

BOOKS

TOGETHER FOREVER: GAY & LESBIAN COUPLES SHARE THEIR SECRETS FOR LASTING HAPPINESS

By Eric Marcus. Anchor Books, 1999. \$14.95 paper.

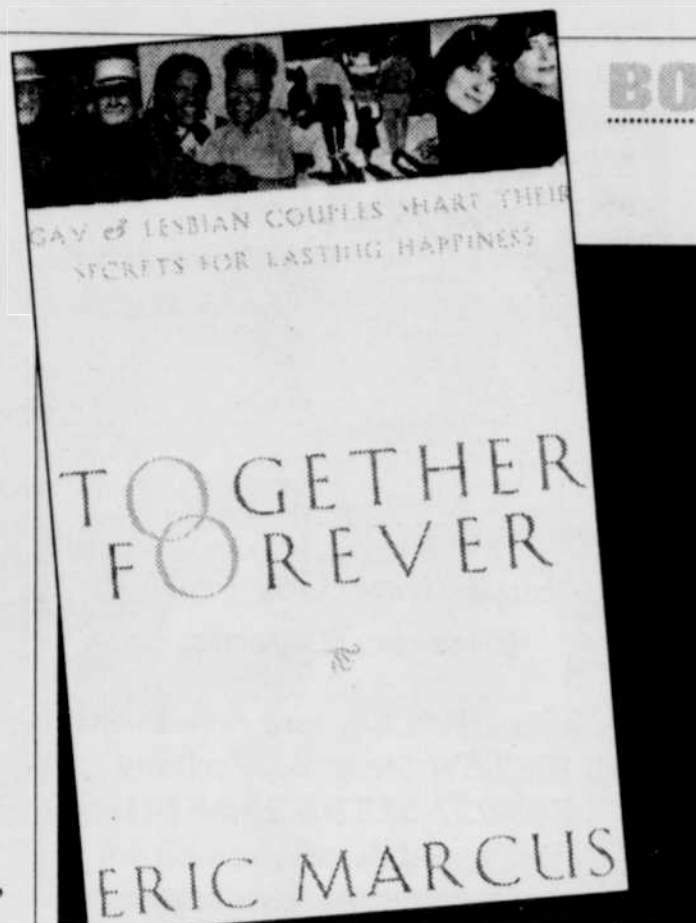
When Eric Marcus began work on his book *Together Forever: Gay & Lesbian Couples Share Their Secrets for Lasting Happiness*, he was searching for the answers to two questions: What is a happy relationship? Is there a secret to a happy relationship?

To find the answers to these and other questions about long-term relationships, Marcus interviewed 40 couples, equally divided between gay men and lesbians. The

couples had been together anywhere from nine to 50 years. Their time together averaged 20 years. Marcus purposely chose couples who had been together at least nine years, in part to ensure that they'd survived the infamous "seven-year itch." Participants' ages ranged from 31 to 86 years.

Marcus interviewed each couple in their respective homes. From the first meeting to dating, living together, raising children, aging together and all the myriad circumstances anyone in a committed twosome faces, the discussions took each couple through all the stages of a relationship. Topics also included monogamy vs. non-monogamy, roles and gender, money, sex, family and crisis.

Dialogue from the interviews is presented



verbatim in the book. This gives one the opportunity to develop a sense of the individual nature of each relationship, as well as the ways in which they are similar. Marcus also shares his impressions and opinions.

Although not a "how-to" or "self-help" book, the stories of these relationships do provide some valuable insight for people either just starting out together or deciding to make a more long-term commitment to their relationship. Marcus notes in his introduction that it was this opportunity to act as role models for those coming behind—to be the models they had lacked—that convinced many couples to participate in his project.

This book is not a scientific study. Rather, it is an anecdotal work filled with the very personal stories of couples who have survived and thrived in a society that places little or no value on their relationships.

