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Certainly we had no idea how this would all begin on that cold day in early December 1981. We were a young confused group, like many, searching for something—anything that would shed some light on the murky future that stretched before us. We were mostly white, privileged, male, gay, and a great many of us were from some distant place. Even those of us that were from somewhere in the City. . .well, it might as well have been Montana.

It might be interesting to note that among us were a great many former Roman Catholics.

We were quickly joined by others: women, lesbians, people of all gender identities; many religions, races, ages, countries, sexual proclivities. Really, the thing we all seemed to be saying most frequently was, “America, we aren’t buying it.” And we weren’t. Not one bit.

We were part of a Great Migration. Those movements of people throughout history caused by war, disaster, turmoil and upheaval. We were migrating, however, into devastation. An East Village gutted by greed, despair and neglect. And for one reason or another The Pyramid Cocktail Lounge on Avenue A became our Ellis Island.

There was once a store in the East Village of the 1960’s called Everything For Everybody. It was run by the Yuppies, of course. It offered clothing and furniture at very little cost. And if you had no money, you could get things for free. Maybe it’s a romantic, anarchistic notion, but I like to think that the Pyramid was our Everything For Everybody.

We knew we were dissatisfied. We left what we felt was an oppressive atmosphere. What New York’s West Village had become. And the Castro, and Hollywood. And countless other places. We headed East. Unlike the men who flocked to those places, we loved women. And we rejected labels.

Certainly, we embraced drag and what was then called cross-dressing, which many at the time insisted was a crude parody of all things female. And although we embraced parody wildly because we always loved a good “send-up,” the drag we did was deconstructive. More like gender-fuck at first. Ripped fishnets with hairy legs, panty hose beneath Wall Street suits. Women in top hats and tuxedos. Blurring the lines of gender. . .beginning to erase the binary world. . .in doing so, we came to realize (more through instinct than intent) you had to own your own gender, sexual preference or role. And this was the last great revolution of the Twentieth Century. The beginning of what we now call *Queer*, though it didn’t have a name then.

All of this was played out against the horrifying backdrop of the AIDS crisis, and yet it was a time of great joy and revelry.

Around this time, I wrote this line in my journal:

“Flow’r furious before the frost!”

That is exactly what we were doing then. And you had better believe they are doing it now.

The Pyramid was our clubhouse. Our tribal circle. Our gang-lair. Our home. Walk in the door, you’ll get a round of applause.