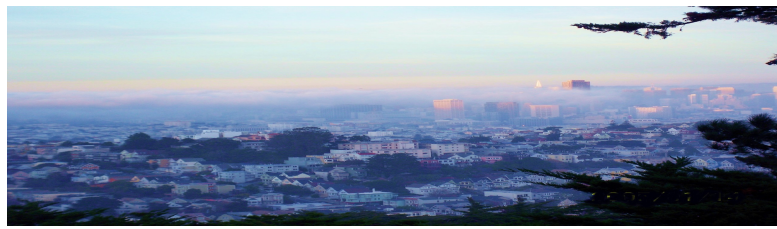


## Gay Riot



When I flipped the car radio on and hear, "Chaos at City Hall." I decide it is an invitation, and I go there. In minutes. I am standing in the middle of an angry mob of men. The riot squad is packed on the steps of City Hall, like little blue robots. A fire is burning in a trashcan and windows have been broken. Tear gas floats in the air with the fog. The people chanting something, then stop as though saying "what's the use." The verdict is in, and Dan White will most likely be coddled, through his five year sentence for killing Milk and Moscone.

A television cable is pulled and broken and the riot squad races through the crowd swinging batons. People are running in every direction and screaming. I hide behind a tree and watch the cops hit people who cannot run fast enough to get away. I can't find any women in the crowd. I don't believe this is an issue that concerns only men. I am suddenly very afraid and plant myself cowardly in the middle of a news team in front of City Hall. I feel like I am watching it on TV. I stand with my arms folded and watch rocks and bottles being hurled at the riot squad. The crowd is beginning to move in the direction of the jail chanting. "Let's get Dan White!" When a police car is burned, I think one of the news and is going to ejaculate right here and now-- he is so excited, what's news without some good old violence.

I decide to mingle with the crowd. Maybe I will find some women to join with. The riot squad is lined up now barricading the crowd from the fire trucks. Many people have gathered to watch the police cars burn. There is something hypnotic about it-- something that seems to center the crowd.

I look at the little robots with their batons clinched and study their faces through the plastic face masks. They are all about 19 years old, and most are women and minorities. The real cops, the real beefy ones who are San Francisco cops but won't live here because they don't want their kids to be around queers-- they are safely behind the lines of the riot squad. This is a war now, and that baby privates are up front, ready to kill for the man. And if they didn't hate gays before this date are sure to hate them now!

I flashed back on all the notices in gay bars and bookstores, etc. asking for applicants for police officers-- the starting salary is \$900 a month. If I were 21 years old right now, I would probably have applied -- I am unemployed and have few skills. I move to the steps of the state building, and there are some white teenaged males who do not seem to be gay but are turned on by the riot and began burning. A string of police cars. A round, middle-aged man, and I stand on the steps talking like were waiting for a bus. We discuss the verdict. "The jury misinterpreted what the shrinks were saying." He said after telling me he himself was a shrink. I say, "I think they are convinced is a nice man and it is perfectly acceptable for a nice men to murder-- hasn't that been true through the ages?"

Someone throws a garbage can, into a windshield, and yells "if the pigs arrest me tell em I ate too many Twinkies!" I wander through the masses of wild, angry people trying to get to my car and a tall lanky man, places his hand on my shoulder and slurs in a British accent through whiskeyed breath "this is wonderful! What an amazing country. The police are standing and doing nothing while police cars burn and rioters threw rocks at them!"

I walked toward the main library, dodgy rocks and flying bottles. I still have not seen any women. Maybe they are all home tucked in bed, like good girls should be. Days later, I hear that supervisor Carol Silver's testimony in court was not accepted by the jury, because she said bullshit in court. More fires are set - more windows broken.

I start to cross the street at the library and am nearly trampled by a mob running from the riot squad. I run and huddle in a dark corner near a pillar. Someone is yelling "the revolution has come!" I hide my head and hope when I lifted again, everything will be over. A second later, I am dragged out by three cops, two men and a woman who began beating me with their batons. I scream and the two men leave. I am face to face with a young woman holding a club over my head. And we are the only ones left on the steps-- she hits me again. I looked at her and memorize every detail of her face. "Why are you hitting me?" I asked innocently. She was the first woman that I've had contact with. She looks at me as if to say "Lady this is war and you are wearing the wrong uniform."

When I finally breakaway and run, a woman stops and ask if I'm alright, but I am not thinking clearly. So I pull away from her angry-- where was she when I needed her? Now I see women scattered here and there... what are they doing in the streets at this hour? My fuddle brain is asking.

## II

When I look back on the riots. I see young women cops, a woman mayor in women's supervisors. I wonder if they will all look and act like their male counterparts. When they become 60. Does it really change things when women become Governors, cops etc.? After this experience, I realize that my enemy is patriarchy - not men.

"I was having a hamburger at Jack-in-the-Box, and I heard some screaming. So I ran out to see what was happening. I saw a man lying bloody in the street so I went to help him. Someone from behind was waving-- get your god damn hands off of him. You God damn queer. And I am not. And I was only trying to help someone. The next thing I saw was a cop, who was larger than the average male. He began pounding me with his night stick. I had a grand mal seizure and was next in a coma. I will never be able to use my right side again-- it is paralyzed. I was only trying to help someone that I didn't even know." Jack Scott told me that himself.