

Why the Sex Doesn't Matter

By Robyn Walters

Oh, I'm not saying sex shouldn't matter, particularly to younger, nubile, virile adults. You know—20s through 60s, say. It certainly mattered to me back then. Marriage, babies, "self-help." Some good memories there as well as some recognition of obsessive solitary behavior.

Other than a Naval Academy Midshipman cruise to Brazil and time between marriages one and two, all of my experience with intercourse occurred within the bounds of holy or civil matrimony. All heterosexual. Four children's worth. And not a stretch mark.

My first marriage lasted 13 years, and the second, 26. Perhaps the beginnings of a mathematical pattern.

Late in my second marriage, when our ardor and my sexual abilities took a nosedive, I began to take an interest in men. Oh, maybe I had a gay streak. But no, that wasn't it at all. The truth began coming out after my youngest headed off to college and I had internet access.

Typing "crossdresser" into the Yahoo search engine opened a whole new world, and I rather quickly discovered a long-suppressed woman hidden in my male life. Robyn bubbled up, and my wife couldn't accept even female garb at Halloween.

Marriage number two effectively ended the Sunday morning I told her about Robyn, a name that she later suggested but now denies. A year and a half later, our homes were sold, and I drove west while she stayed behind. It was hard, very hard.

After moving into my new home, I decided to see a gender counselor to find out what was going on with me. The answer, after a few months, was frighteningly simple. "Robyn, you are transsexual. What are you going to do about it?"

At long last, there was a plausible answer to my developing interest in men. It took a while for me to put a label on it: bisexual because I was still attracted to women, too. The plus came soon thereafter.

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What Do I Bring to a Relationship?

By Gloria Jackson-Nefertiti

In December 2019, I learned about an upcoming event at [She Bop](#) (a women-owned sex toy boutique in Portland, Oregon). It was called "New Horizons in Kink & Polyamory: An Evening with Authors [Kevin Patterson](#) & [Dr. Liz Powell](#)." Since this event was scheduled to take place the day after my birthday, I considered it a birthday present to myself.

Though I value both speakers' opinions, Kevin Patterson was the one who gave me the most to think about. He shared three questions that night, and—to risk sounding clichéd—these questions and their answers were life-changing for me.

But before I share those questions, here is some background about my partners and how we met.

I've been with "G" for 14 years. I first saw him and his partner S when I sat across from them at a reading group for [The Ethical Slut](#). But we didn't start dating until 2006, when I expressed a desire to.

I met "J" in 2011 at the [Center for Sex Positive Culture](#) in Seattle and have referred to him as my partner since Fall of 2012.



Gloria, continues on page 21

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Editor's Note

Dear Community,

In this issue, we turn to a theme we had planned before the pandemic disrupted our lives: Finding Sex/Finding Love. The prompt was: "How do you seek and find romantic and/or sexual connections? Do you use technology such as dating apps; why or why not? Have you intentionally sought these connections, or stumbled upon them? We want to hear about your experiences, whether delightful, discouraging, amusing, or absurd!"

While current events have certainly put a pause on many of our efforts to create romantic and sexual connection, we hope you will find the reflections of this issue's authors and artists as enjoyable and relatable as we did.

Also in this issue: an "Around the World" interview with Natalia Anaya from Mexico, reports from the second Bisexual Awareness Conference, organized by Side B Philippines, and the first joint Australia/New Zealand bi+ conference: Stand Bi Us 2020, as well as a review of *Avocado Toast*, available on Amazon Prime.

Other news to report to you: we are working on obtaining status as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and hope to have this completed in the coming months.

As we await a time when a vaccine is widely available around the world, please stay safe. Remember that you are part of a worldwide bi+ community, and you are not alone.

~Robyn

**Kat reads BWQ.
Send a picture of
yourself reading
BWQ to biwomeneditor@gmail.com.
Be creative!**



Upcoming in *Bi Women Quarterly* Call for submissions

Spring 2021: Role Models

Who has had a positive impact on your bi+ journey? To whom do you turn when you need strength, inspiration, or support? Tell us about your bi+ role models or heroes, heroes or theyroes, whether they be friends, admired celebrities, or trusted community members. Submissions are due by February 1, 2021.

