

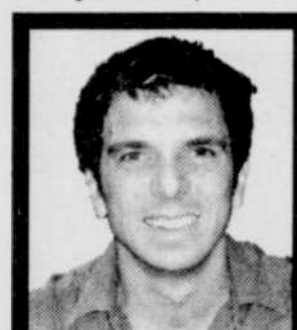
HUMOR

# Ya gotta have friends

## The Divine Secrets of the Yum-Yum Brotherhood

The thought first occurred to me while vacationing in Palm Springs. Floyd and I were at INNdulse—the kind of resort where you lie around the pool naked and talk about the first thing that pops up—when a Methodist minister in booty shorts was extolling the virtues of the Internet. “I just adore Web-camming!” he crowed. “It’s all about the come and go.”

(I can’t know for certain, but I don’t think that’s something a straight person would ever say.) I personally believe in putting the “out



**The Gospel According to Marc**  
by Marc Acito

there” in being out. You’d have to be arranging flowers in heels and singing show tunes to get much gayer than me. Yet, when I was at INNdulse I noticed the subtle ways in which I’m apt to censor myself in the straight world, like hesitating to take my partner’s hand or call him “honey” in public. And in that moment I

realized the power of an all-gay environment.

Now, Floyd and I had long lamented the fact that we didn’t have a gay clique. We had gay friends, but they were scattered among the straights like rainbow sprinkles in a box of plain doughnuts. So it was at our annual Gay Pride party last year that we decided to form our own clique.

The event coincided with our neighbor’s birthday party for his 3-year-old. One lone fence separated a pack of screaming children

from a pack of screaming queens. Undaunted, Floyd sought out other gay men who were lone rangers—interesting men who were interested in others but somehow set apart.

By evening’s end he had formed a gang of seven, some of whom didn’t even know each other but had essentially signed up to be friends the way you sign up for a pottery class.

We quickly realized, however, that we actually have a lot more in common than just our desire to connect. I’m not talking about mutual interests, although we have lots. Like jugglers, we try to keep as many topics in the air as we can, ranging from the political (ganging up on the token Republican is our favorite contact sport) to the penile (“Is cum a protein or a carbohydrate?”).

No, it turns out that the thing we most have in common is what kept us from being part of a group to begin with: We were all used to being the center of attention. And we’re all adept at commanding it (or at least manipulating it).

Thus, there are a number of birthday parties in which the honoree is virtually ignored and so many people sing the harmony on “Happy Birthday” there’s no one left on the melody. If you want center stage with this cast, you have to fight for it.

Eventually we each stopped being the sun at the center of our own universes and instead became one of the planets revolving around a group identity—what we call the Yum-Yum Brotherhood.

As new boyfriends and friends have entered the atmosphere, they, too, have been swept into the gravitational pull. Some appear infrequently like Haley’s Comet; some flame out like meteors. Others join the orbit and go round and round with us. Always at the center, however, is the notion of the Yum-Yums.

We’ve become so close that nothing is too personal or sacred that it can’t be shared—and, more importantly, mercilessly mocked. As friends we all adhere to the adage that tact is for people who aren’t witty enough to be sarcastic. For instance, the story of Marco’s Tuna Meltdown—the fit I pitched in a Canadian sushi bar—has become a favorite legend to repeat, a running joke I will never live down.

But the Tale of the Tuna exemplifies in a peculiar, dare I say fishy, way the transformative power of community. I showed my worst, most neurotic self to my friends, and they came back with equal measures of love and ridicule.

It’s not that straight people are incapable of

doing that for a gay person—it’s just that we bring an extra layer of comfort, understanding and bitchiness.

Speaking of bitchiness, this is the time of year when some queers carp about the validity of Pride parades, asking why we need solidarity as a community. But as the first Year of the Yum-Yums comes to a close, I can tell you that being part of a queer community has been, well, out of this world.

And that, my friends, is The Gospel According to Marc. ☐

MARC ACITO’s first novel, *How I Paid for College*, will be published in September. Write him at [marc@marcacito.com](mailto:marc@marcacito.com).



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