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# ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE

A MEMOIR-MANIFESTO  
**GEORGE M. JOHNSON**

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX  
New York

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# AUTHOR'S NOTE

In writing this book, I wanted to be as authentic and truthful about my experience as possible. I wanted my story to be told in totality: the good, the bad, and the things I was always too afraid to talk about publicly. This meant going to places and discussing some subjects that are often kept away from teens for fear of them being “too heavy.”

But the truth of the matter is, these things happened to me when I was a child, teenager, and young adult. So as heavy as these subjects may be, it is necessary that they are not only told, but also read by

# LOSING MY VIRGINITY TWICE

I never daydreamed about sex with another boy. When I *did* think about sex, I was a girl having sex with a boy. I created an alter ego in my mind named Dominique that looked how I would look if I were a girl, and she would have sex with any of the boys I daydreamed about. That was the only thing that ever made sense to me, until it finally didn't. College opened my eyes to some things.

As I've said, there was not much mainstream queer representation back then, and my high school taught

sexual education in a very archaic way. The whole "birds and the bees" conversation, which never really made sense to me because who the hell cared about how birds and bees were mating? Sex education was an absolute joke—and the fact that we were in Catholic school didn't help. We discussed abstinence as being the best method for contraception, of course. There were diagrams and charts and that damn banana they used to show you how to put on a condom properly.

We learned the basics about sex. What an erection was, what sperm did and how it traveled to an egg to create a baby. We learned about STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV. But again, surface-level information. Nothing about how these infections harm one community more than the other—especially HIV in the Black community.

We also didn't learn about sex between two men. I focused on masturbation instead of sex, primarily because I still could not imagine myself having sex with anyone else. The feelings I had were for boys, but the only encounters I'd had with boys—Thomas and Evan—weren't the same as what I had seen in love stories or pornography. Those were mostly between men and women, and they were excited and confident with

each other. The porn stories were so romanticized, but the passion was there. Even the corny storylines were better than my lived experience—which consisted of no romantic love at all. So, sex with myself was going to have to suffice until I had the ability to trust myself with someone else.

That moment for me didn't come until my junior year of college. I remained a virgin until I was almost twenty-one years old, something unheard of in my family. It had been a daunting task to lie about having sex (and with a girl) to all of my heterosexual cousins. I had never seen a vagina other than in the movies, and had no desire to.

Being a member of a Greek Letter Organization has a way of shining a spotlight on you in college, opening you up to a whole population of people who may not have known you existed. One boy in particular took a liking to me and asked for my phone number. At first, I thought his interest was platonic. He was the friend of someone in my chapter, so I believed he was just being social.

As we began texting one another, it quickly escalated from a friendly conversation to an X-rated one. This was fine for me, except I wasn't quite sure who

was supposed to be who in the bedroom, or if that would just play itself out. I didn't ask, because frankly, I didn't have the language at the time to know what the terms were even called. He waited until his roommate was out of town one weekend to finally invite me over.

I arrived, and he had made us both dinner, which was cool. We talked a little before moving to the couch to watch TV. After about twenty minutes, he got closer up under my arm. This signaled to me that I was going to have to be the more "dominant" person in this encounter—based on what I knew from watching the interactions of girls with boys.

We cuddled up for a few minutes before I leaned in and we began kissing. This was actually my first time ever kissing a boy as well. I remember in that moment I was extremely nervous because I did not know what I was doing. I didn't know where it would lead. I just remember silence. I know that it felt right. It was the first time I was sharing my body with someone on *my* terms. I felt agency in that moment.

Eventually, he came up for air and said, "You're a really good kisser." I was shocked, seeing as it was my first time, but I was also too excited to care and went

back in for more. As we kissed, he began unzipping my pants. It was clear to me in this moment that he wasn't new to this.

He reached his hand down and pulled out my dick. He quickly went to giving me head. I just sat back and enjoyed it as I could tell he was, too. He was also definitely experienced in what he was doing, because he went to work quite confidently. He then came up and asked me if I wanted to try on him. I said sure. I began and he said, "Watch your teeth." I didn't want to let him know I was inexperienced. So, I slowed down and took my time and luckily got into a good rhythm. He didn't know I was a virgin, and I did my best to act dominant like my favorite porn star. I was an actor, and this was my movie.

There was so much excitement running through my body. This was much more than losing my virginity. For once, I was consenting to the sexual satisfaction of my body. This moment also confirmed that sex could look how I wanted it to look. And that it could be passionate and kind, but most importantly, fun and satisfying. His body felt great in my mouth.

