

5/15/86

answered
on PC 6/14/86

Dear Lou,

Of course I've been thinking of you often, but especially since the Vanessa Redgrave - Renee Richards TV show, which I'm sure you saw. I thought Redgrave was excellent as a man, but I really got a kick out of the continual commercial spots for artificial fingernails. I'll bet every cross-dresser in the country was watching that show and every damn one of them man right out and got the awful artificial fingernails. Also got ~~out~~ a kick out of the blush one in the doctor's office who was proudly showing off her dreadful nails - at least 4 inches long and all curved in - regular cat claws.

As the french say "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

Now to tell you about some of the things in my life - For the past 3 months I've been playing an unaccustomed and unusual role, for this P.T.A. (poor tired auntie). I've been a father to a 17 year old boy. He will be out of my hair in the next week or two and I will heave a big sigh of relief. A couple of my straight friends from a small town dumped this one on me. They knew a married couple that had the problem boy and without even asking me they gave the married couple my phone number and suggested that perhaps their problem son could counsel with me.

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My friends then called me and told me what they had done and when I said "My God, why didn't you ask me first?" they replied with - "Well, Eddon, it's no big deal, if you don't want to counsel the kid, then just turn him over to some agency."

The kid's parents simply gave the kid my name + number and told him to come to Milwaukee and I would "help" him. Kid was staying (unsuccessfully) with grandparents in Texas. Grandpa put him into a midnight El Chapo flight to Milwaukee and the kid calls me at 1³⁰ in the morning - "Din at the airport, when can I see you?" "Well, where are you staying?" says I. "Nowhere" says he. "Well, says I, I'll tell you how to get a limo into the city and then how to get a bus to my house. That will save you money and you can spend the night ~~with~~ at my guest." "But I've only got a dollar," says the kid. "How about that for an intro?" "Well, get a cab and I'll pay," says I, 30.

45 minutes later here shows up kid with a \$15 cab bill, 2 beat out suitcases and a cardboard box with a string. Scared, little, nelly and I do mean nelly, kid ~~Eye shadow~~ Eye shadow, long varnished finger nails, fruit boots and faggot blouse, just my cup of tea, ya know.

3 hours later, in the wee hours of the a.m. sent him to bed in guest bedroom, but I had the whole bag of shit story of the kid's life. Little ~~of~~ over 18 years ago low class father, now on his third marriage at

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age 37, marries even lower class woman, who six months after Jody's (that's kid's name) birth, broke both of Jody's legs and took off, not to be seen again. Last anyone has heard of her was couple of years ago when she was living in Texas with 2 Mexican men and a black man. Has been and is known as cheap whore all these years. Father remarries - 2nd marriage lasts less than a year. Kid stays a while with grandparents, but at age 7 or so Papa remarries ~~for~~ again. This time to woman only 22 years old. (Now 33).

Papa enters police work and soon goes to small up state Wisconsin town and becomes police chief. Need I say more about him?

Kid is naturally nelly, but step mom encourages it, treats him like younger sister if you know what I mean. At 7th or 8th grade, problems begin in big way. Think how difficult it would be to be a very nelly boy, looking like a girl, going to school in small town.

"Faggot, Queer" etc were nicest things said to him by school by folks in public while trying desperately to have sex with him in private. Papa all his about a girl. Parents throw up hands when problems start, - fights, school problems detentions, falling grades - etc, and ship him off to aunt in Texas, who doesn't really give a shit, but does not cope with any problems at all, simply lets him stay with her. Graduates then from 8th grade. Back to small Wis town.

Problems now worse. Has finally decided he is gay himself and has now had a few.

Same sex experiences in Texas. Problem intensifies.

