

Becoming

A Chronicle of Metamorphosis

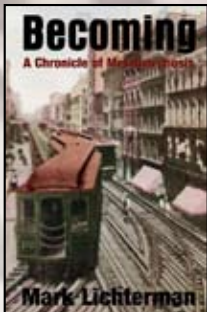
by Mark Lichterman

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**Do you remember your radio and Captain Midnight,
The Lone Ranger, Junior Miss and Let's Pretend?**



The first time you inhaled a cigarette? Your first swallow of hard liquor? The thrill of the first exploration of the body of your boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife... your own body? Your first orgasm?

Remember when as a people we loved America, and showed it? Then you might be ready for a nostalgic, funny, romantic, sexually frustrating novel.

A novel that may remind many of us of ourselves, “way back then,” when God’s most mysterious creation was the opposite sex. A novel about life and the often funny, sometimes sad, day-to-day things that stir the memories of our lives.

Reminiscent of the Neil Simon trilogy, Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint* and the humorous writing of Jean Shepherd in the mid and late sixties; uniquely original, we are introduced to five-year-old Mitchie in 1939 in an ethnically diverse, lower middle-class neighborhood on the west side of Chicago.

As children do, subtly growing over the next sixteen years, seeing World War Two through the eyes of this Jewish child, and later, lying about his age, joining the National Guard, “cause girls love guys in uniform.”

Accidentally getting caught up in the Korean war at age fifteen, *Becoming* follows Mitchell’s life in a series of nostalgic, comical, romantic, sad and — because “those” situations with girls, and later women, rarely conclude as young men hope — vividly described, extremely funny sexual situations.

Becoming climaxes hilariously in 1955, in Brighton Beach New York, when Mitchell is twenty-one and a man... or, because it takes more than age and size to “become” one... the semblance of a man.

For more information, visit www.metropolisink.com or email lktrman@aol.com

From 'Becoming'

January 14, 1944

THE VINTAGE BLACK AND YELLOW SCHOOL BUS pulled up to the Dwight David Eisenhower dormitory at precisely twelve o'clock noon.

Rushing aboard, 53 boys scrambled for the window seats.

Frank and Mitchell ran to the rear of the bus where there was a pulling, shoving, pushing contest as each struggled for the seat next to the window. Stretching the material of Mitchell's sleeve until it was inches beyond his hand, Frank pulled it through the handhold of the seat across the aisle and, using it as one would a block and tackle, he was able to hold him back long enough to slip beneath him and into the seat, as all the while Mitchell tried to keep a straight face, but was laughing and couldn't stop.

"No fair, you, uh..." trying to think of a name, "...schmuck!"

Laughing as hard as his friend, "'Schmuck'? What's a schmuck?" Frank asked.

"Something my uncle always calls my dad whenever they play gin rummy."

"Schmuck, eh? You keep this up, Lipensky, an' I'll know more Jewish words than you. What's schmuck mean?"

"Jeez, I d'no. Maybe somethin' like, uh, ass."

"Madonn', you're dumb! Even I know the Jewish word for ass! It's tuckas."

"Oh, yeah, I forgot."

"You forgot! Lipensky, you're such a, a..." looking for a word, Frank smiles, "shmegegi! I can't believe it—me, a wop, teachin' you, a Jew, his own language."

Watching the tree-bare, winter scene, the boys were quiet a moment.

"Mitch," speaking softly, "you ever wonder about girls?"

"Girls?" Lookin' at Frank. "Nah. What about 'em?"

"You ever think... you ever wonder about their, uh, things?"

"Things! What things?"

"Mitch, don't be such a dope! You know, their things! The only things that make girls different then guys is their chests an' that they got different kinds of pissers than us. You ever wonder about 'em, about what a girl's pisser looks like?"

"No."

But he had. One day last summer, standing on the stairs a few steps beneath her, he was talking to Marlene. She was sitting with her knees spread and he was able to see between the gap of her shorts and the inside of her skinny thighs. For some reason she wasn't wearing panties and, maybe, knowing he was looking, "putting on a show" she had opened her knees even wider and, out of curiosity, so he could see better, he'd even stepped a step lower, but all he saw, and what he had thought was: *The crack in Marlene's tushie goes all the way up the front.*

"Do you?" Mitchell asked.

"Yeah!" Frank answered. "Once I saw Cynthia, my older sister, when she didn't think anyone was home an' she left the toilet door open."

About Mark Lichterman



*"Would you like to have
Santa come down
your filthy chimney?"*

This was the heading on a flyer I made for my company "The Flue Bug Chimney Sweep" in 1982 that became the thought that prompted my writing of *The Climbing Boy*.

As tedious as writing, re-writing and self-editing may be, I found these to be the simple, the fun, the enjoyable parts of writing.

In 1984, after finishing the rewriting and self-editing, I began the task of finding an agent or a publisher for *The Climbing Boy*. *Writer's Market* became my bible.

After hundreds upon hundreds of queries, each including a stamped and self-addressed envelope (this was before I discovered computers), and after receiving hundreds upon hundreds of rejections, I discovered the Catch-22 of the publishing industry: agents will not look at a new writer unless he/she has been published, and publishers will not look at a new writer unless he/she has an agent.

But I had discovered that writing had become a very enjoyable and important part of my life, so as I continued to look for an agent or a publisher for *The Climbing Boy*, in 1986 I began *Captain Midnight and the Toothpaste Thief*, which I later renamed *Becoming*.

Lo and behold, after twenty-two years of trying, and nearly giving up, Metropolis Ink agreed to publish *The Climbing Boy* and, four years later, *Becoming*.

Thank you Kurt and David for taking Zachariah, Mitchell and their worlds out of the dark box they had lived in for twenty-two years.