



The monster among us

Meth is on a run as the 'queen of drugs' in Portland's gay community

by Glenn Scofield Williams

Once in a while doesn't hurt, I told myself.

Charles has his head down; he's shifting in his chair. There's nothing in his demeanor that says drug addict. In fact, he seems to be your average guy: gay, nice-looking, your best buddy from down the block.

"I allow myself to do things, if it is not dangerous," Charles says. "I snorted coke in L.A. one night, so I figured it was the same thing. To snort something sounded OK, since I was not into that all the time."

Charles is not his real name. A telephone operator from downtown Portland, he wishes to remain anonymous, fearing repercussions in the workplace and among friends and family who know nothing of his habit.

"I was just hooking up as usual," he says, rubbing his thumb against his computer keyboard. "I had not hooked up in a while, but my ex had left me and I was out there trying to find someone to come home with me."

Charles fidgets with a notepad on his desk and smiles grimly. "This guy wanted to come over to my place. He did sound like a gentleman. He brought wine and some white powdered stuff. It was meth. I snorted it."

"I felt a rush and a bang. It burned like a bitch. Suddenly I was not thinking about why my ex left me. All there was to think about was the moment. The moment before me and nothing else. The world belonged to me. I was wanted and everyone around me looked good. I had self-confidence. My body was energized. My mind focused on anything else but me and my own fuckups."

"I fucked for hours," he continues. "I was having a lot of fun connecting with my partner—well, the trick of the night, anyway."

Charles smiles a beautiful, flawed smile. "I am one of those guys who thinks about everything. On meth I did not care to think anymore. Meth was a relief from my own thoughts."

The most amazing thing about meth is the sexual drive," says Wade. "I spend hours in my apartment naked, watching porn, searching the Internet and phone dating lines looking for sex partners. There's this almost immediate desire for porn, to be touched, played with, fucked."

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—Charles

Wade is a banker from Portland who is also using a pseudonym to protect his identity.

"In May 2003, I met a very cute meth user—let's call him Dustin." Wade looks out the window wistfully. "I watched Dustin shoot it for two weeks. Needles excite me. My heart raced every time he shot up. The liquid drug pushing into what he calls his 'river of life.'"

"On a Friday night, just after midnight, he shot me up." He points to the crook of his arm; his voice is unflinchingly direct. "I watched the needle go in. He withdrew the plunger until he saw a drop of blood. This is to make sure you have struck a vein. And then he pushed."

A small grey bird lands on his windowsill; Wade is not distracted by it. "My scalp tingled for several minutes. The clothes came off. The desire to be caressed. The feeling was very, very good."

Wade licks his lower lip mindlessly. "I've used meth a couple of times a month since. I have not yet stopped."

There is silence in the room. The bird has flown away.

"Dustin was a dealer. He always had it," Wade says. "When he went to jail, I got it from his scary roommate. Now I can get it from a friend of his that I have become close to."

Wade runs his fingers through his hair, then looks at his fingertips. "I haven't used for three weeks. But I have not given it up yet."

Meth makes you edgy and you clench your jaw and nothing is real," says Neil, a gay Portlander working in marketing and public relations who also prefers anonymity. "You are stuck in this other world with people. Nothing is authentic."

"I did it because I was curious. And my friends, whom I trusted, were doing it," he admits. "I snorted it. It makes you feel really wired. It made me very edgy and anxious—of which I am neither, when sober."

Neil used meth occasionally with a boyfriend whom he refers to as his first love. His boyfriend's downward-spiraling meth habit wreaked havoc in their relationship and inevitably led to their breakup. "I used it only on a few occasions with friends. I didn't use very much and, yes, I have stopped. Fortunately, meth didn't affect me that much. But my ex has been affected horribly. There was a point at which he was literally shitting and puking blood and still didn't realize he needed help."

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