

# MOVING DAY

This is a guided fantasy exercise that should be read aloud to the group. It works best when two facilitators, a man and a woman, read alternately (the changes in typeface make it easy to divide up the parts). Members of the group should be asked to relax and listen quietly, and to be aware of their thoughts and feelings in response to the story.

After reading the story, the facilitators should ask the group (as a whole or in smaller groups) to discuss these questions:

- 1) What assumptions did you make about the genders of the characters?
- 2) How important was it for you to identify their genders?
- 3) If you concluded that the narrator's relationships were not all with people of the same gender, how did that thought make you feel?

The sticky heat of a Texas August pervaded the apartment. The last boxes, labeled for the movers, were ready to be sealed. I finish the task in short order. Time for one last search of the apartment for strays. Five years, and now no evidence of my life. I roam, opening and closing drawers and cupboards. In the bedroom, I slide the cabinet doors of the headboard. My journal! I was so certain I'd emptied all the contents, but obviously not... Glancing inside the cabinet to make sure nothing else hid there, I retrieve my journal. I haven't made an entry for years. I decide to read it during long waits I faced traveling to Denver.

Hours later, my belongings driven away by movers, followed by a surprisingly quick cab ride to the airport, I sit in the boarding area waiting for my flight. As too often is the case, the gate agent announced a slight delay. I remember my journal and pulled it from a pocket of my carry-on bag. I recall being given this blank book with leatherette binding by Micki—my first crush in the seventh grade. Micki made me feel nervous and excited when we were together. I loved those feelings. Unable to keep pace with its growth spurts, the awkwardness of my body was even more pronounced around Micki. This elicited affectionate comments like "You klutz!"—which were certainly safer than saying, "I like you."

Micki's family moved during the winter break. We said our goodbyes, lying to each other that we would write. My depression over Micki's absence was soon soothed by a new friendship. I wrote pages describing how wonderful Cory was to be around. Cory looked at me when we talked and made me feel whatever I said was incredibly interesting. I always felt smart when I talked to Cory. We spent hours "doing homework," playing tennis, and listening to records. But over summer, between eighth and ninth grades, we lost interest in each other and our friendship faded away.

My journal records passions for three people in high school: Jerry, Dale, and finally—Chris. With Chris, I learned to blend sexual longings with the intense closeness of earlier friendships. We both managed to escape being taught to feel guilty or dirty about sexual feelings and took delight in our experimentations. My journal entries, minimal during this period, suddenly erupted in anger. I described when Chris shared a letter of acceptance to a private college far away. "My parents both went there and I want to go, too!" I was astonished. "Chris, we agreed to go to State together—we're even signed up for the same dorm!" Chris acknowledged the promise, but reaffirmed intentions to attend the family alma mater. My betrayal felt complete. I hadn't even known about this other application. My fantasies of being together throughout college evaporated, and as they went, so did my feelings for Chris. Reading now, it seems shallow, but I make allowances for being 17.

College brought Terry. Assigned to the same co-ed residence hall, we met over dinner the first day and soon were fast friends. Our interests in music, films, skiing, and tennis were similar. We even had the same major, chemistry. By December, we had entered a full-blown affair. Sophomore year, we moved off-campus into a large house with six others. Terry and I finally were able to share ourselves and our record collections completely. I was outmatched in class, however. Terry took honors in all our courses and was heavily recruited by top graduate schools. With less-than-sparkling GRE scores, I was recruited by Shell, Dow and Dupont. Terry accepted an assistantship at a prestigious doctoral program in the East. I headed to Houston for an entry-level position with Shell. Difficult choices, but I knew I couldn't stand in Terry's way professionally, any more than Terry could stand in mine. From my shaky handwriting, I didn't believe that then any more than now.

At Shell, I met Jo. Still reeling from my break-up with Terry, our relationship started as strictly rebound. Over time, I thought I had truly fallen in love. My journal entries ended here.

The gate agent calls for boarding. Once established in my seat, I reflect over the past few years. Despite the depth our feelings and what I thought was a commitment to each other, Jo accepted a promotion that meant a transfer to Ohio. There was nothing there for a research chemist, so I stayed in Texas. I felt abandoned again. Why didn't anyone ever want to stay with me?

Shell provoked too many memories of Jo, so I began to job hunt. I was hired by the government to work cleaning up Rocky Flats, a toxic waste dump near Denver. In the midst of packing, Terry called. We hadn't lost touch, although we hadn't seen each other for years. Terry asked me to guess who was the new Ph.D. chemist also hired to work on the clean-up. As the flight attendants readied for take-off, I wonder what the future held for the two of us in Denver. I close my eyes and lean back as the plane speeds down the runway.