I came up after a while and kissed him again. We both got up and went into his bedroom, where we got

completely naked. He took off his clothes and immediately lay on his stomach. I then took off my shirt, and then my boxer briefs. I got behind him. There was moonlight coming through the shades of the dark room. Two Black boys under the glow of blue moonlight. How poetic, dare I say ironic?

Now, I was scared as hell. One, because I didn't know what I was doing and clearly, he did. Two, because it was still college, and my fear of word getting out that I was inexperienced or bad in bed would have been too big of a campus rumor. Let alone that I was having sex with men *and* a friend of someone in my chapter.

For the first few minutes, we dry humped and grinded. I was behind him, with my stomach on his back as we kissed. After a few minutes of fun and games, he got up and went to his nightstand, where he pulled out a condom and some lube. He then lay down on his stomach. I knew what I had to do even if I had never done it before. I had one point of reference, though, and that was seven-plus years of watching pornography. Although the porn was heterosexual, it was enough of a reference point for me to get the job done.

I remember the condom was blue and flavored like cotton candy. I put some lube on and got him up on his knees, and I began to slide into him from behind. I tried not to force it because I imagined that it would be painful; I didn't want this moment to be painful. So I eased in, slowly, until I heard him moan.

As we moved, I could tell he was excited—I was, too, but the pride in me told me not to show it. I felt like I was in control and proud of myself for getting it right on the first try—all the while still being nervous. I wanted to stay dominant in that moment. We went at it for about fifteen minutes before I started to get that feeling. Weakness in the legs, numbness in the waist. I finally came and let out a loud moan—to the point where he asked me to quiet down for the neighbors. I pulled out of him and kissed him while he masturbated. Then, he also came.

That night was glorious. I had conquered a fear and had sex with a man on my own terms. The years of suppressing my identity and not dating or kissing had all come down to this one magical night in an apartment on the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia. I didn't want to leave, and he didn't make me. I did, however, get up to make a phone call to one of my

line brothers. I left him a voicemail saying that I had finally had sex.

I then went back into his bedroom and climbed under the sheets. We both lay naked in each other's arms that night. For him, I was just a conquest of a cute frat boy on campus. For me, I was finally on my journey of sexual exploration and couldn't wait to do it again.

He and I had sex a second time two weeks later, before school let out for the summer. He went home, and I stayed in Richmond. That entire summer, however, I didn't do it again. I had several sexual encounters that involved mutual masturbation and kissing and fooling around, but I just couldn't bring myself to have penetrative sex again.

I was hesitant because I still had a lot of questions. As much as I enjoyed being on top, I wasn't sure if I always wanted to be the dominant person in the bedroom. I was still a novice at sex, and even more at gay culture and sexual positions. I wasn't sure if because I "topped" him, that meant I always had to be the top. I also wanted to try the bottom position, which I associated with being the more submissive person. (Though if you know me, that ain't ever been me.) I just needed



time to reflect, and figure out if sex for me was going to be the casual hookup thing or if I was ready to now seek something more.

That next semester, I entered my senior year of college. I was promoted to be the fraternity president, becoming one of the more well-known students on campus. It was a great start to what would be a great year. By that time, I was using a dating app online called Black Gay Chat.

One night, I got a message from another boy who went to school with me. He said that he had always had a crush on me and wanted to meet up. It was the night before I headed to Jersey for my birthday, so I agreed to meet up with him as an early birthday present to myself. I got to his apartment and we both began drinking while watching TV. This lasted all of ten minutes before we started kissing and undressing each other.

He then stood up and grabbed me by the hands and led me into his bedroom. We took each other's clothes off, fast but deliberate. After, he told me to lie down on the bed. He asked me to "turn over" while he slipped a condom on himself.

My heart immediately started to race. Nervously, I asked him what he was doing, and he said, "You." I laughed at first but then told him that I had never been the bottom. He looked at me and said, "Well, that's about to change tonight."

I was extremely nervous. There is a fear, as with most things that you are doing for the first time. But this was my ass, and I was struggling to imagine someone inside me. And he was . . . large. But, I was gonna try.

I had previously topped someone who clearly enjoyed it, but he had been enjoying anal sex before I ever came along. He knew what to expect. I didn't. As an avid porn watcher, the only thing I knew about anal sex previously was that it was painful, or at least played up as such on the cameras.

