Kinsey's sexual research in the 1940s indicated that, in addition to the ten percent of exclusively gay men, there was also an additional ten percent of men that had been predominantly homosexual for at least three years of their life. In fact, his research revealed that almost forty percent of all men had had an orgasm with another man at least once in their life.
Gay Radar

By Rick Small

Pretend you've gone home for the weekend—the wedding of an old friend from high school, let's say. Afterwards, at the reception, you get to talking to the best man. Nice guy. Nice-looking too (especially in the tux). And no one's acted this interested in your fishing trip anecdotes for years.

You get to thinking. He hasn't mentioned a girlfriend, and he's obviously interested—but what exactly is he interested in? Is it really the fishing trip—or is it the image you've conjured up in his mind of you in your long thermal underwear?

There's only one way to find out, right? Throwing caution to the wind, you lean over and whisper, "You're making me hot."

"What?" he says. "What did you say?"

"Hot," you repeat. "You're making me hot."

He looks at you blankly.

"Hot! You know—horny? You're giving me a hard-on!"

"I don't under—" Suddenly, he clues in, letting his glass of champagne shatter on the floor. The room quiets and the best man backs away, wildly pointing at you and shouting at the top of his lungs, "Fag! Sinner! Unclean in the eyes of God!"

In other words, it really was the fishing trip he was interested in.
Talk about your own former “partner” and “significant other” but don’t immediately specify his gender. On one hand, this gives the subject of your investigation a hint at your sexual orientation and might cause him to reciprocate by mentioning a former partner of his own—also not specifying the sex (a fantastic sign!). On the other hand, it might cause him to mention a girlfriend or wife, alerting you to be extremely cautious.

Now granted, the one who’s really made a fool of himself in the above situation is the homophobic jerk. Having someone find you attractive should be considered a compliment—even if you’re heterosexual and the person attracted to you happens to be of the same sex. But of course this isn’t always the case. As a result, the gay man not only gets rejected (which is bad enough), but he also has to live with the fact that he’s told a goddamn homophobe that he found the jerk sexually attractive.

I don’t know about you, but it’s definitely a situation I try to avoid. Not that I’m “in the closet” or ashamed of my sexual orientation; I couldn’t care less if people know my story. But like most gay men, I’ve had enough rejection in my life. As a result, I’m kind of cautious about making romantic overtures to someone I don’t know very well.

On the other hand, again like most gay men, I don’t spend all my time at gay bars and bathhouses. And while some work places are tolerant of homosexuals, the vast majority aren’t (and no one can work amid rumors circulating that John in Marketing not only rejected your pass, but also called you a “fucking pansy” in the process).

But what if you do meet someone interesting in the “straight” world—at a party of straight friends, for example, or when visiting relatives in the suburbs? Since you don’t know his sexual orientation (or at the very least his attitude toward yours), do you just keep your feelings to yourself and appreciate his dark, masculine good-looks from afar? However well-proportioned his heavenly body or however sexy his eyes, do you just pass him by on the way to the guacamole dip?

You don’t have to. You can have your cake and eat him too. Best of all, you don’t ever again have to risk rejection or embarrassment. How, you say? By doing a little detective work! By playing sleuth and looking for a few simple, tell-tale clues, you can “detect” with absolute certainty if the man you’ve just met is a seething cauldron of homosexual lust, a prospective candidate for president of the Moral Majority, or somewhere in between the two. Better still, you don’t ever have to mention your own sexual orientation.

First of all, some encouraging statistics. You’ve probably heard the old “one-in-ten” estimate that ten percent of all men are homosexual. In other words, the random chance that any man you meet might be receptive to your advances will be about ten percent, right?

Wrong—it’s actually much higher than that. While it’s true that ten percent of the male population is predominantly homosexual, there’s also a large number of men that are actually bisexual. In fact, Kinsey’s sexual research in the 1940s indicated that, in addition to the ten percent of exclusively gay men, there was also an additional ten percent of men that had been predominantly homosexual for at least three years of their life. In fact, his research revealed that almost forty percent of all men had had an orgasm with another man at least once in their life (and that’s only counting sexual experiences that took place after puberty; when he included men who had had sexual experiences before and during puberty, the number of men jumped to almost seventy percent!). And other studies have since shown that a whopping eighty percent of the population report being sexual aroused by a member of the same sex at least once in their life. Even if AIDS is making people more cautious about homosexual encounters, it still means your chances with any given man are certainly a whole lot better than just one in ten. But not to get your hopes too high, there are some major drawbacks to a relationship with a bisexual, as I’ll explain in a bit.