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Jody gets very depressed - 3 suicide attempts. Each time parents run to psychiatrist - 70 year old man who don't know dick about gay etc. Finally father overhears him talking again about suicide. Can't have this - How would it look for police chief son to kill himself - forgot son is insane, say Pa and promptly drags him, literally kicking and screaming, off to mental hospital for commitment. Youma cut lot of money through Pa, so he has him made ward of court so public can pay. Jody shipped to mental hospital for month's evaluation - put in with badly fucked up kids - watches in horror as one kid takes off after another with butcher knife. Begs family to get him outta snake pit. No dice - full month, but court decides he needs very special school - Found one Lac Academy. - Very fine - nationally known - very expensive - works very successfully with small number of fucked up kids. Court insists parents pay part of \$3,000 monthly expense. State to pay balance. Parents now still pay off part of big debt to school. Parents, however, refuse to enter into family counseling with school people - even though it costs no more. In fact in the 9 months he was at school parents visited him not at all. And he only got 3 short letters from his step ma. Goes into school in January - supposed to be out in June, but runs away from school in May. Gets to Chicago - no money - winds up with street whores hustling at 5 bucks a ton to feed himself. Much

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bad, bad experience - but not too long - a couple of weeks - proportion plain clothes cop and gets bented for prostitution. 16 years old. -

Because papa - police chief and because he is missing from school for kids, chags are dropped and he is back in the school. All okay, again. Leaves school in Sept, but school tells court he should not return to family - family bad for him and uncaring. (Understatement of the year.) Jody now put into foster home in Madison, kid now just past 17 and Foster parents have son in early 20's, who happens to be gay and who introduces Jody to Madison gay bars. Nobody questions age and Jody drinks coke and dances his ass off every night until closing time. Foster parents don't seem to mind and then bartender gives Jody one strong booze drink and Jody promptly gets drunk + ~~is~~ sick all over the place. Bar owner calls cops and now Miss Jody no longer welcome in bars and foster parents ~~stop~~ grounds him - home and in bed by 10 etc. My guess foster parents not bad, but really don't give a shit - only guess. I'm guessing again. So far, no one in world ever cared for Jody. He runs away again, comes to Milwaukee and sleeps with various elderly chicken hawks for a day or 2 at a time. ~~With~~ Gravitate to John Clayton's bar "C'est la Vie"; ~~Miss~~ Clayton - the biggest chicken hawk of them all promptly falls for Miss Jody, who by now has dreadful bleached blonde hair and

is a real asshole - forgot I almost
type. Clayton let his sleep with him and
feed him and fuck him every time he
end gets hard (Clayton I mean) and when
kid protests - "all you want is to fuck me"
Clayton kicks him out - December 14, at
night, no warm clothes, no money. We are
and alone in. Back to small town - no
when else to turn. A few weeks later parents
ship him off to Texas to Grandpa and
Grandpa seemed like old lady
Grandpa and is typical southern bigot.
Grandpa says "So kid is queer, he's
my grandpa and I ain't one," but
Step Grandpa says "get the queer out
of here or I'll go," so you know who
wins. So that's how I got kid,
he seemed more next day and
I find that kid so scared that he slept
in clothes for fear I would molest him.
What could I do - didn't have the heart
to put the kid back on the street - didn't
want the responsibility, ~~but~~ one really
didn't like him much. (Underneath I was
good kid, bright and with potential), but
very difficult to change Cooper's spots
without killing cleared yourself. There I
am, middle aged queer living in home
full (chock full) of volatile antigay etc.
Big risk to take in forget and try to
help. So I level with kid,
I look like you can stay here for a while
but you will regret me and work
with my or back to gutter. If you

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would be better faggot than with me - your decision. No tricks in my house - not a single trip to bars - underage. No girls with me. I've been around for long time and seen it all - much smarter than you.

You can safely take clothes off when you go to bed - I wouldn't fuck a faggot like you with someone's dick. If I wanted a girl I'd get one not a nelly boy."

I'll give you a chance - you take it or leave it - we will work towards you taking charge of your own life. It can be whatever you want - a good life or the gutter. Take your pick, but don't fuck with me because you will lose your chance.

