



Every Nine Seconds (Queer as Folk)

By Joseph Brockton

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Every Nine Seconds (Queer as Folk) By Joseph Brockton Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1088305 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Pocket Books
- Published on: 2003-03-01
- Released on: 2003-03-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .70" w x 5.31" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 258 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Joseph Brockton is a pseudonym for an author who has done several Star Trek novelizations.

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Chapter One

Michael Novotny sat on his bedroom floor wearing his Captain Astro pajamas and inhaling deeply on the last remnants of a joint. The fumes slid between his lips, down his throat, and into his lungs. He held the smoke there and handed the joint back to his best friend, Brian Kinney.

He tried not to laugh, since that would release the smoke and totally ruin the effect.

The superhero pajamas had been a gift from his mother. She had sewn them together out of material she had unexpectedly stumbled across a month before his last birthday. It had taken her a couple weeks to finish the simple outfit since she had to find time to work on it between shifts of her job at the Red Robin Diner and while Michael was at school.

The pajamas were supposed to have been a gag gift. She gave them to her son on his eighteenth birthday. The day he supposedly became a man.

He hadn't gotten the joke.

Brian lifted the joint to his mouth. The paper bonded with his lips as he closed his eyes and inhaled, savoring the familiar taste.

Brian wasn't dressed in superhero pajamas.

He wasn't dressed in much at all.

A pair of tight white Calvin Klein briefs barely concealed his ample bulge. The material of his white CK T-shirt strained against a chest that was trying to burst out of the fabric. His tanning-bed-darkened skin stood out in contrast to the pure white of his clothing.

It was the only thing pure about him.

Brian had learned the value of a good workout years earlier, and his body displayed that fact proudly. His hair was mussed, but still neatly trimmed. He wore it short and deceptively simple as if to make up for the years he had had it feathered on the sides. The entire look was well cultivated to walk the line between boy and man.

He snuffed out the last of the roach.

The two young men exhaled together. The smoke intermingled between them.

Michael liked the buzz. He felt much calmer than he normally did when Brian was in his bedroom. He also

felt hornier. The room seemed more alive to him in the darkness that was lessened only by the light of a street-lamp streaming in through the window.

It was eight minutes to midnight on the night before Brian Kinney's eighteenth birthday. Brian had a standing invitation to stay over at Michael's house whenever he chose. And he chose to do so often. It didn't matter that it was a school night. Brian's parents had given up on keeping track of him years ago.

Besides, the school year was almost over. The Susquehanna High School class of 1989 were less than a month away from their freedom. And Brian was always slightly ahead of his peers.

"So when do I get my present?" Brian asked as the last wisp of smoke brushed past his lips.

Michael tried to put off the inevitable. "It's not your birthday yet."

"It's *always* my birthday."

Michael couldn't argue with that logic. Brian was always celebrating his life in one way or another -- often in his birthday suit. Michael uncrossed his legs and got up off the floor. He had the two small, wrapped gifts under his pillow.

"Happy eighteenth birthday," Michael said with his usual exuberance. "It isn't much."

"It's from you, Mikey. It's more than enough."

Michael sat back down as he handed Brian the gifts. He wished that the presents didn't look so small, but took some solace in the fact that his mom was always saying, "It's the thought that counts." Then again, he hadn't really put a lot of thought into the gifts. He knew the things Brian liked. Buying him gifts was easy. Michael hadn't bothered to get a card, knowing how Brian would react to the forced Hallmark sentiment or stupid cartoon humor.

"What have we got here?" Brian coyly asked as he took the gifts out of Michael's hands. He opened the smaller one first. It was plainly in the shape of a cassette.

"It's a mix tape," Michael said as the wrapping came off.

"I can see that." Brian read the names written on the side. "The Cure, Prince, Echo and the Bunnymen...Rick Springfield?" He looked up at Michael. "That's quite a mix."

"They're from different points in our friendship," Michael said, grinning.

"Put in on." Brian handed the tape to Michael.

