

Shavings from My Head

Where the Child Things Are Confessions of a Circuit Breaker

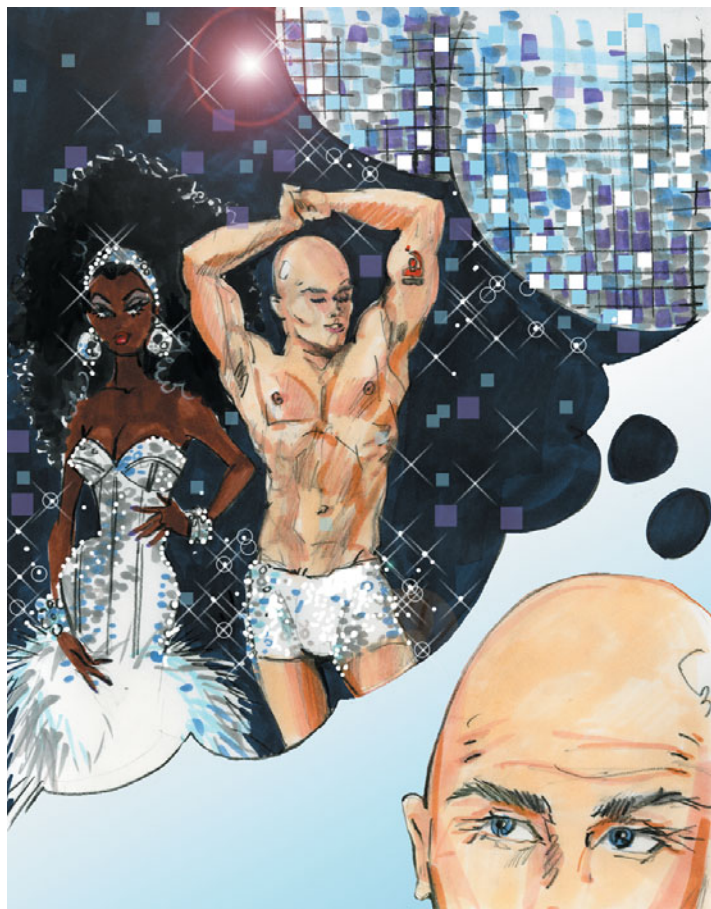
"Gurrrl, we're *all* going dancing tonight," my (younger) friend announces near the close of our phone conversation. "You should come!"

"You *know* I gave that up," I annoyingly reiterate (*déjà vous* setting in).

"Well, if you change your mind, call me!"

Then he went out dancing. And I did not. Why? Because several years back, I made up my mind that I would not become one of "those" guys; the guys—when I was 25—that my friends and I deemed w-a-y too old to be dancing at a club. Thus, I turned in my dance card and gave up the dance.

Post call, a few hours later while on the treadmill at the gym—my iPod infused with a new concoction of tribal tunes—all at once, I am both elated and glum. In an attempt to distract my conflicted demeanour, I begin mentally choreographing a fashion show (a byproduct of my profession). But, one by one, the imaginary supermodels are replaced by snapshots of my formative fag years, and I return to my happy daze—my dancehall days. The whole scenario makes me realize that—even while being active, running on the treadmill—I'm still stuck on one thing: I still really miss the dancing. Middle age has punched a hole in my dance card and, instead of granting me a free car wash, it's left a hole in my whole.



The first time I went to a big all-boys dance party, I was completely unaware of what was in store. In typical fag fashion, it was much more than my vivid imagination might have concocted. It was a sea of hunky men, all in various forms of undress, all in white, and all happily bobbing about under the watchful eye of (what I would eventually learn) the star DJ. That was a million years ago and a few years into what has infamously lived on for decades now as *The White Party* (the original New York version).

Although a nubile innocent, I was also a burgeoning fashion designer. Thus, I came prepared in my variation of white: a taken-apart, refitted, then entirely studded with rhinestones pair of white boxer shorts. Shortly aftersubmerging into the sea of dancing men, I was spotted by one of the drag queens elevated atop a box in the centre of the massive dance floor (a result, I suspect, of my uber-sparkly foundation ensemble).

She raised her overly penciled eyebrow in my direction and twisted her mod-clad figure into a pose. In rebuttal, I threw her my best bored-model-caught-in-editorial stance. Next, an extremely long, metallic-purple, press-on nail aimed itself at me, then repeatedly curled back into her—a showy command for me to appear at her glittery-silver, platformed feet.

Sashaying through the throngs of skivvy-clad men, I eventually landed at her box-throne where a cluster of metallic-purple digits extended themselves down to me. I reached up to shake her hand, and with the power of a world-class weightlifter, she/HE pulled me up and onto her/HIS box.

"Hey, Mr. Sparkle," she/HE greeted in a low, bourbon-soaked voice. "Don't you look all festive? Almost as festive as me!" she/HE said, going over my body like a searchlight. "You need to be up *here* with *me* tonight Honey!"

And with that—accompanied by a newly acquired affection for metallic-purple nail polish, a reminder to bench press more weight, the lyrical beat pulsating through my veins and a newborn joy for dancing among my peers—a sparkly go-go boy was born.

Eventually, I turned off my iPod, got off the treadmill and went home. Before jumping into a hot shower, I discovered something new: a white hair had mysteriously sprouted on my chest—my first. This brought with it an odd, albeit unexpected, prompt back to my earlier thoughts and a new mark of recognition regarding firsts: that there are all sorts of virginal experiences and at every age.

After acknowledging what's inevitably the start of a new white-party-of-hair on my chest, I also realized how much I've learned from my virginal experiences, and that, because they were firsts, they've stayed profoundly ingrained in my cranium.

Here are a few things I've learned from *my* firsts:

- I've learned that you will only be a virgin at something once, and, much as you may try, you can *never* repeat the same experience;
- that you can't eat cake before bed after the age of thirty without gaining weight;
- that the social venues for homos over forty are less;
- that everyone has a story that began on a blank white page (including this one); that it's better to participate in the dance instead of watching from the side;
- that white is a non-coloured canvas on which to custom-colour your own work-of-art world;
- that life moves at white-lighting speed—propelling you through decades faster than you can say virgin;
- that there will *always* be *more* firsts until death—which will also be a first; and
- that I've learned the importance of rhinestones.

So, along with the aforementioned learnings and all the memorable firsts, as I pack my bag for a trip further into middle age, I shall continue to approach my firsts with eager, albeit cautious (comes with age) optimism. But, from time to time, provoked by a good tribal beat, I *still* miss that place, that special, sparkly-white, innocent place ingrained in my memory book—where the child things are.

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