Nervous and drunk, I listened and got on my stomach. He got on top and slowly inserted himself into me. It was the worst pain I think I had ever felt in my life. He then added more lube and tried again, which felt better but not by much. He began his stroking motion. Eventually, I felt a mix of pleasure with the pain.

I can't say that I didn't enjoy it, because I did. But it was painful for sure. In those few minutes though,

I can say that he was gentle. His aim wasn't to hurt me, and my aim was for him to be pleased, too. He didn't last long inside of me, thankfully. He gave me a kiss before he pulled out. I didn't stay long, nor did I masturbate after. I was in a state of shock. I just wanted to get back home.

That next morning, me and my line brothers were planning to travel to Jersey for my birthday and I had to drive. But, I was in pain. I told them what I had done and before getting on the road, they picked up some Tylenol for me and explained, "It will take some time to get used to it." They were proud, though. I had earned another gay badge of honor like it was the Boy Scouts or something.

I was in pain for nearly three weeks following that encounter and too afraid to go to the doctor for help because I would have had to tell them I had been having anal sex. So, like most other trauma in my life, I sucked it up and dealt with the pain until my body healed. I didn't have sex for several months following that encounter.

But after a while, I got the courage to try it again, but this time I went into it much more prepared. With each time, I learned more about my body and the

power to say, "No, that hurts." Sex should be pleasurable. And there are safe ways to ensure that. Like they say, *Practice makes perfect*, and I eventually got a lot of practice.

I often imagine what my first sexual experiences would have been like had I been given the ability to learn about what queer sex was when all my straight friends and classmates got to learn about what it looked like for them. My queer sexuality was one big, risky crash course, much like the other aspects of my queer existence.

There is so much danger in not providing proper education about sex to kids, especially for those who are having sex outside of the heteronormative boxes. Sure, we learned about HIV, but in a school full of white kids, it wasn't a priority. Despite the fact that Black queer people fall into the highest risk category for it, learning sex education through a white lens made me think I was just as invincible as my white classmates.

The "banana test" taught us how to properly put on a condom when none of us have a banana between our legs. Being taught sex as a way of producing children rather than as an act of pleasure stripped me and

others of the ability to fully comprehend what we were getting ourselves into. I really put myself in riskier situations by not knowing what I was doing and by not having the tools, resources, or supportive community to seek that knowledge.

The risk factors for queer people engaging in sex continue to be higher than that of all other communities. We are prone to having a higher chance of contracting sexually transmitted infections. The CDC has already stated that 50 percent of Black men who have sex with men will contract HIV over their lifetime. And a quarter of Latino queer men will also contract the virus. To deny the queer community a basic sex education as teens is to perpetuate the prevalence of those statistics.

Queer folks often live a second adolescence throughout much of their adult lives because of this deprivation. I didn't explore sexuality during my teen years. I didn't have openly gay friends or mentors growing up. I didn't have the opportunity to date boys or have a boyfriend. I had to figure a lot of this shit out on my own. So the mistakes people make and the lessons they learn by exploring in their teens, I was just starting to learn as I transitioned into adulthood.

We suppress who we are during those early formative years when we *should be* learning and growing beside our straight peers, and within the safety and support of our families. The heteronormative systems in our society literally have the power to change the trajectory of our lives.

Losing my virginity twice are experiences that shaped my understanding of who I was, and how I could show up in a relationship. You don't know what you like or who you are if you allow yourself to be fit into a box that society has made for you. Learn what you like and don't like. Create the sexual environment that works best for you. Sex is a part of growth as a human regardless of gender and sexual identity. No one has the right to deny us the resources we need to properly engage with one another.

I wish I had known then what you know now. But I don't regret any of my sexual experiences. And to be honest, this was the scariest chapter for me to write. Because this chapter involves a vulnerability with the world that I'm still not sure I'm ready to share. My first experience was full of pleasure. My second was full of pain. But I went through that and have shared it so maybe you won't have to.

Will this part of my story be met with pushback? Absolutely. But I'll be damned if I don't tell it because of fear. My greatest fear is that queer teens will be left to trial and error in their sexual experience. It's worth me feeling a little embarrassed so that you all are a bit more prepared.

CHAPTER 16

# DON'T KNOW WHY I DIDN'T CALL

It was Christmas break, and I was about to return to college for my final semester.

"Be safe on that road, Matt," my mother said to me as I was getting ready to leave. "Make sure you call or text me when you get home. And make sure you tell your daddy bye."

I walked down that same hallway I used to run up and down as a kid to their bedroom. "You out?" he asked.

I loved the way he said that. He always acted so