Summer 2021: Never Have I Ever

Let's have some fun with a game of "Never Have I Ever." Tell us about something you have never done. Is it something you hope to do, or something you hope to keep avoiding? If you hope to do it, what has stopped you, and do you think you will one day? Submissions are due by May 1, 2021.

Submission guidelines are online at
biwomenboston.org.

Send your submissions and
suggestions for future topics to
biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Note: If you do not want your full name
published, or wish to use a pseudonym,
just let us know.

We are an all-volunteer organization. Want to proofread, edit submissions, host one of our monthly brunches, help us with social media, fundraising, our Etsy shop or our WordPress website? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you're interested in helping out, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN) is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. We strive to create a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities; class backgrounds; racial, ethnic, and religious groups; ages; and abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action, and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, full acceptance of bisexuality, and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.

AROUND THE WORLD: Natalia Anaya, Mexico City, Mexico

Interviewed by Robyn Ochs

Robyn Ochs: *Natalia, please tell us about yourself.*

Natalia Anaya: My name is Natalia. I currently identify as a bisexual, pansexual, non-monosexual, and non-binary transperson. Also, I am an atheist, feminist, and transfeminist. I am an activist for all these identities.

I also like to use the labels: bigender, multigender, intergender, and agender person. And I have a friend who perceives me as a postgender person. I do not like to use the label queer for various reasons.

Robyn: *You have a lot of identities! I consider myself someone who knows more than most about identities and labels, and you've used at least one word that is relatively new to me. So, thank you for this new information. Would you mind saying more about what any of these identities mean to you?*

Natalia: Sure! With all these identities I try to express my fluidity as a non-monogender and non-binary person. I'm a person who is questioning the traditional ways of understanding gender, moving myself through the spectrum of gender variations and exploring my identity possibilities. For me, the meanings of these identities are: bigender: two genders, multigender: many genders, intergender: between genders, and agender: without gender. I conceive of all these identities as beyond monogender binarism.

Robyn: *What would you like us to know about your personal life?*

Natalia: I've been in a loving relationship for more than 20 years with my partner who is a cisgender woman. I am also a mother of a 29-year-old son and a 25-year-old daughter.

I was born and raised in Mexico City in a liberal Catholic family in which I could choose my religion, and I chose to be an atheist. A few years ago, I discovered that the word heresy (herejía) means choice and heretic (hereje) means chooser or elector, both in ancient Greek. Then and there I understood many things. Therefore, I am a proudly heretic woman in the original meaning of the word: I want and I like to choose my life and labels.

I've worked for the National Institute of Statistics and Geography since 1985 in different positions in three different cities:



Portrait of Natalia by Emer Gómez-Flores

Puebla, Aguascalientes, and Mexico City. I've been living in Mexico City since 1995.

Robyn: *How old were you when you came out?*

Natalia: I discovered the word bisexual when I was 37 years old, after living until that point in a state of confusion because the world only gave me two options—homo or straight—and I never felt comfortable with those labels. I discovered the word bisexual when I was attending a workshop about AIDS and sexuality and a girl said she was bisexual. In that moment, I heard a bell in my mind and I realized that the label bisexual fit me.

Some years later, I came out as a trans person. Since I was a child, I knew the world was very different for me. I felt attraction to others regardless of their gender, and I never felt like a girl or a boy. So I think both my bisexuality and my non-binary gender identity are non-binary ways to live. Also, my body after the hormone replacement treatment and my androgynous gender expression that I sometimes have are non-binary, as well.

Today, I am exploring new labels and identities that fit better with my feelings and experiences. For example, the labels bigender, multigender, intergender, and agender offer me a wide possibilities to live my gender identity and enjoy different perspectives to question and deconstruct gender as a binary and static entity. Also, the labels pansexual and non-monosexual enrich and complement the label bisexual to express the orientation of my erotic and loving desires.

Natalia, continued on next page

Robyn: *I like to say that identity is a journey. As we move through our lives we learn more about ourselves, and what we learn may affect how we understand ourselves and how we choose to identify. Do you envision a time when you have it all figured out?*

Natalia: I think identity is a journey too. But it is not just movement through my life that lets me know more about myself. I think identities, labels, and the language linked to sexual and gender diversities change over time. Language is the tool that lets us build ourselves and our interactions with otherness. Besides, I enjoy exploring myself continuously so I cannot envision a time prior to my death when I will have it all figured out. And I'm so happy for that.

