

The Tagger

and other stories

Edited by Ginger Mayerson



The Wapshott Press

The Tagger and Other Stories

Published by
The Wapshott Press
An Imprint of J LHLS
PO Box 31513
Los Angeles, CA 90031



The Wapshott Press
www.WapshottPress.com

Compilation copyright © 2009 by Ginger Mayerson

Copyrights for the individual works are held by their respective author(s).

Also see page 189.

First printing February 2009

All rights reserved. Being works of fiction, any resemblance herein to persons living or dead is astonishing and purely coincidental. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or broadcast.

"The Tagger" originally appeared in *The Velvet Mafia*, Issue 16, 2006.

ISBN: 978-0-615-26249-9

06 05 04 03 4 3 2 1

Wapshott Press logo by Molly Kiely

Contents

Mark and Mick

Molly Kiely

The Tagger 1

Ginger Mayerson

Across the Universe 7

Laura Dearlove

Atlantis 27

Kitty Johnson

Impossible Love 39

Kathryn L. Ramage

The Unsent Letter 63

Chad Denton

Finding Courage 67

Gail Marlowe

Fast Forward 93

Logan

Extraordinary 131

Emily-Jean MacKenzie

I'm Not Your Boyfriend 147

Lene Taylor

When George MacFadden was Eaten by a Dragon 161

Colleen Wylie

You Know You Should be a Better Person (But You're Not) 175

Karmen Ghia

Permissions 189

Finding Courage

Gail Marlowe

Why did the man I couldn't take my eyes off have to be so old?

I couldn't go over to him.

So he was in the Gay and Lesbian Studies section of Borders and reading a book he'd picked up from a shelf there—that didn't mean he was gay. Maybe he had a gay son or nephew or friend, or maybe he was looking at a book about lesbians because his daughter was one, or maybe he was just curious. And even if he was gay, he wore his suit as though he wore one all the time and liked it, so he was probably a professor or a businessman or someone uptight I'd never get along with.

And he was too old for me. He was probably my dad's age.

No, I couldn't go over to him and strike up a conversation. I couldn't ask him to have coffee with me. And I definitely couldn't ask him to have sex with me, even though I wanted to.

Every time I had been attracted to a guy, all through high school and all through college and now when I had a real job and made real money, he ended up being someone I couldn't go after. No, *wouldn't* go after.

I was sick of it.

Why couldn't I find an attractive guy and just see if he was into guys? Could it be that hard?

Well, yeah, it sure seemed to be. I'd known since I was a kid and thought that Batman and Superman were hot, not Catwoman or Supergirl, that I preferred guys, and I knew now I wanted to have sex with a guy, but I

couldn't get up the courage to approach any guys.

Pitiful. That was me.

I moved to get a better angle while staying where I was pretty sure he couldn't see me, but I still couldn't see the cover of the book. Then the man in the suit tucked the book under his arm with the other books he was carrying and strode toward the register. Damn. Now I'd never know what he'd been reading.

I watched him as he bought his books. No, I wasn't going to go up to him and see if he wanted to have coffee with me or anything else. I was too much of a coward. But I was going to drink him in and later, when I was home, I'd imagine him watching me as I jerked off, and maybe even imagine his hands working my cock instead of my own.

Really pitiful.

He left the store without a look around or back. I took a deep breath, then another and another, and felt my cock start to soften. Then I marched over to the Gay and Lesbian Section and pulled out the first book that caught my eye, titled "The Joy of Gay Sex." I started browsing through it and was hard again almost immediately. Wow. Those pictures...I shivered. Why had I waited so long to check this section out? Because I'd been scared of doing anything in public that might show I was gay, since all my life I'd heard from my father, my uncles, my cousins, and most of the people I knew too many jokes about gay guys and how unmanly they were. Well, no more. I was a man, no matter who I wanted to go to bed with, and I was definitely buying this book.

I closed the book and scanned the titles of the other books in the section. Maybe I could find one that would help me get over my issues about approaching men, give me some tips, anything. Just because I was ordinary looking on a good day and shy and wore big, dark-framed glasses didn't mean I had to be alone forever, did it? I hoped not. I really wanted to find someone to do some of those things the pictures demonstrated.

Hell, I was going to find someone. Weren't there

gay bars somewhere around? I was in Boston, for god's sake. Men married men here. There had to be gay bars, and they'd have to advertise. I'd seen free papers in Harvard Square. I'd go there and pick up some and see if they had any ads aimed at gay men, like me.