It's been slow and with lots of ups and downs, but by god I've managed to stay a step ahead of the kid. Took the key away from him when he insisted on rushing off to Juncus Park to cruise every night after I'd explained the dangers. "Now give me the key - you will have to ring the door bell to enter and I won't answer at 2 AM. Fuck off. If you stay out late, plan to spend the rest of the night out because I won't get up and let you in until the following morning. What's more if you persist in going into the park and get bashed don't call me from the hospital. I won't help! If you get hunted by cops, don't bother to call me, I won't help!"

Sent him off to MATEC to find out how to take high school equivalency tests to get his

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high school diploma. (He, of course, had quit school at 16.). He studied like a trooper, took the tests and passed them — barely passed them — but he now has high school diploma.

No permanent job in sight. Nobody would hire him for anything, even as dishwasher in cheap restaurant. "Whatever you expect, kid, who's gonna hire you with eye make up, fruit boots and a blouse?" Do what you wanna, but don't you realize that the eye make up turns off more people than it turns on." Meanwhile I'm trying to live my life as nearly normal as possible. I'm cooking up good well balanced meals and serving them with good china + silver etc. every night. The kid learns to set the table properly, and how to spoon his soup etc.

No I don't, in spite of my friends' urging, assign chores etc. "If he wants to do dishes, OK, but he don't have to do them. If he wants to do the laundry + dust out the house, okay, but he is NOT MY SON." A little at a time he began to change and to feel comfortable.

When he began to flirt a little with me in a non-sexual manner, I turned away from it and stopped it cold. When he tried to wheedle favors — "You are better than my DAD. I think of you as my father." I responded, BUT I AIN'T YOUR FATHER AND GAMES GET YOU NOWHERE WITH ME.

When he stole \$5 from my dresser and rushed off to the park, I was waiting in wrath when he got home around 10 o'clock.

"Okay kid you stole \$5. - Back to the streets. You must be out of house by sundown tomorrow." "Nobody steals from me and then has the effrontery to lie about it and deny it. I'm not the fool you think I am and if you'd asked I'd have lent you the \$5, ~~but~~ notice I said lent, not given. You wouldn't be a faggot - then be one."

"I'll show you storms kid, I've been kicked out before and I survived, I'll do it again." "I'm sure you have been kicked out before, but the difference is that you were being used and when you used back, you got kicked out, but remember you haven't been used here, and I won't be used either." He left, in a spattering rain and came back at 2 AM ringing door bell and pounding and plaintively calling from street. "I get up, let him in and say, Okay you want to talk, we will talk." I pour coffee and wait. He's been crying and looks like a slightly soggy puppy. After a few minutes of silence I say "well, where do we begin?" He sobs - well, I did steal the \$5 and I'm sorry." "well, says I - that's a good place to start. Don't cry - it won't help - you can't play on this old man's sympathy. Don't try flattery, either. It won't work." We talked until 7 AM. I deliberately kept the kid up until he was exhausted and of course so was I, but it worked. He had had several hours - soggy hours in the park to think things over. Where do I go - what do I do -? It must have been

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as rough for him as it was for me, but
better nature came to the front and he
to understand that I wasn't helping him because
I wanted to use him (read fuck him) and
I deserved his respect. He began to see
that he (indeed), was responsible for the
rest of his life and that he couldn't
even blame others for all of his past
problems - Besides he was now working toward
a career as a flight attendant, hoping to
go to flight attendant school for TWA. This
has since sort of fumbled - first they were
begging for applicants and now they are
taking none for the time being. However, this
is still a future possibility.