Robyn: *That is such an important point! Our individual journeys take place in the context of an external culture that is also changing and evolving. And I agree: for me it's about enjoying the journey.*

You've been a bi activist for a long time, so I'm hoping you know the answer to this next question: What is the history of bi activism in your country? Are there now or have there been groups in other parts of the country, or has all of the organizing to date been in Mexico City?

Natalia: The history of bi activism is very short in my country. The first bisexual group was Taller de Reflexión de Mujeres Bisexuales (Tremub-1996), which was founded by Angélica Ramirez. After that group, we founded Caracol Red Mixta Bisexual (1998). The members of that group asked to change the name of the group, and it became Sentido Bisexual or Sentido Bi (1999). This group continued until 2001 but stopped their activities because during that time my ex-wife didn't let me see my children, and I was devastated. Two years later, I was able to spend time with my children again, and I founded Opción Bisexual (2003). Our way to get new people involved was visiting lesbian and gay groups to talk about bisexuality and, at the end of the presentations some of the girls and boys of those groups came out as bisexuals, and attended our groups.



In the late 1990s and early 2000s it was very hard to come out as bisexual and even to be bisexual. The Mexican culture related to diversity was more binarist than today. But due to the efforts of our group of activists, bisexuality has become more visible and accepted, even in the lesbian and gay communities. Today, more and more people are coming out as bisexual, homoflexible, pansexual, or plurisexual. Frequently, the meanings of these labels are different for each person. But nowadays there are more and more young people who say aloud that they are bisexual, most of them women.

This past September 23rd, on Celebrate Bisexuality Day, I noticed there are now more lesbian groups that have become bi-inclusive, and some of them have changed their names to include bisexual women. I think the bisexual community has achieved a better integration into the LGBT+ community and the feminist movement over the years.

Today, I'm not in a group, but I do activism on my own in the new groups of young trans and lesbian people.

Robyn: *What has been your experience working across national borders? Is there a value in these interactions? I'm very interested in how we cross-pollinate ideas.*

Natalia: I've read about bisexuality in blogs, books, and magazines in English. Also, I've had many interactions with people in Latin America and Spain, but I haven't discovered anything new about bisexuality. For me, the more interesting and nutritious information is about intersectional and decolonial feminisms from the global south and Black feminisms. Now I have a more complete perspective about sexuality as a part of a larger set of violences that comes from the global north culture, like racism and classism, scientism, cartesianism, binarism, and, of course, coloniality.

Robyn: *What else would you like us to know?*

Natalia: When I share testimonies about myself, I always say I have been blessed three times: I am bisexual, I am a trans person, and I live with HIV. Because of these three blessings, I see the world from a very different, interesting, and productive standpoint. I've learned a lot from these experiences. From these vulnerable three conditions, I can see the privileges and power of the people who self-identify as "normal and healthy persons," and I can also see other privileges like whiteness, even white feminism.

Robyn: *Natalia, thank you so much for your time.*

Robyn Ochs is the editor of Bi Women Quarterly and two anthologies, Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World and RECOGNIZE: The Voices of Bisexual Men.

being my own girlfriend experiment

By Laura-Marie River Victor Peace

I was trying to be my own girlfriend for a year or so. I'd heard the concept of being your own best friend, which I like, but I preferred a different intimacy. The experiment concluded when I decided I can't be my own girlfriend, that relationship is about receiving something from outside myself, encountering an Other. It was a great try, though—informative.

I wanted to be my own girlfriend because I want to love myself, to bring more healing and nurturing to my life. Also, I want a girlfriend for support, learning, new behavior. My spouse Ming is more than wonderful, but it would be fun to have romantic, sexual experiences with someone who has different desires and behaviors. And a body to enjoy that is different from Ming's, with different abilities/disabilities than what I'm used to.

