

AFTER THE BALL

We are not eight-hundred pound gorillas, yet!

BY BARD MICHAELS

If you want to read a book that can change your life, start here: *After The Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen.

Here's an analogy from the book to activate your imagination: "An eight-hundred pound gorilla sits where it wants; we, however, are not seen as eight-hundred pound gorillas." (p. 140). In a sentence, this vignette is the very heart of this masterful analysis of the gay liberation movement and the fairy tale turned nightmare: à la Mercer Mayer's *There Is a Nightmare in My Closet* (correction: OUR closet).

Ah! there is nothing so sublime as humor turned in healthy criticism upon the foibles of the self. *After The Ball* will do more for your sense of humor and your capacity to see yourself, your life, and the "movement" in greater perspective than anything else \$20 can buy. With one prerequisite: "Do you have the guts to look at yourself and the mental power to conduct a healthy self-evaluation/examination?" If your answer is even a haughty "Maybe!" — you've got the opportunity.

(An aside: practice "good" politics — buy the book from A Woman's Place Bookstore and support one your most powerful allies.)

I've waited 20 years for this book. Now, amidst all my fantasizing, I am free to ponder its sequel. The title? *Coming Home: or Mopping Floors in Glass Slippers Is Not Glamorous, Silly; It's Dangerous!*

Hoorays and kudos for the authors. They have guts and fine minds. Their medicine will not go down "with a spoonful of sugar." It will take something more like castor oil. If you've been politically constipated for a while this treatise will move all your innards. I am not interested in entertaining you as a literary critic. Neither is it my intention to convince

you that this work of "art" is "politically correct."

As a mental health practitioner, my motivation is to give some good counsel, to help you create and pass your own *internal Mother Test*: Would I want my mother to read/know this about me? The real point is, what do you want to know about yourself as a gay person? If you are even slightly inclined to "the truth," we are on the same wavelength.

After The Ball is about telling the truth. It's about coming home to ourselves, coming out of denial, having the willingness and the desire as in Tradition Three of the Twelve Step Program. It's about constructive criticism, self-criticism, and most of all, it's about developing a personal code of ethics and morality that can guide us to become the bigger selves we long to be.

Finally, it is a blueprint for developing something we all dream about; creating working relationships, extended intergenerational family, and a campaign to "Wage Peace" in the national arena for human, civil, and sexual rights.

Perhaps enough of us will buy, read, and share the book so that a number of small discussion groups will spring up and the process will help us at the local level to do some recovery from the aftermath of Ballot Measure 8. The best antidote for depression is a healthy plan of action with lots of doses of interaction and lively discussion.

After The Ball is a timely arrival at a significant political crossroads. I hope our responses to the challenges of this book are worthy of its intentions. Two of your brothers love you enough to want you to experience, own, and share the truth of who you really are, and who you can become. Sufficient enough motivation in itself for you to let it in. ▼

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Out of the streets, into the closets!

Kirk and Madsen have solved the crucial question of
How to Make Straight People Like Gay People...
just Look Straight, Feel Straight, Be Straight

BY MARAKAY ROGERS

After a few months' bout with the equal debilitations of taxes and of internal medicine, I emerged from what I thought was a fantasy world of the IRS and medical tests into the even more appalling fantasy world of Heterosexual Batmania. I warned you all that this would happen. First DC Comics sacked Dick Grayson. Then they completely de-Robined Batman. Now Batman is running around with Kim Basinger. For those of us raised in the great days of superhero camp, when Batman and Robin were an item, when Superman hung out in Bizarro-land, and when I was just waiting for Wonder Woman to ask why she was wasting her time on the stupid lunk Steve Trevor, it is clear that the world has gone crazy.

Having been away from the so-called real world only to emerge around Gay Pride Day, I see these phenomena quite clearly. Attention sports fans...the world is crawling with nouveau-heterosexuality — except, apparently, in the nation's capital, Fantasyland USA, where some of the latest scandals surrounding the last administration are proving what I always thought: Nancy Reagan was First Fag Hag of the United States. It appears that our fine fundamentalist government was crawling with escort service-dependent officials. Everyone knows, though, that Washington isn't the real world. In the real world these days, even Batman is straight. At least Wonder Woman finally ditched Steve.

Even the gay community, it appears, is going straight — or, if it isn't, it seems we're supposed to be pretending to do so. This high-IQ concept is now out of the closet and between the covers of a new book. More alarmingly, it's between the covers of a new book written by people who claim to be real, live, non-heterosexual, Kinsey-5-or-better persons. How on earth could Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, supposedly intelligent — or at least supposedly literate — gay-type persons, come up with *After the Ball*, the book that will inspire the slogan "Out of the streets and into the closet"? Their theory is simple, or at least simple-minded. Gay liberation hasn't been as successful as the civil rights movement, they say. Why? Because straight people do not like homosexual people.

Kirk and Madsen have solved the crucial question of How To Make Straight People Like Gay People. So to be liked, folks, just Look Straight, Feel Straight, Be Straight. Gay people, according to our heroes, do not Behave Properly. Not to Behave Properly is the worst sin that Harvard graduates such as Kirk and Madsen can imagine. To Behave Properly, one is to follow the example of Mr. Kirk and Mr. Madsen. Buy a house in the suburbs. Buy some Brooks Brothers suits —

men only, please. Buy a station wagon and a riding lawn mower. Wear horn rims. Do nothing that would alarm your Sainted Aunt Heloise in public. Why, no — can it be? Straight people will like you folks, if — if — if you're Clark Kent. Straight people like nerds! They like guys who wear Van Heusen shirts and who barbecue steaks — no grilled tuna, please — on backyard charcoal grills next to their Ford Country Squire wagons. This applies to men only, of course. Kirk and Madsen don't worry about lesbians; I guess our authors were at Harvard before women got there, so they never met any women. I guess straight people might like Lois Lane. Is she too ballsy? You think so? Well, maybe they like Kim Basinger. Batman's giving her a shot, anyway; I guess the barbecue and horn rims were even more threatening to Bruce Wayne than girls are.

I am serious, folks. I could never invent something this absurd. I've seen photographs of Kirk and Madsen, by the way. They bear a strange resemblance to Clark Kent, horn rims and all. Only the most severely heterosexual-worshiping self-hating gay men alive could think up the platform of refusing to support saving the whales because it's too left for straight people to like the concept. Only a really warped mind could conclude that gay groups are not respected because gay groups are concerned about migrant worker oppression. Did I mention what these exponents of the gay KKK think of drag? Oh, by now you won't bat an eyelash at their quote that straight people hate us "not just for the myths and lies we say we are, but also for what we really are." Kirk and Madsen want us to clean up the gay image, or so they say. They want us to scrub down. I hate to tell them that too many discussions of gays getting "cleaned up" and "scrubbed down" remind me of the Nazi concept of how to operate a shower stall. Kirk and Madsen go one better on the idea, however. Rather than get herded into the poisoned shower at gunpoint, grab your soap and towel and volunteer for it.

First Batman went hetero. Now we've got gay authors asking us to trade our old Batman and Robin comics for some nice, straight Superman comics and try the Clark Kent makeover on ourselves. The message is clear. The writing is on the bathroom wall. It's time for us to crawl back in the closet, gang. These nice, edified gay authors are telling us so. You think you've got some kind of right to sleep with guys or something, fella? We don't want no gay waiters here. Just gay Republican officials in Washington. ▼

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