In short - in three months
the longish girl like hair is now
down to a reasonable length - not
short, but shorter so that it doesn't
hang on his shoulders and hide the
sideburns. The new hair style (by the
way, his hair was back to natural dark
color before he came to me). He decided
that he looks better this way, which ideal
he does. The eye make up disappeared
and when one of my butch type
friends complimented him, saying you look
a hell of a lot better without it it
disappeared for good. At the right moment,
I handed him a finger nail clipper and
said nothing. The longish nails were
trimmed and without my saying a word the
clear polish disappeared forever I hope.
After that operation was over, I said "I
know gangsters wear clear finger nail

polish, but no one would dare laugh or get a sly in their head. They were it to prove that their hands are clean - its psychological - covers their guilt. ~~What~~ "Are your hands clean, psychologically?" He decided that they were and the finger nails have remained short ~~and~~ with no polish.

I managed to not miss an opportunity to kid him about his "fruit boots" and his "blouse" (really a man's jersey, but the arm goes were so large that when he lifted his arms, the garment spread out like wings.) that he took the overboard hints - and borrowed a pair of tennis shoes from me and the fruit boots shipped. When he did a little part time work, which I arranged with a straight woman friend, who didn't put him down because he was gay & selly, but simply put him to work cleaning her shop. he used the money to buy a good pair of loafers - The fact that he went out and got them himself and earned the money for them only amused me. "I think you will like them," he said taking them out of the box. I laughed because they were identical - exactly like the shoe I wear every day to work. "I'll bet you are surprised," he said "you thought I'd get another pair of 'fruit boots'." Well I looked at a really hot pair of red patent leather shoes, but decided that if I wore them to a job interview I get turned down for sure, so I bought these. Actually they kinda grow on

you. They cost \$7 more than the "funt boots" but they are real leather and if I take care of them, they should last a long time - longer than the funt boots". "Well, kid, you're not as dumb as I thought you were." (Reverse psychology - my dear)

He, of course, met a couple of push faggets about his own age. He went to visit them several times and asked if I wanted to meet them. "What for - do you want "daddy" to help you decide if "daughter" should go out with them. Make up your own mind, don't bother me. You are in charge of your life, remember?" Well a week or so later, he worked for Cindy all day and after getting some cigarettes had about \$15⁰⁰ left from his earnings for the day. "They want to go roller skating and I haven't been going much for. It only costs 3⁵⁰ including the skates, so can I go?" "I don't give a shit - if you want to go, okay. If not, don't. You decide. He went - had a good time. I later learned they both let him pay their way in and skates and one of them "borrowed" his last \$5⁰⁰. He learned - The \$5 never came home and he decided he didn't need that kind of friends. "Cheap lesson," says the old man, but I knew you would find out and make your own decisions.

Now kid has met a 28 year old hunk - looking - good guy - etc. quality. In love - they gonna live with guy

but gotta get a full time job first so he can go into relationship, pulling his own weight etc. Went out and by god got a job - To start June 2 - his 18th birthday. - Nurse assistant at nursing home. Small salary, but permanent job at least until flight school opens. Will move in with guy, at least by time goes to work, but probably sooner.

3 months ago this was a confused, scared, pushed around faggot. Today, ready - a little nervous, but ready - to go on his own. Will do so as a high school graduate and will be in charge of his own life. He is really a different person - will not completely different, but a new person. I think he's got a good chance of making it in a real world. He is setting up his own safety net. He has persuaded new lover to consider moving out of fancy, expensive apartment into something good but cheaper, that Jody can afford to own his own half. ~~Good~~ lease should be in both names, and bills split etc. He's learned to think.

By the way - today was his papa and step mother's wedding anniversary. He called home and his father answered phone. "Happy Anniversary Dad," says Jody. "Thank you" says father - Mother is still at work. Call back after four o'clock and you can talk to her, "Goodbye bye." "Doesn't that tell you something, Jody?"

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Sorry that this is a book, but in a few days I will no longer be a father. Thank God! I wanted to talk to someone about it and you got the load. It's off my chest now, and onto your new flat one!

On second thought, that flat chest ain't so new after all - is it? Don't let this stay off your chest and forget it, but don't ever say the old man doesn't lead an interesting life.

With all my love

Ella