



Same Love

TONY CORREIA

Will going to Christian camp help Adam "straighten out" his life?

At seventeen, Adam has suspected for a while that he might be gay. When a confrontation with his devout parents forces him to reveal his true feelings, they send him to a Christian camp, warning him that there will be no room in their lives for a gay son. The last thing Adam expects is to meet someone at camp who he is deeply attracted to.

But Paul is committed to his Christian faith, so Adam tries to bury his attraction by concentrating on his art and his new friends. When it becomes clear how unhappy other campers are, Adam and Paul begin to seriously question what the church tells them about love. And with so many people trying to get Adam to change who he is, Adam has to figure out on his own what kind of life he wants and who will be a part of it.

TONY CORREIA lives in Vancouver, B.C. He has worked as a waiter, bartender, bouncer, barista, receptionist, technical writer for a software company, as well as writing a newspaper column and a memoir.



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*In loving memory of Aaron Hachey,
secret handshake buddy.*

01

Fall into the Gap

MIKE'S EYES ARE WIDE AS SAUCERS as he watches me end the call with my mother. I tuck my phone back into my pocket.

“Did she believe you?” he asks.

“I think so.”

“I can't believe we're finally hanging out!” He claps his hands like a contestant on a game show.

“Sorry for all the sneaking around,” I tell him.
“It's easier to lie.”

“I’m glad you decided to be yourself for a couple of hours — even if it means shopping at Metrotown Mall.”

“I’m so embarrassed to have to lie. I mean, you’re a friend from school.”

“Don’t worry, I get it. You’re closeted, white, and Christian. I’m fierce, brown, and gay. We’re Romeo and Juliet without the heaving bosoms.”

“Which one of us is Juliet?”

“Girl, you are definitely the Juliet in this movie. Like Romeo, I will cut a bitch before I let anyone tell me who I can and can’t love.”

“Stop calling me girl. No one can know I’m gay until I graduate.”

“Closet case,” he shoots at me.

“Drag queen,” I shoot back.

“It’s not an insult if it’s true, honey. Now where do you want to go? Abercrombie & Fitch? We can judge all the posers.”

“I can’t — too much perfume. My parents will smell it on my clothes.”

“Are you telling me you’re not allowed to go into A&F?”

“A&F is the gay bar of the shopping mall as far as Christians are concerned.”

“How about The Gap? Is that a gateway to hell in your religion?”

“I like The Gap.”

“You would. Onward homo,” Mike says. He leads the charge down the mall.

I can barely keep up as he makes his way through the crowd of shoppers, dodging duck-faced girls posing for selfies, mothers dragging their children and their husbands — who are pretending not look at the duck-faced girls. I keep looking around in case someone from my church sees Mike and me together.

“They should change the name of this store to Fifty Shades of Beige,” Mike says. He frowns as he sifts through the rack.

“Do you want to go someplace else?” I ask.

“This is fine. Do your thing.”

“I feel like I’m disappointing you.”

“It’s not you, Adam, it’s the clothes. When I look around this store it makes me think that everyone is trying to look like each other — even the brown people. It’s so boring.”

“That reminds me, I’ve been working on this really cool graphic novel. It’s about a preacher who uses an app to brainwash his followers into believing God is speaking to them on their phones.”

“Sounds cool. When do I get to read it?”

“I just started it. I can only work on it after my parents go to bed and on my breaks at work.”

“Why don’t you just tell your parents you’re gay?” Mike asks.

“Not until next year, once I’ve been accepted to university,” I tell him. “I’ve saved every penny I’ve ever earned so I can study to become a graphic artist. But it’s still not enough. If my parents don’t help me out, I’ll have to take out a ton of student loans and be in debt for the rest of my life.”

“Word!” Mike raises his hand to Jesus. “Ain’t nobody got time for that.”

“Does it bother you that we have to keep our friendship secret?”

“It’s a drag — and not in a good way! But I understand. You’re not the first person I’ve met with religious parents. Wait till you meet some of the people at the gay youth group downtown. They’ll blow your mind.”

“I hate all this sneaking around,” I tell him. “I hate that I have to memorize your number and delete all your texts in case my parents snoop through my phone. I honestly don’t know why you want to be friends with me when there are so many rules.”

“Because you’re a good guy, Adam,” Mike says. “And an amazing artist. Some of the illustrations you did for the yearbook blew me away. I can’t wait until you’re rich and famous so I can tell people I knew you when you were a scared little boy.”

“Stop it.”

“I’m serious. But you need to stop being so hard on yourself. All of this fabulousness did not happen overnight,” Mike waves his hands over his body.

“Trust me, my dad was not thrilled to have Beyonce for a son.”

“It won’t be like this forever, I promise.”

Mike holds a plaid shirt up to his chest and says, “Does this shirt make my ass look fat?”

“No, but flannel makes you look like a lesbian.”

“Don’t joke about lesbians,” Mike says. “I learned that lesson the hard way in the Gay–Straight Alliance.”

Suddenly I hear the last voice in the world I want to hear. It’s like the Wicked Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*.

“Adam Lethbridge, is that you?”

I turn around, and there is Mom’s best friend.

“Mrs. Harris!” I give her a fake hug.

Greta Harris is one of those phony Christians who spread the word of God to your face and gossip behind your back. She’s Christianity’s answer to TMZ. Just when I think my luck can’t get any worse, Greta’s daughter Michelle appears next to her.

“Hi, Adam,” she smiles.

Gross. Michelle Harris has been trying to get

inside my pants since kindergarten. Beneath that good Christian girl act beats the heart of a hussy.

“Hey, Michelle,” Mike says.

“Mike Hoskins? What are you two doing here together?” asks Michelle. She is looking at us like she caught us making out.

“I’m sorry, who did you say your friend was again?” Greta asks. There’s a twinkle in her eye, like a reporter sniffing out a scoop.

“Oh, we’re not friends.” Then I realize how awful that just sounded. I start speaking faster, trying to cover my tracks. “Mike and I worked on the yearbook together. I was on my way home from work and we happened to run into each other.”

“Two boys shopping for clothes,” Greta says. “How interesting.”

“Tell me about it,” says Michelle.

I wish they would both just fly away on the broom they came in on.

“Look at the time!” Greta glances at an invisible wristwatch. “We should get going if we’re going to beat

the traffic. Say hello to your mother for me, Adam.”

And just like that, Greta disappears into the crowd like it was a cloud of black smoke.

“You didn’t tell me you’re friends with Michelle Harris!” Mike says. “I hate that bitch! She’s always ranting about religious freedom. She claims she’s discriminated against because of her faith. Oh, Adam, are you okay? You look like you’re going to throw up.”

“Don’t take this wrong way but . . . you know how you’re kind of flamboyant?”

“That’s putting it mildly, if I say so myself.”

“You see, Greta has a really big mouth. She’s probably on her phone right now with my mother telling her she saw us together.”

“She wouldn’t!”

“She would, and she would enjoy it.”

“You’re overreacting.”

“Where do you think Michelle gets it from?”

“Are you telling me your parents are as religious as Michelle? No wonder you’ve been sneaking around behind their backs.”

“Exactly. I should go home.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?” Mike asks.

“Can you turn back time?”

“Girl, I may be fierce, but I’m not Cher.”