Of course it goes without saying that gay and bisexual men don’t necessarily look or act any different than straight men. There are gay Republicans, ministers, football players, and fraternity men (lots of fraternity men, from what I hear), and there are straight florists, ballet dancers, and AIDS activists. And since there are effeminate straight men and masculine gay ones, you certainly can’t tell anything by how “manly” a man acts. Consequently, this lack of overt or physical signs and signals is the reason why you have to be sort of a detective. In
Fine-Tuning Your Gay Radar

Appearing too eager makes you seem desperate or hard-up—qualities that no one finds attractive. So go for a walk or grab a bite at an all-night cafe. This will give you the chance to let it slip about how your last lover happened to be named “Ted.” Then, once you’ve both acknowledged your homosexuality, anything is fair game.

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other words, like fingerprints on the murder weapon and footprints beneath the window, you have to search for clues to uncover the answer to this, not the most pressing of mysteries, but certainly one of the most intriguing.

You see a man. You immediately like his dark, smoldering eyes and wry little smile; even the sweat stains under his arms turn you on. So you strike up a conversation. If, after talking to him a bit, you still like him, here’s where the detective work begins. Think of yourself as Sherlock Homosexual.

The very first clue to look for is just plain interest in you—and you probably won’t need a magnifying glass to find it. Is he hanging on your every word, laughing at your feeble jokes, maintaining eye contact. Or, conversely, does he seem distracted and disinterested? Do his eyes wander appreciatively to others—especially female others—in the room? If you’re in a small group of people, does he seem to be interested in what you’re saying above all the others? Give yourself a little time to hook his interest (since it’s not always love at first sight). But if the two of you just don’t click—or, worse, if he seems to be clicking with the blonde in the low-cut blouse—forget this guy. Unlike what you read in romance novels, if a man doesn’t seem interested, he probably isn’t. But the opposite is also true: If he does seem interested in you, he probably is!

Unfortunately this is where most gay men stop investigating and start coming on. If he seems incorrect, gay men often make the incorrect assumption that their “dream man” probably wants to jump into bed. Now, if we were talking about a man and a woman here, she very well could be interested in that sort of thing. But in the repressed, homophobic world we live in, a man can be interested in you—even sexually interested—but not willing to act on his feelings. Suggesting to this kind of man that he go back to your place for a night of great sex might not be, well, that good an idea. And so your stint as a detective continues.

The next tell-tale clue to look for is his age. Usually, of course, this is obvious. If you’re in a bar, for example, you can be pretty sure that he’s at least twenty-one. But if he looks a little young, age is an important thing to investigate—even if his youth is one of the things you like best about him. Not only is it a crime to have sex with a minor, it’s also a pretty lousy thing to do. Adolescence is a confusing enough time as it is; being seduced by an older member of the same sex is the last thing an adolescent needs—even or perhaps especially if he is, in fact, a homosexual. So bring the conversation around to school—college? High school? Talk about apartments (“still living at home” is a dead giveaway). Then if the man you’ve met isn’t eighteen or older, bring the conversation to a close and move on to the next man that catches your eye. You might not want to do this (and the kid might not want you to either), but trust me. This is for the best—for the both of you.

But let’s assume he is over eighteen. What’s the next set of fingerprints to dust for? Why, relationship status, of course. Why not bring up the relationship you terminated a few months ago and see what he says? Talk about your own former “partner” and “significant other” but don’t immediately specify his gender. On one hand, this gives the subject of your investigation a hint at your sexual orientation and might cause him to mention a former partner of his own—also not specifying the sex (a fantastic signal!). On the other hand, it might cause him to mention a girlfriend or wife, alerting you to be extremely cautious.

Extremely cautious? But there are plenty of married men that are bisexual or just “curious.” Why rule them out, you ask?