"Okay." Michael slid over to his Casio boom box and slipped the tape in. He adjusted the volume controls so it wouldn't disturb his mom, who was sleeping just down the hall. It didn't really matter, though. The walls of the house were so thin that she could probably hear everything that was going on in Michael's room anyway.

She could probably smell the pot too.

Brian held the remaining small square box and gave it a shake. Something inside rattled against the

cardboard. "Pot pipe?" he asked with a smile.

"Yeah, my mom picked it up for me," Michael sarcastically replied.

The Smiths started playing on the boom box: "The Boy with the Thorn in His Side."

Brian tore the wrapping off the second box and dropped it on the floor. He lifted the lid and found a leather bracelet with a ring of small white shells. It wasn't a typical Brian Kinney fashion accessory, but when Michael had first seen it, something about the bracelet had just seemed perfect.

"I got it at that craft show mom dragged me to last week at the Expo Center in Greengate," Michael said. "I know it's not really your -- "

"I love it." Brian slid the bracelet onto his wrist. "Thank you, Mikey." He gave his friend a quick peck on the cheek.

Brian was quite a picture -- almost naked except for his barely fitting underwear and the bracelet on his wrist. Michael was enjoying the view.

Four minutes to midnight.

"Almost eighteen," Brian said with a level of excitement that he rarely allowed anyone to see.

"Like it makes a difference."

"It makes all the difference in the world, Mikey. High school's almost over. College is just around the corner. A whole new life."

Michael hated that Brian was so excited about the future. They were heading off to very different schools. Brian had received a full soccer scholarship to Carnegie Mellon University. Michael would be attending Allegheny Community. While the two schools were relatively close to each other, this "whole new life" could mean the end of their friendship.

To make matters worse, Brian had been accepted for an early session.

He would be moving into his dorm in only a month.

"I was thinking," Michael said, cautiously approaching a subject he had been planning to suggest for a while. "About Captain Astro and Galaxy Lad."

"When aren't you?" Brian asked, but there was no condescension in his voice. He no longer shared Michael's interest in comic books, but he never begrudged his best friend the indulgence.

"In issue forty-four, *The Bond of Brotherhood*, Galaxy Lad suggested they take a blood-brother oath to cement their friendship. I was thinking we could do the same thing." Michael got off the floor and stepped over to his desk. He rifled through the top drawer. "We could use my dad's Swiss Army knife."

"Knives and bloodletting?" Brian chuckled. "I didn't know you were into S and M."

"Only on special occasions." Michael sat back down with the knife in his hand. It was one of the few things he had that had belonged to his father, who died in Vietnam. Using a fingernail, he opened the knife and moved the blade toward his thumb. "Now we just have to -- "

"Hold it." Brian grabbed the knife from his friend. "If we're going to do this, we should do it right." He picked up the Bic that they had used to light the joint and flicked it on. An orange glow lit their faces as Brian moved the blade across the flame. His eyes locked with Michael's as fire burned the blade clean.

Brian removed his thumb from the lighter and the flame was extinguished. He dropped the Bic to the floor.

And waited.

Michael tried to focus on The Smiths as the clock ticked toward midnight. He wasn't sure about what Brian had in mind.

And when you want to live

How do you start?

"Give your thumb a little prick," Michael said.

Brian raised an eyebrow but let the pun slip away unspoken. "Michael, blood oaths like that are for straight little Boy Scouts." He slowly rose off the floor, indicating to Michael to rise as well.

They stood facing each other with only a few inches between them.

"Are you ready to take a real pledge, Mikey?" Brian moved the blade between them.

"What are you -- "

Brian held the blade up to Michael's lips, shushing him. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes," he answered without even thinking.

"Silly rabbit." Brian guided the knife down past Michael's chin.

The blade came to the bottom of the V in the neck of Michael's pajama top. Brian gathered the fabric in his hand and pulled it away from Michael's body. With a flick, Brian sliced through the threading and the top button fell to the floor.

"Brian -- "

"Shhh."

The blade dropped an inch to the next button, which came off with a pop. The third and fourth buttons followed in short order. Michael inhaled sharply as the cool air hit his chest. It was smooth. His pecs were just beginning to take on a more masculine shape.