I was sick and tired of being a coward.

I skimmed through a few books and picked out two that looked interesting, put them on top of "The Joy of Gay Sex", and carried them toward the registers. Thank goodness I wasn't so hard now.

There was a line—should I flip open one of the books and start reading? No, that wouldn't be a good idea—it wasn't that long a line and it would probably start moving just as I got to a good part. I'd use the time to think about where I'd go next. Somewhere with coffee was a given. Coffee was good. Wait, this Borders had a café. I could sit there and have coffee and read. I'd look for the free papers later, on the way home.

"Hey." I blinked. "Hey. I'm open here. I'll ring you up."

The voice came from one of the further registers, which had been closed but now had a guy standing there.

Oh god.

Forget about the man in the suit. This guy was seriously gorgeous—like Apollo or some other Greek god, with his short blond hair glinting in the light and his smile and his warm green eyes and his face and his...everything. He looked like he was about my age, and he was smiling at me.

Probably only because I was a customer, but still...it didn't seem that way.

I moved over to his register. I was next in line, after all.

He was still smiling at me.

I put the books down. I would not apologize for them. I would not explain. It was my business what I bought. I'd come in after work to look at books, and I'd found some to buy. He could think whatever he liked

about me. I didn't care.

He grabbed the top one as I was digging out my wallet. "Oh, this is good. I love it."

He loved it? The book about being shy and gay and living with that and finding guys?

I handed him my Borders card. "You've read it?" My voice came out in a squeak, and I wanted to sink through the floor.

He scanned the barcode. "Yup. Lots of good advice."

He'd read it. I wanted to ask if it was because he was gay too, but that was just too stupid. Maybe he had a brother who was gay or a cousin or a close friend.

He scanned the other books. "You have good taste. Nice to see that. If after you read these, you'd like some more recs, let me know. I've read a lot."

Well, he sounded like the right person to ask about gay stuff, like bars. It wouldn't hurt to try, right? Right. I'd decided not to be a coward any more. Might as well start now.

He told me the total, and I handed him my credit card. "You mind answering a question?"

He swiped it and looked right at me. "Fire away."

"I want to find a bar where—" I swallowed. If he turned on me now, it would...I couldn't think about that. He was smiling at me, and he'd been friendly, and he'd made me feel safe talking to him. I was going to trust him. "Where I can meet guys who like guys."

He nodded and handed me back my card. "Yeah, I can tell you the names of some good places." He wasn't going to turn on me. Oh god yes, thank you. "Listen, I've got a break coming. If you'll hang around, I'll join you in a half-hour at most."

"I'll wait in the café."

"Sounds great." He grinned and pushed the receipt at me. "But sign that first, please." I did. "See you in a little while," he glanced at the receipt, "David."

His voice saying my name made me feel warm all over. "You're sure?"

He slid the books into a bag. “We guys who like guys got to stick together. Plus,” his voice lowered, “you’re cute.”

“Me?”

His smile widened. “You.”

I took the bag and floated through the store back to the café. He liked guys too. He was coming over to talk with me. He thought I was cute.

I ordered a decaf mocha and took it and my books to one of the small tables. Maybe after some coffee, I’d calm down and be able to read.

He probably just said I was cute to be nice because I knew perfectly well that I wasn’t cute. And he was just going to talk to me because he saw my books and felt sorry for me. Yes, that had to be it.

And really, no way he’d been flirting with me. There was no reason to believe anything so ridiculous, even though I wanted to so much. He was so handsome.

We’d talk for the length of his break, if I was lucky. He might decide he had better things to do than talk to some guy who didn’t know anything much, and why shouldn’t he? After all, I wasn’t anything special, and he was. But if he did stay...I shook myself out of my thoughts. Whatever happened, he’d go back to work when he needed to, I’d finish my coffee and leave when I was ready to, and that would be that.

Unless...

I closed my eyes and breathed.

I had to stop this. So he was gay. Or maybe he was bisexual. It didn’t mean he was into *me*.

“Hey, David.”

I opened my eyes, and he was standing there, holding a big cup of coffee, smiling down at me, so much better looking than any man, ever. I was really glad I hadn’t gotten up the courage to approach the man in the suit earlier.

“I’m glad you’re still here. I was afraid you might get bored and decide to take off, so I got Kim—she’s my boss—to let me take my break now.”