I spend all my time with myself, so I was a convenient candidate. I wanted to be more self-sufficient. Seemed easier than finding another human to be my girlfriend—less potential for heart-break, drama, and illness. Less time consuming—no commute. I wouldn't have to fall in love with her kids and family, if any, then risk losing them also, which has happened to me so many times before.

I do like myself—the wordplay, creativity, vibrancy. Good ideas, nice writing. I'm skilled at love and loyal. I'm considerate, a true listener, passionate, making my own path. I have pretty hair. I spent many years hating my body, but I love it now.

I wanted to date myself, live with myself, love myself with a steadfast tenderness. I did spend some good time with me. I learned when I was falling asleep or waking up especially, lying in bed, to touch my own tummy, breasts, arms, shoulders, and hands, in a friendly way. That felt good; it was comforting. I said "I love you" to myself. I called myself honey, sometimes.

I didn't buy myself flowers—seemed too expensive. I didn't take myself out to dinner; I don't drive. Dating seems expensive, the way most people do it. I could have taken myself to a park for free, but I don't feel safe at parks by myself.

Mostly, I thought about it, and I decided the main appeal of a relationship is that another person is another world. Getting fresh input. Learning about them and about reality through their life. New perspectives. A relationship is about collaboration—making a new thing together, that never existed before. Can't really collaborate by myself.

I realized I usually know what I'm going to do. I do surprise myself sometimes, with ideas. But other people surprise me constantly, every day. I've been with Ming for almost nine years, but he still surprises me all the time, and parts of him I'll never know. He has a deep beautiful Mystery.

There are things I could do to discover other parts of myself—role play, trying drastically new activities, altered states. But I didn't want to try those. Doing psychedelics seems too difficult right now. I wanted more like bubble baths and lighthearted fun. But we don't have a bathtub.

I still want to be there for me and take all I learned from this experiment into the future. Maybe one day I'll try again.

The experience helped me loosen up how I see myself and how I care for myself. It's been a long journey from not knowing how to care for myself and feeling guilty if I tried, to doing self-care much of the day. As I find myself in middle age, I enjoy my own company more and have faith in my ability to keep changing and learning.

Laura-Marie River Victor Peace is a queer radical mental health activist living in community in Las Vegas, Nevada. She enjoys rest, riding her trike, plants, and blogging at listeningtothenoiseuntil-itmakesense.com.



Artwork by Lindsay M. (@lindsaysaidit on Instagram)

Wondrous Love

By Neen Chapman

Love Sweet Love. Love is a Battlefield. Crazy in Love. Love's not Time's fool. My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song. How many loved your moments of glad grace. Variations on the word love. Just The Way You Are. Baby Love. All Of Me. Justify My Love. And The Power Of Love....

Song titles, lyrics, and lines from poems all about Love... and how true they all are. Wondrous Love in every incarnation has a wildness and a beauty. Humans have been telling tales about love, writing about it, singing it, painting it, whispering it, analyzing it, second guessing it, defining it, and professing it for millennia. Age old Love.

Finding love for a majority of humans is at their core of connection. Of course, love takes many forms, and no two relationships are ever going to be the same. Our uniqueness and our life's experience make sure of that.

I have been the most fortunate human as I have had deep, powerful and passionate love relationships. They have set the bar for 30 years, and that is a high bar. Confession: I've been solo and not in a love relationship for over four years now. Oh, I've had fleeting weeks of passion and being on the cusp of love and a relationship, but, and it's a significant but, on both occasions the other human walked away. Sadness, loss, brief grief, questions, self-doubt, the lot passed through my mind on both occasions. Tough stuff to experience, but every time it happens, I ask myself is it worth it, and I always answer (after a period of healing and time): Yes! It is absolutely worth it!

As for Finding Love, for me, this one has been all over the shop. I've met beautiful people through work, through friends, through interests, through nights out, through shopping adventures, through travel, through the net, through parties, through grief counselling, through volunteering, through vet appointments and surprisingly, through visits to the hospital. Yes, even while being treated in hospital for an avocado toast injury, I met a beautiful nurse, who, at 2 a.m. and post my being stitched up (well, super glued in fact), gave me her number and asked me on a date.

You might say, oh, but you're solo right now, what happened to all of these dates and serendipitous meetings? A couple of life things happened in the last two years to remind me that I needed to do some more work on me and not chase love and sex. But, oh my, I miss both.