Normally, Michael would be uncomfortable to be so exposed around Brian, but his mind was elsewhere at

the moment. Blood was coursing through his body and away from his brain. It all seemed to be heading toward one particular place.

The last button came off. A line of flesh peeked out from between the flaps of his pajama top. His stomach was taut.

Brian brushed against Michael's erection as his free hand grabbed at the lone button on the pajama bottoms. Michael sucked in more air, wondering just how far this was going to go. He was both nervous and excited.

The blade pressed up against the button.

If the bottoms came off, he wondered, what would happen next? There was a lot of activity between his and Brian's crotches. He couldn't be sure, but he thought he saw the outline of Brian's erect penis in his white CK's. He looked back into Brian's eyes.

His face registered the silent plea: *Do it.*

Brian released the fabric without cutting the button.

A wave of disappointment mixed with relief flowed through Michael.

But Brian wasn't done.

The blade was in front of Michael's face once more. He was tempted to ask what the hell was going on, but he didn't want to spoil the mood. Brian was in control. Michael was just along for the ride. He wasn't concerned. Brian always made him feel safe.

Michael could feel the blade gently pressing against his temple. The metal was still warm from the fire it had been through. He could feel the edge of the blade as it slid down the side of his face. Brian was putting just enough pressure on the handle so that Michael would feel it, but it would not leave a mark. The blade traced along the jawline, ending beneath his chin.

Michael stole a glance at the clock. It was only seconds until Brian's birthday. Even though he hadn't seen Brian look at the time, Michael knew his friend was aware of the passing seconds.

A brief flicker of pain brought his eyes back to Brian.

Michael's lips felt wet. His tongue ventured out and was met with a coppery taste. Brian had cut Michael's bottom lip.

He looked to his friend about to question what was going on when he noticed a matching small cut on Brian's lip. Before Michael could say anything, Brian leaned forward and the two cuts met.

Brian had kissed Michael many times before on the cheek and forehead, and even a couple brushes on the lips. They were nothing like this kiss. Michael felt passion and intensity and Brian's tongue pushing to get into his mouth.

Michael's experience with boys was limited to say the least. He had never even had a real kiss before. Michael opened his mouth to let in the welcome guest. Blood and saliva intermingled.

It was unlike anything Michael had ever imagined. He thought it impossible for his dick to get any harder, but it did with each passing second. He wanted to push his body up against Brian's, but fear kept him at a safe distance.

Typically, a scene like this would end one of two ways.

Option A: The flimsy material between the two boys would be torn away and their naked bodies would glow in the moonlight. Brian would then guide Michael over to the bed and lead him through a night of either passionate lovemaking or intense sex.

Option B: Michael would wake up.

But this was no dream.

This was Brian Kinney.

This was Michael Novotny.

And this was their friendship.

Brian opened his eyes and pulled away. A thin line of blood briefly linked their silent pledge. When it broke, the invisible bond remained.

Michael pressed his lips together to savor the kiss before he accepted that the moment had ended.

"Time for bed, Mikey," Brian said.

It wasn't an invitation for more.

Brian got into bed.

Michael's disappointment abated slightly when he saw the tiniest little wet spot right below the elastic of Brian's briefs as the thin sheets covered his body. Brian had been turned on by what had just happened.

Michael's own underwear was rather moist as well.

He slid under the sheets beside Brian on the twin bed. Their bodies shared the space in the middle as they had many times before. Only a few inches separated them. Michael could feel the cut on his lip already closing over.

Brian was lying on his side with his back to Michael. The sheets rose and fell as he breathed. Michael mirrored Brian's position, hoping that his friend would lean back into him. He wanted to touch Brian, but was too afraid to make the move. Sometime in the middle of the night they would fall into each other as they normally did, but Michael never had the courage to make that happen intentionally. He would have to settle for waking with Brian's arm around him or his head on Brian's chest.

It was as if their sleeping bodies had better sense than their waking minds.

The music had shifted to the second song on the mix tape.

Patrick Swayze sang them off to sleep.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Oaks:

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