

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

How I Knew Harold

Around 1981 we run into your old girlfriend on an elevator.

She's wearing black leather pants and a tank top. She asks how I like New York. We are all sweating bullets. I want to say it sucks, but the doors open and she's gone. We miss our floor.

Around 1953 Mom tells the family she's pregnant. My brother bounces around the living room with a pillow on his head wailing "it will change our whole lives!" This story is recounted each year around my birthday.

Around 1978 I leave home to move in with Jack. Dad and I are standing in the driveway. They don't want me to go. He's Jewish. Mom packs ham sandwiches and slips me two twenties. I move back in three months.

Around 1979 my friend Sandy plays taps at a funeral gig, so I go along. I walk up to the casket in my boots and fur jacket. I'm checking out the deceased when a woman grabs my elbow. She wants to know how I knew Harold.

Around 1972 my sister tells me and my parents she's gay. Dad says it's unnatural and they start arguing. I keep quiet. Mom goes to the kitchen to make sundaes.

Around 1962 my brother feels like scaring the hell out of me and chases me around the house with a butcher knife. I hide behind Dad's suits. It smells like Old Spice.

Around 1969 I tell my parents over dinner that I'd live with a man before I'd marry him. Dad says it's unnatural. I tell him to get his own dessert.

Around 1963 Grandma gives me ten bucks for learning the times tables.

Around 1957 Dad and I sing My Darlin' Clementine every morning on the way to school.

Around 1968 Patty Bryant and I run out on the check at Woolworths.

Around 1964 Mom colors her hair—starts wearing eye shadow and mascara. She's standing over a steaming sink in a pale green mohair singing "Edelweiss." She looks absolutely radiant.

Deborah Harding