What to do about meeting a wonderful human? Know yourself. My first thought and action, an absolute must, is to check in with myself and see where I am at. How is my brain health, my thinking health, my self-health? I have DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder), and that makes my life pretty complicated and never dull.

The reality of living with a mental health diagnosis is off-the-scales selfcare and being brutally aware that any human who comes into my life, to share a life, knows what DID is, understands that it does not mean *Sybil* or *The United States of Tara* or any other misleading and outright misrepresentation of DID in media, film, books, television, and even medical journals. After many years of therapy, hard work, and selfcare, I am pretty damn good most of the time and only occasionally do I still have bad days, but those days are a part of life. Just like every other human being on the planet.



Not exactly spontaneous is it... talk about a buzz kill (definitely and necessary), but, once I've done the groundwork—and if the wonderful human is still around—I get to be myself with them. Finding out who they are, how their brain is, falling in love, having company, watching movies, exploring the world, making art, dancing together, listening to music, caring, and having outstanding, amazing sex.

Sounds like a lot of work and yes, it is, but as I said earlier, it's absolutely worth it.

How to find love? The one way I rule out these days is anything online. Internet dating does not work for this bi+ pan, non-binary, DID human. There's something two-dimensional about reducing connection to a few photos and a limited character bio. Tick boxes of interests and kinks, odd questionnaires that try to distill my humanity and my illuminating and riveting personality down to a match matrix.

I know it works for millions of humans across the globe. There are so many new apps. It feels like there's a new one every week. Millions of success stories. I have friends who have met their partners on the net and are now married. This medium works for them. Mind, there still isn't any halfway or even quarter way decent internet dating app for bisexuals and pansexuals in Australia. This is a major turnoff to finding Love on the net.

Internet dating is possibly good for hook ups and sex (when it's safe and vetted) and is certainly used for exactly that by a huge swath of the global population. Good for them if it works. I have used the internet for amazing sex and sexual relationships over the years, and they can absolutely service the libido and the urge, but other than that, the depth and understanding I seek in a relationship means the Internet is not for me. Hook ups aren't on my radar these days. Boo hoo. My libido hasn't reduced but the interconnectedness of my mind and body for sexual pleasure must have friendship, relationship, and connection with another

Neen continues on next page

beautiful human on a similar path. It's an annoying epiphany at times but a supremely healthy one.

So no to the Internet dating for me, where to then? Let's just set 2020 aside for serendipitous meetings of amazing humans. Though I have met a number of beautiful people via zoom (Ha! What did I just say about online anything...), moving right along. I am putting my energy into real life. Meeting beautiful bi+ pan humans through our incredible community networks. When allowed and safe, going to art shows, music events, writing classes, LGBTIQ Conferences, actual real-life conversations and new places for coffee, cakes and drinks. Fingers crossed for the future.

There is, however, another side to dating in the bi+ pan community. Being a leader in the community here in Sydney and as part of a brilliant new collective, I am acutely aware of not taking any kind of advantage of anyone. Makes it a little tough sometimes to take chances and understand flirting and mutual feelings (when is that ever easy) from the lines and the trust placed in me being a leader. I'm still working this one out. I'll let you know how it goes.

Where does this leave us with all of those love songs, lyrics, poems, stories, and paintings. They are divine and one of the most precious parts of being human. I believe in them all. I have danced to, sung, painted, talked of, written all about love since I was about eight years old. Why change now just because I'm 50 and life, society, and the world are going a tad mad.

Actually, thinking about it, what better time to go into the world. Humans are more real at the moment than I have ever seen them be. Kinder, more compassionate, more truthful, and 100% more interested in the connection, depth, beauty, and pure wildness of Finding Love.

