



The Animals: Love Letters Between Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy

Christopher Isherwood, Don Bachardy

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The love story between Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy—in their own words

The English novelist and screenwriter Christopher Isherwood was already famous as the author of *Goodbye to Berlin* when he met Don Bachardy, a California teenager, on the beach in Santa Monica in 1952. Within a year, they began to live together as an openly gay couple, defying convention in the closeted world of Hollywood. Isherwood was forty-eight; Bachardy was eighteen. *The Animals* is the testimony in letters to their extraordinary partnership, which lasted until Isherwood's death in 1986—despite the thirty year age gap, affairs and jealousy (on both sides), the pressures of increasing celebrity, and the disdain of twentieth-century America for love between two men.

The letters reveal the private world of the Animals: Isherwood was "Dobbin," a stubborn old workhorse; Bachardy was the rash, playful "Kitty." Isherwood had a gift for creating a safe and separate domestic milieu, necessary for a gay man in midtwentieth-century America. He drew Bachardy into his semi-secret realm, nourished Bachardy's talent as a painter, and launched him into the artistic career that was first to threaten and eventually to secure their life together.

The letters also tell of public achievements—the critical acclaim for *A Single Man*, the commercial success of *Cabaret*—and the bohemian whirl of friendships in Los Angeles, London, and New York with such stars as Truman Capote, Julie Harris, David Hockney, Vanessa Redgrave, Gore Vidal, and Tennessee Williams. Bold, transgressive, and playful, *The Animals* articulates the devotion, in tenderness and in storms, between two uniquely original spirits.

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