—Kristine Chatwood

THE CRISIS OF DESIRE: AIDS AND THE FATE OF GAY BROTHERHOOD

By Robin Hardy with David Groff. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. \$24 cloth.

The *Crisis of Desire: AIDS and the Fate of Gay Brotherhood* was published posthumously. A reader's likely first assumption is that author Robin Hardy died of an AIDS-related illness. He did not. He had AIDS, but his death came in a hiking accident.

Statistics might predict that Hardy, being gay, would be the first child in his family to die. His brothers, however, lost the genetic lottery and both inherited cystic fibrosis. He watched them die—one rapidly, the other over decades.

The untidiness of Hardy's life—its disdain for predictable endings, his melancholy fearlessness, and loneliness mixed with camaraderie—is what flavors this book. David Groff, Hardy's friend, adds cohesiveness.

Following Hardy's death, Groff collected Hardy's notes and memoirs and combined them with his own understanding of Hardy's wishes to create a testament that captures so much of the despair, memory, optimism and fatalism to come out of the AIDS pandemic—at least as it relates to gay men living in Europe and North America.

The title might lead one to think that Hardy laments the loss of something that may never have existed: gay brotherhood. In reading *Crisis*, though, it's obvious that he's not looking back to some greater, happier day. Rather, he finds the community to be evolving in a stifled way. What Hardy so sweetly laments is the loss of what may have been, had the gay male community been allowed to evolve without death as its caretaker. Hardy

doesn't write that he longs for the free-wheeling days before AIDS. He longs for the lost opportunity for gay men to be able to make free choices, to not be afraid of sex, or love, or affection.

Though his simple, sometimes unpopular, points about gay male culture as it exists today are wildly refreshing and unsentimental—although his words exude a kind fraternity—his eloquent writing and logic stand on their own. So much so, it's almost a crime to steal this space when it could be given to Hardy's words.

St. Hardy has bequeathed his brothers literature that can make them feel reconnected to one another, whether it's a revived bond or a fresh one.

