

October 15, 2012 by Matt Kailey

I recently participated in a book reading at the Mercury Cafe in Denver, offering up a couple of essays from my latest book, *Teeny Weenies and Other Short Subjects*. Here is “Let’s See What You’ve Got.”

Let’s See What You’ve Got

“I’ve never met a female-to-male transsexual before.”

Yes, of course. I get this all the time from gay men. But this particular gay man had just spent the last fifteen years living in San Francisco. If a gay man lives in San Francisco for fifteen years and has never met an FTM transsexual person, I can only assume that he spent those fifteen years:

A) incarcerated.

B) homebound.

C) in a hut on the far side of Alcatraz island.

Almost every major urban center in the United States is teeming with trans men. If we don’t live there already, we often migrate there in search of a more welcoming community, better access to health care and other resources, and a larger trans population with which to connect. San Francisco, with its rainbow flags down Market Street and its “anything goes” Castro district, is particularly attractive, especially for gay trans men.

In reality, my fine gay friend from San Francisco, who apparently had to come to Denver, Colorado, to actually meet a trans man, has probably met many of them throughout his decade and a half in the City by the Bay – he just doesn’t know it. Thanks to the incredible transformative powers of testosterone, trans men rarely have to come out publicly unless we choose to, and we are hardly ever read as trans, even if someone is looking extra hard.

This invisibility is great for someone who is trying to quietly assimilate into mainstream culture, but it can lead to a lot of misunderstandings, unpleasantness, and even downright nastiness if the guy is simply trying to get a date or a trick for the night. A non-trans gay man can quickly turn ugly when he picks up a guy and then finds out later that his cute trick doesn’t have the expected “equipment,” no matter how hot the guy is overall.

This particular predicament is cause for ongoing discussion in trans man space: when, exactly, do you come out to your potential partner or one-night-stand? I always advocate for a “the-sooner-the-better” approach, primarily for safety reasons. I have no desire to be in a strange apartment in a strange neighborhood with a strange (and maybe rather large and burly) guy who suddenly feels that I have “betrayed” him by not intimately discussing my physical configuration beforehand. It’s true that I might get rejected and left standing at the bar with only my beer for company, but I’ll take that chance a lot faster than I’ll take a chance with my physical safety.

The guys who feel as if they don’t need to go into a “tell-all” confession prior to a little play have a very good point, however – how many non-trans gay guys honestly share their stats before leaving a bar or a party with someone? I’m not talking about all those 9-inched hunks who only seem to exist on the pages of the personals. I’m talking about real guys who hook up in real circumstances. Unless you both strip down right where you are and show each other all the goods, there might be any number of things about your trick that will disappoint you, and vice versa. These things don’t come with a written guarantee.

So while I'm all for safety (mostly mine), I also understand the desire for privacy and anonymity, along with a person's right to possess the body he has without explanations or disclaimers. We're out there. You've met us, whether you know it or not. And we're not trying to fool you. We're just being ourselves, looking for the same things that you are.

So – let's see what you've got.