

HOMOWORLD

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You wake up to the sound of your radio alarm dedicating songs to same sex couples:

- Jolene, please don't take my woman
- When a man loves a man....

As you sit to have breakfast you gaze blankly at the cereal packet depicting the bonuses of its vitamins and minerals as played out by a family running through a cornfield: two dads, their son and a red setter. You briefly flick on Breakfast TV to catch the end of Richard and Jimmy discussing the latest face make up available for drag queens.

You leave for work, passing some of your neighbours saying goodbye on the way: Melissa and Iris and further down the street John and Mike. As you sit on the tube you look around you at the ads to pass the time: cheaper travel insurance for same-sex couples, the wonderbra ad: 'Come on girls'. At the next stop a man enters the tube and something about him you can't put your finger on makes you suspect he is also heterosexual. He glances over and spots you and smiles the smile of recognition. You think 'I can tell you're straight too, but maybe no one else here has noticed!'. You might laugh to yourself and enjoy the exclusivity of the contact.

Arriving at work, one of the admin staff is showing pictures of her holiday she just took with her girlfriend in Lesbos. As you join the group to look at the photos you get asked 'Where did you take your last holiday?' Do you admit it was Corfu, a destination well known for its heterosexual holidays, and do you say who you went with?

You start your working day and see your first client. During the session the client discusses her excitement at having found a sperm donor through one of the many agencies set up to match potential parents with similar outlooks on parenting. Can you relate to this and share her joy? She makes the comment: 'you know what it's like, it takes so much thought, time and testing to find the right match. Finally I found someone who wants to be there to talk through decisions but agrees to let me have the final word'. How do you feel admitting to yourself that you don't fundamentally know what it's like, that for you it would just be a case of stopping using birth control? The thought rekindles the awkwardness you felt finding one of only two clinics London set up to provide birth control. The stigma you might have felt walking towards it through the hospital grounds, surely everyone must know that's where the heteros go? The condescending looks of the receptionist as she asks you loudly whether you have used the service before and would you prefer your GP not to be informed. You might find these thoughts and memories interrupting your session. Do you take this to supervision? Does your supervisor even know that you are straight? Do you know what your supervisor's personal feelings are about it? Do you fear your supervisor might be secretly pathologising you? These thoughts make you remember that you will be changing placements in a few months. You briefly hope the next team will be more accepting.

At the end of the day people are going for a drink at the nearest gay bar on the corner. Some are bringing partners. Do you invite yours, knowing there will be staff there you are not out to? Staff whose response to your heterosexuality you cannot be sure of. Or do you go for a few hours and then leave to travel into central London and the straight ghetto of Old Brompton Street? But maybe you just want a quiet drink as you are tired and you know Old Brompton Street will be full of pumping Celine Dion and boozed pint drinkers. With no real alternative, you decide to head home. Just as you have made the decision your partner texts to say he will meet you at the tube as he is leaving for home now too. As you smile a member of staff you don't know well catches your eye and says, 'That from your girlfriend? What's her name?' Do you come out, lie, or say you're much too busy to be in a relationship? You wonder what their response would be if you did come out:

- Full acceptance;
- A total lack of interest and changing the subject due to embarrassment;
- Or else they might imagine they now have license to ask you a list of overtly personal questions because 'some of their best friends are straight' and they've been in a straight bar so they really don't have a problem with it, eg
- 'so how long have you known you were straight?'
- 'what a waste, I would never have guessed you were straight.'
- 'do your parents know?'
- 'is the sex better?'
- 'what do you actually do in bed anyway?'

Finally you reach your home tube station and as promised your boyfriend is there to meet you. You feel a flood of relief at seeing him, realising how tired you are. But do you greet him with a kiss with all these people still around? As you walk home you both have to walk down a quiet street. You start to hold hands, glad of the contact. However, unexpectedly a group of youths rounds the next corner and you let go. Did they see the contact? Are they going to say anything, heckle you? Worse still, is this a potentially violent situation? You both stare at the floor as you walk past.

Safe behind closed doors at last, you decide to order a pizza. Your partner is in the kitchen, when the doorbell rings and doesn't realise you've already opened it. He shouts 'I'll get that darling' and you notice the pizza delivery boy trying to hide a laugh as your boyfriend bounds into the hall behind you.

As you curl up on the sofa you flick on the TV to see if anything is on. Nothing matches your mood:

- BBC1: the film *When Harry met Henry*
- BBC2: A review of the contemporary version of *Romeo and Jonathan* at the Young Vic.
- ITV: American funniest home videos special on commitment ceremonies
- CH4: *Big Brother*, the episode where the straight person comes out to a fanfare of questions
- CH5: *Better Gay Sex*.

You flick through a copy of the *The Blue Paper* (the free 'straight' paper about the scene), which you remembered to pick up last time you were in the centre of town as you can't get it locally. You are amused by the rally to join a kiss-in protest after a straight couple were asked to leave the airport lounge following their public display of affection. However, you become disheartened as you read that Clause 29 has once more not been voted out by the House of Commons, their fear being that if straight relationships are even acknowledged to exist by schools it might result in young girls wanting to experiment with older men, or boys with older women. 'This country needs to uphold the same-sex values that made it strong' and are reflected in its tax benefits.

You finally decide to turn in, deciding not to read any one of your Mary Sheldon novel which you bought excitedly because it actually featured a straight character in its subplot. However, you've gone off the book, since you found the character was a shallow representation of straight cliches.

The end of another day in Homoworld!