—Will O'Bryan

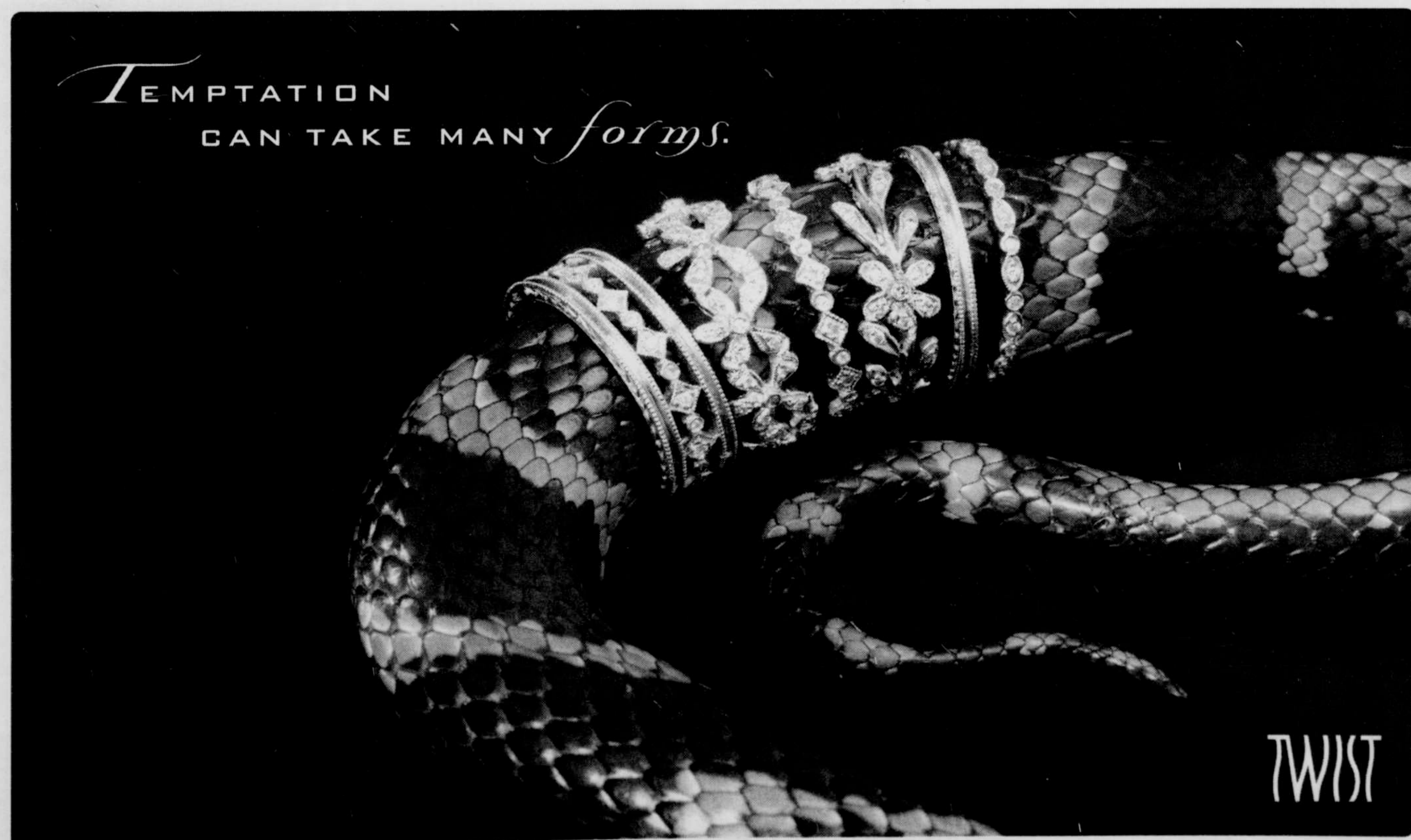
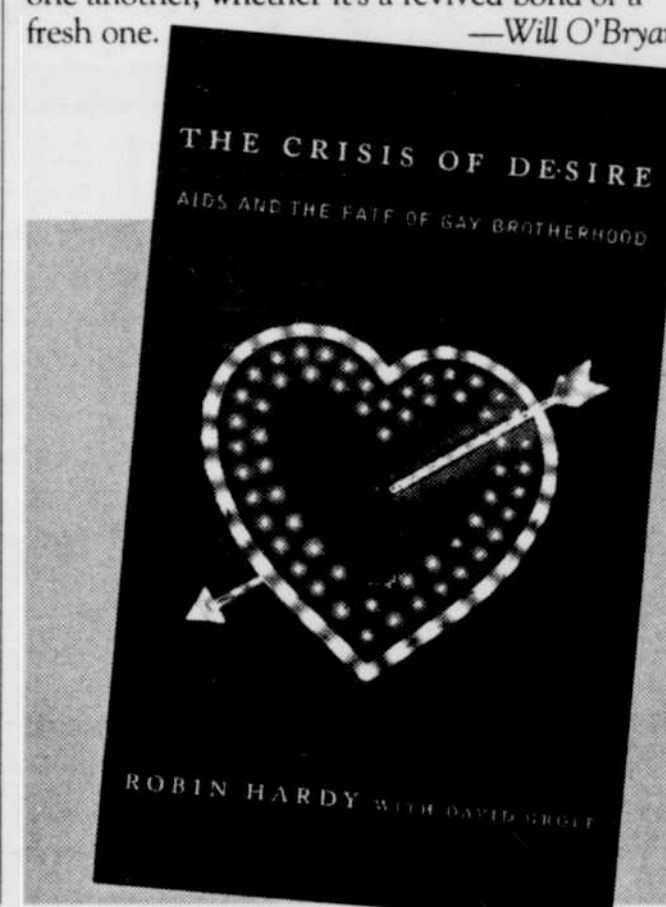


PHOTO: PAUL FOSTER

TEMPTATION
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