

# *The other side*

It will be an uncomfortable few days for some fraternities.

In "Gay Students: Out of the Closet," a Cavalier Daily series which starts today, "Sam" reveals that he is a homosexual living in a fraternity. But he does not reveal his real name.

The dinner table will be a bit quieter, the TV crowd will not gather quite so close as usual, and everyone will wonder, "Who is Sam?"

Some confident fraternity members will dismiss the possibility that one of their brothers is gay: "It couldn't be one of us," they will say. "We're all normal."

"Out of the Closet" is directed at the less confident students, the ones willing to devote some thought to homosexuality. In last week's endorsement of "Gay/ Lesbian Celebration Week," we suggested several ways in which homosexuals could help "straights." This week we ask straights to think about what they can do for homosexuals.

As the series shows, most homosexuals differ from straights only in their sexual orientation.

But this was not always the case. At one time, the only alternative to following traditional sex roles was to mimic the opposite sex. Gay "queens" dressed in feminine clothing and lisped. Lesbian "butches" wore male attire and cropped their hair close. Because they had rejected the role prescribed for members of their gender, they believed their only alternative was to act like members of the opposite sex.

But feminism introduced the idea of the coequal couple, in which neither member dominates. Most gays accept this concept, and the "queen" and "butch" stereotypes no longer apply.

This provides little consolation for Sam's fraternity brothers. It means Sam drinks as much as they do, kids around as much as they do, and studies as little as they do. They will probably never discover his true identity. For he is one of them.

We hope "Out of the Closet" will not signal a witchhunt for the University's many Sams. Rather, we hope it will help straights imagine what it is like to be among the hunted.

If you are homosexual, many of your fellow students believe you are a sinner or a pervert. Most straight members of your sex feel uncomfortable around you. They take it for granted that you want to sleep with them, and they dedicate themselves to signalling their unavailability.

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~~They misunderstand you, of course: Sex is no more important to you than it is to straights. And if you are like most homosexuals, you do not set your cap for straights.~~

Heterosexuals joke about you and other homosexuals as if you were not human. Indeed, in their view, you are something less than human. When they accuse someone of being like you, they are calling him weak and contemptible.

Unless you are a lesbian. Then your sexual orientation is perceived as failed womanhood. Many straight women, unable to conscience the possibility of coequal couples, typecast you as aggressive and unattractive. Many believe you became a lesbian because you could not snag a husband — as if sexual orientation were a choice.

It was not through spending time with you that they came to see you this way. If they know you at all, they probably do not know you are homosexual.

We blush at this nutshell description of the pain of homosexuality. We cannot understand that experience any more than a healthy person can understand what it is like to have leprosy.

But in “Out of the Closet,” ten gays and lesbians tell their stories in their own words. They are not entirely happy stories, because the University has decided that homosexuals are not to be happy.

We hope that by reading the series you can catch a glimpse of the other side of the witchhunt. And we hope the homosexuals we interviewed can persuade you to stop hunting them.