If you’re only interested in a sex-

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ual encounter, having it with a bisexual is fine. But if you’re at all interested in a relationship, a bisexual man is probably not the way to go. Before you get involved, stand forewarned that the vast majority of “true” bisexual men—that is, men who are equally attracted to both men and women and aren’t just homosexuals who are ashamed of it—ultimately opt for heterosexual relationships (probably from social pressure). You have to admit life’s easier with a member of the opposite sex as a mate. And given a choice, most people take the easier path. But for you, a gay man on the lookout for a relationship, this is the major drawback about bisexuals I mentioned earlier; chances are, he’ll ultimately leave you for a woman.

But don’t despair just yet, because even if you uncover your man has a wife or girlfriend, it could be that he’s a gay man who’s just never had a gay sexual experience (there are millions of them out there and they can be any age). In other words, even if this man is married or has a girlfriend, you’re still in the running. Be cautious, but don’t rule him out completely. Instead, move on with your investigation.

Now you have to uncover his attitude toward homosexuality. It’s a sensitive, controversial issue, so proceed slowly.

Begin by incorporating the topic into whatever you’re already talking about. If you’re talking about your work, mention a gay co-worker who’s been the source of considerable controversy. Or if you’ve been talking politics, steer the conversation toward any recent gay rights legislation or a related issue. Make it clear that you view homosexuality with an extremely open mind.

Then wait. If you’ve effectively laid the groundwork, like the proverbial criminal returning to the scene of the crime, your man will spring your trap. Homosexuality is such a heated issue that almost everyone has an opinion and, when given the opportunity, just about anyone will share theirs. Listen carefully to what he has to say. If his reaction is negative, you know where to tell him to go... and the great part is that you can tell him this without him ever having found out that you secretly had wanted his body! At this point, you’ve told him nothing except that you have a liberal attitude on sex, allowing you the option of walking away from this jerk without embarrassment or remorse. Do it.

Another possibility is that he’ll change the subject of homosexuality back to something more innocuous, this could mean that he’s uncomfortable with the topic, a sign of repression. To find out for sure, wait a few minutes, then reintroduce the topic. If he changes the topic again, you can be sure that, like the situation described at the beginning of this article, your new acquaintance is interested in you but not your body. And if he is interested in your body, he’s too repressed or guilt-ridden to act on his interest. In either case, you’ve probably made a new friend but not a new sexual partner.

Finally, his reaction to homosexuality may be positive, and I don’t need to tell you what that might mean. A tolerant or positive attitude doesn’t necessarily mean a willingness to have gay sex, but it’s a good sign. Now all you need is that one final piece of evidence, the “smoking gun,” so to speak: you have to find out if this man considers himself to be homo- or bisexual.

Of course you can’t just come right out and ask about this. You have to give him a chance to talk abstractly, to tell you without actually telling you (so that he can save face if need be). Talk about “mankind” or “human beings.” Suggest how common homosexuality is, how many friends and co-workers you know who are gay and
how many people have same-sex experiences (even mention the statistics cited earlier in the article). Talk about psychology and getting in touch with your own feelings. Most of all, listen for him to say the key words: "I've heard that human beings are all basically bisexual." If he doesn't say it, you can (once you know that he has a tolerant attitude on homosexuality, you're not risking much anyway). And if, after you've said it, he doesn't agree, you might consider asking him, "Have you ever been attracted to another man?" Give him a chance to beat around the bush a bit. But if he doesn't at least admit to being a little bisexual, well, again, you've at least made another friend.

But if he does say it or agrees with you after you've said it, it's case-closed. Saying or agreeing with the statement "All people are bisexual" really means "I am bisexual or homosexual," and saying it to you at a party means "I'm not only bisexual or homosexual, I'm interested in sleeping with you." Being the great detective you are, you may not have uncovered a murderer, but you'll definitely be uncovering a bed that night—for two.

Of course there's no reason to hurry things. Why not suggest a drink or a cup of coffee together "so we can talk some more"? Appearing too eager makes you seem desperate or hard-up—qualities that no one finds attractive. So go for a walk or grab a bite at an all-night cafe. This will give you the chance to let it slip about how your last lover happened to be named "Ted." Then, once you've both acknowledged your homosexuality, anything is fair game. If he's never had sex with a man before, he might very well have a few questions. And whether he's had gay-sex or not, this is a good time and opportunity to share your feelings and concerns about safe-sex. Whatever you talk about, the conversation is bound to end up either at your place or his.

Then you'll have plenty of time to begin a thorough investigation of... his body.

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