

University of Alabama

UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA

14 March, 1967.

Dear Mother and Dad,

I love you. Thank you for the love which you have shown in learning decidedly more about me recently. I remain the same person, you know. I just wanted you to know. I am grateful that I have been able to tell you, not out of a compelling sense of horror and not even out of a broken spirit. We all need one another, but likely we will frustrate any real communication if our need is so overwhelming that it would alter or destroy that which it depends upon. I felt strong enough to tell you, and I felt you were strong enough too, to know.

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Your knowing is all. I do not expect you to understand, for I do not myself. I have merely in health accepted the reality, and this painfully purchased honesty has freed me to consider the bigger questions: not how can I avoid being what I am; but how can I, being what I am, remain true to other people and become more than, if not altogether different from, my animal identity. Ironically, paradoxically, the acceptance which most would seem to separate me from others, actually establishes my freedom to be most like them; for indeed all of us are something a little higher than the beasts but also a little lower than the angels.

Dad, you have expressed a desire to be more informed on the subject of

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homosexuality. I understand and respect your desire. I would warn you, however, that most of the material written on the subject approaches tripe. This is surely to be ~~expected~~<sup>expected</sup> of writing about a condition forced by social convention to be kept underground. By course too, most studies have had to be made on people who were sick enough or criminal enough to come to the attention of the experts. And the quacks who peddle dreams of change are hardly less numerous than those who sell hair formulas to bald men. I do not want to change what I am. Fifteen years of frustrated attempt have proved too futile, unrewarding; and I see now that the greater error was to feel that what I am is more important

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than who I am. We do not choose the objects of our animal attraction; but we possibly (and, I believe, definitely) may exercise some measure of humanity in our behavior with these.

Undoubtedly, understandably, you as parents will be concerned to know how your son became a queer. The books can give you dozens of formulas, and undoubtedly each will have perhaps a small portion of truth. But we human beings do not finally live by formulas, thank Goodness. I have been through all of the vicious cycle of mental recrimination, the attempts to fix the blame; but now such efforts seem irrelevant. While it is healthy to know that our behavior, good and weak, has precedents, human causes, still the acceptance of the

state of being human, together with the struggle to make our humanity meaningful, these seem a more worthy endeavor than the devilish tasks of fixing blame and debilitating self-censure - yours or mine. Your prophet Isaiah hit upon some of this long ago: "All we like sheep have gone astray."

No more than I censure myself for being queer can I censure you for any part your behavior might have had in my developing thus. Your own background will likely not allow you to accept the inevitability of my homosexuality; I understand. And I certainly ~~do~~ <sup>do</sup> not demand or expect that you be pleased. <sup>queer</sup> Nor am I pleased. I did not choose to be <sup>queer</sup>. Not can I choose not to be. There are things past our knowing and finding out.

That this will be difficult for both of us. Quite frankly, I should most like to delay it until after I have been to Washington to visit Octavio, and possibly even until the play is over. There is no rush, surely, on a matter that has for over half of my life been far more of a strain than it is now. I have shared it with you, I hope, not as a strain but as an IS. Not to have shared it would surely have been my considering you a little less than you are.

In a separate parcel I am sending some elementary but sound information published by an outstanding organization of which even the Archbishop of Canterbury is a member. I had the good fortune

Nevertheless, all is not grim. It seems to me that you should delight in the compelling desire for honesty which has been your most beautiful gift to me; for believe me, I delight in it. Strangely, this letter and my dear conversation with you, Mother, pay homage to you both for your kindness, for your love. Too, in our world in which there is so little honesty and so little love, we are rich indeed. Perhaps to belabor the point of my (or anyone's) homosexuality is to miss the greater gratitude - namely, that one can love anyone.

I appreciate your desire, Dad, to come for a long talk. I look forward to such an occasion. You know, of course,

to attend many of their informative public meetings last year, and wise counsel there also directed me to people who have meant much to me. But more on that when I see you.

I am also returning your book as you requested, somewhat guiltily for have found no time in so many months to spend on it.

The role of Shylock grows more interesting.

I look forward to seeing you next month.

Loree,  
Lorie

## Notes

- I had turned 30 three months earlier.
- I was an only child and very close to my parents.
- My parents were serious Southern Baptists. Five years earlier I had become an Episcopalian.
- A few months after writing this letter, I told my grandmother that I was gay. She said huffily, "What did you expect?! You became an Episcopalian."
- At the time of writing, I was in my first year of the doctoral program at the University of Alabama, and I was an instructor in the English Department.
- The previous summer I had returned to the USA following a year of teaching in London, where I came out to myself as a homosexual person. I taught in the Penge Secondary Modern School near the Crystal Palace.
- At the time of writing I was cast as Shylock, and the play was in production at the University of Alabama. I won "Best Actor of the Year" for the performance.
- When I wrote this letter I knew personally no homosexual couples, nor any lesbians.
- I did not meet my future husband, Ernest Clay until six years later. See Two Grooms: <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/2grooms.html>
- This letter was first published in *SFI* [San Francisco Integrity. July 1, 1980
- See other biographical material at <http://rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/pubd/index.html#autobiography>