

## Infidelity and the Gay Man

By Clint Hamblin

"I've never been in a monogamous relationship," my boyfriend admitted. We had been dating for a few months.

"I can't do an open relationship," I replied and asked if we should break-up.

"No," he said as he threw his arms around me. "I don't want to lose you."

And so, it began.....

Our relationship was a rollercoaster ride overflowing with joys and successes including weddings, funerals, christenings and all of the typical events one might expect when merging two lives.

His mom and dad loved me. Never did I feel so welcomed into the family of a man I was in love with.

And then there were the horrors. The dark side of my partner's personality included his lifelong battle with self-esteem. As a "drama queen" of epic proportions, his frequent emotional meltdowns were daunting often with me as the objective of unrelenting verbal abuse.

Despite these issues, I was convinced the good stuff outweighed the bad but when I found numerous sordid e-mails from him to people without last names, I knew we were in deep trouble.

Dozens of missives from Craig's List "Men for Men" filled his Inbox on my computer.

"Gettin' any?" EthanFun asked. "Nah, just from the BF," my partner responded.

BF? Boyfriend! That's me. I was the BF.

Shocked and disgusted? You bet! The love of my life was having sex with strangers from Boston to Burlington, Vermont. A massive confrontation raised the roof as he confessed to sexual recklessness and the real killer: He admitted that he had been screwing around for nearly 5 years – our entire time together.

When we started this relationship, we both knew that we were HIV negative. I asked if he had been practicing safe-sex. He said, "No."

He tearfully swore on his dead mother's soul that he would never do it again. He begged me to believe he would change but there was no denying that his pledge of monogamy was a complete and utter sham. My partner was touring New England, having unprotected sex and then coming home and having unprotected sex with me.

*"I travel to Burlington often to visit my family," he wrote to one of his playmates. "Let's hook-up next Tuesday."*

From the beginning, we never stopped proclaiming our love for each other. We fantasized about the wedding we would one day have including the platinum wedding rings we planned to purchase at Barney's where he worked and could get a discount. We thought pizza and sushi could be served at the reception and it was fun wrestling with the invitation list.

We had frequent and incredible sex. Each time was better than the time before. Little did I know that like a community toothbrush, I was having sex with dozens of men without ever knowing who they were or what their health status might have been?

*"I'm Irish from the waist up but I'm VERY Italian from the waist down, if you catch my drift," he often wrote continuing to promote his not so "mini-me," his prized possession, hoping to entice yet another trick.*

My heterosexual friends were appalled and horrified. "This is the ultimate betrayal," one said.

Another asked, "What quality of person is capable of this contemptuous behavior concealing it for 5 long years?"

When I told my gay friends, many said, "So what? Weren't you fooling around?" The assumption choked me. Did my promise of fidelity have no meaning? Did my sexual orientation automatically void the validity and integrity of my pledge?

In 2010, is infidelity still expected in a male same-sex relationship? Is a vow of monogamy a "wink, wink" promise that nobody thinks anyone will keep? The only time gay people got upset was when I mentioned that he was not practicing safe-sex and even then, more than one person said, "HIV is like diabetes. You can control it now so it's no big deal."

Who deserves to be sentenced to a life managing HIV and what about herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea and all of the STDs? Why would anyone knowingly expose their partner to these horrible and sometimes incurable diseases?

Better yet, why was the man who claimed to love me playing Russian roulette with my life?

*"It's only sex," a Lesbian friend said. "At least he didn't fall in love with somebody else."*

So, I ask the question: "When it comes to integrity, are gay men excused?" With recent same-sex marriage triumphs and our continued and successful quests for equal rights, isn't it time we aspire to achieve the same moral and ethical standards as everyone else? Unfortunately, there will always be couples who cheat on each other. That has nothing to do with being gay or straight but why are gay people not surprised when there is infidelity in a male same-sex relationship?

For nearly 7 years, I thought our lives were better together than apart? I believed that he was my "forever" guy that I would love, nurture and support. I was convinced that I could live with his dysfunctions but as his devoted partner who diligently maintained our pledge of fidelity, I could not understand or reconcile his lecherous behavior and he was incapable of giving me an explanation.

Maintaining this relationship required too much of an investment with a dwindling and potentially dangerous return. No more would I feel compelled to count his Viagra and calculate his indiscretions by how many of his little blue pills were unaccounted for.

My now x-partner is gone. I can't help but feel that many years of my life have been wasted. My heart has a hole in it and I am alone, wounded and limping. The recovery slowly and painfully continues and every day between the tears and sadness, I try to convince myself that I am much better off.

And yet, there remains a question that persistently plagues me: Was my partner a despicable, deceitful and dishonest pig or was he just following the same sex relationship script written for and by gay men?