

I Kissed A Cub And I Liked It

Yep, I'm turning 40—the supposed death age of homos everywhere. Many have opined that turning 40 in gay years is like turning 80 in straight years. To be perfectly honest, I'm not completely sure how I feel about it. A part of me is rather looking forward to this new decade and chapter of my life, while another is slightly apprehensive and fearful of having to check the “40-49” age box when filling out surveys and such.

You cannot deny we homos tend to place a lot of value on youth and looking young. One need look no further than ads on Craigslist (don't front, you know you check it) or gay.com (does anybody even use this website anymore?) and see all the age restrictions in hookup ads. “Over 40 need not apply,” one will state or “Over 40 OK as long as you don't look over 35.” These ads litter the Internet like so many used condoms at a safe-sex party.

One of the first gay books I read upon coming out was William J. Mann's *The Men from the Boys*. In the novel, protagonist Jeff O'Brien faces a midlife crisis at 33 and must deal with not being the new, hot young thing anymore—even though he is described as someone who is built like an Adonis. Many of the gay men in the book also consider 30 as the official over-the-hill age, making those over the milestone number less desirable sexually. I read



panda say what?!

BY BENNIE TAN

I was in a few relationships, all the while thinking, “I must succeed in one before 30.” Then 30 came and went and my world remained pretty much the same. Much like the Y2K

scare, nothing disastrous happened. I came out at the impressionable age of 26 and it left an indelible mark on me. Needless to say, I looked forward to turning 30 as much as one would look forward to a urethra swab test for Chlamydia.

I came out at the relatively late age of 25, and reading *The Men from the Boys* left me overwrought with anxiety. I kept thinking I had precious few years to accomplish what all gay men were supposed to before they got too old—being in a stable relationship, having a successful career, partying to the fullest. So I set out to do those things with great gusto. I worked really hard and partied even harder. I was in a few relationships, all the while thinking, “I must succeed in one before 30.” Then 30 came and went and my world remained pretty

much the same. Much like the Y2K scare, nothing disastrous happened. My penis *didn't* shrivel, dry up and fall off and I didn't become an instant outcast sexually or socially.

In fact, contrary to the novel, my big gay life didn't really start swinging until I was in my thirties. I met more people, became more comfortable in my own skin and had way more sex than I ever did before. There is some truth to the statement that age is relative. Living through my thirties proved to me how old you feel and act is actually all in your head. It is also true that with age comes experience, and experience has taught me how to better navigate the many bumps in life.

Associating with the Bears has also helped in dealing with the whole age thing. Having been discriminated against in the past for being too fat, old or hairy, this group of men tends to be more accepting than others. Bears also skew slightly older and since I've always had a thing for older men, it's a win-win situation. Don't ask me why I have a predilection for slightly older men—maybe I have daddy issues due to a distant father while I was growing up. Before I start psychoanalyzing myself,

though, I must admit it never occurred to me I would one day become the daddy in question.

Recently, I was instant messaging with a cute Latino cub from Florida on GROWLr (the furry equivalent of Grindr) and he called me “papito.” I had an inkling what the term meant but, to be sure, I asked him to clarify. He said “papito” meant “cute little daddy,” a term of endearment. Rather than being insulted, I took it as a compliment.

At an Oregon Bears event not too long ago, I had my eye on a really adorable cub, and by the end of the evening we were making out. It was only after we became Facebook friends that I realized he had just turned 21. In one of his emails, he called me a “hot Asian daddy.” In the past I would have been slightly uncomfortable, but instead I took it all in stride. I was flattered a hot little cub would consider me daddy material and make out with me. So yes, I kissed a cub and I really, really liked it.

I think my forties are going to treat me just fine. At least I know for sure life as a gay man does not end when he turns 30. ☐

THIS PANDA is hijacking the Oregon Bears' monthly Bear Bust at the Eagle Portland Saturday, July 16 starting at 9 p.m. as his unofficial big 4-0 birthday celebration. You are all invited. Email him at pandacub@gmail.com for more details.

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