Neen Chapman is Bi+ Pan and out in all aspects of life and work, recently 50 (how did that happen), silver haired, and loving being the Vice President of Sydney Bi+ Network, founder of BOLDER, mental health awareness speaker, activist and speaker, maid to lovely kitty cats, and deeply into history, reading, geology, documentaries, art, painting, poetry, music, equality, Bi+ activism, politics, and kink.

love to be found

By Carol E Moses



Carol E Moses is a visual artist living in Massachusetts. Moses does painting, drawing, and portrait photography/interview series. Her current project is "Image & Interview: Meeting with Bulgaria," in the WorldsofCo residency. Upcoming is a blog of art and artists in the pandemic time: artinthetimeofcoronavirus.com. Other work is exhibited at Studio 213 in Boston's SoWa neighborhood.

how I find it

By Nest Valorfixer

our bodies whisper
honest need.
I have too much
love to carry.
I was told I'd be ignored
for my shameless
fat body.
my belly only knows truth.
my thighs are blatant.

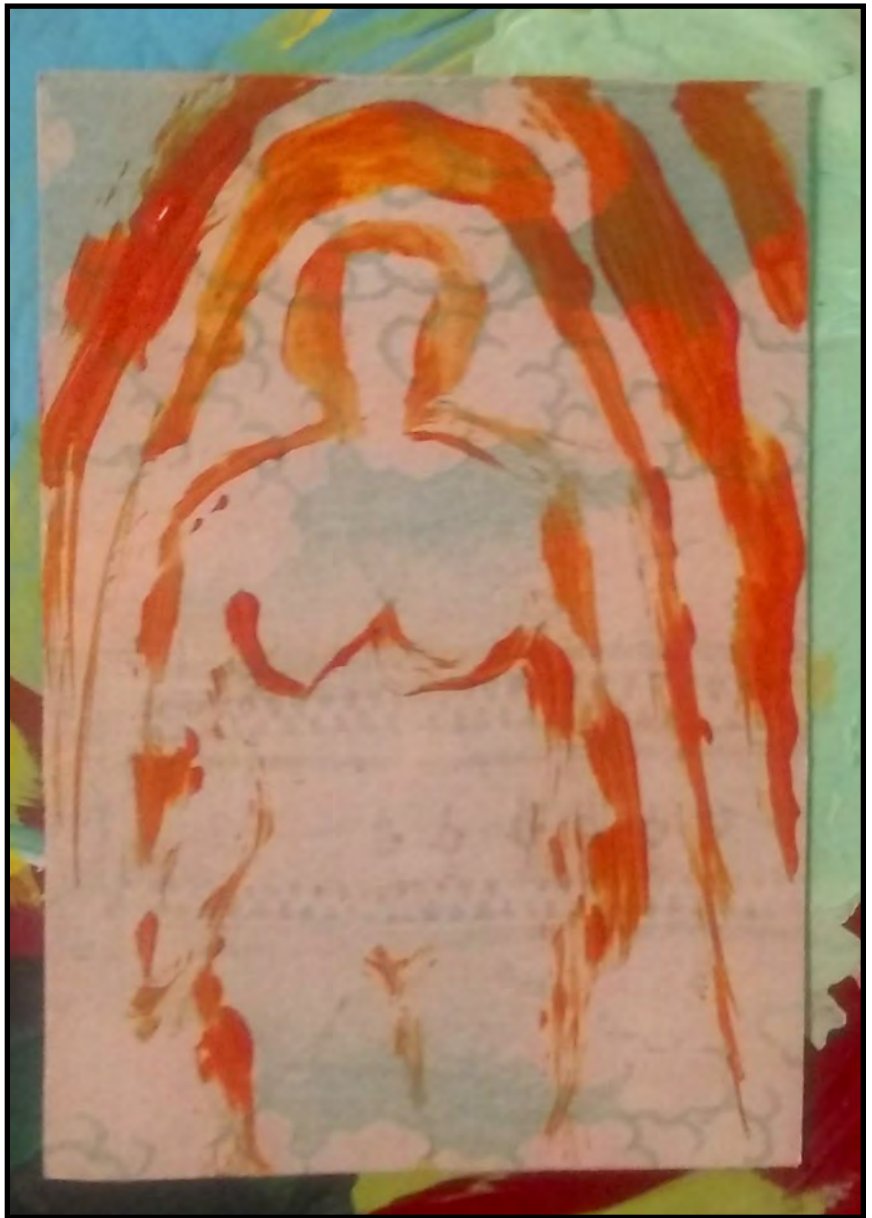
and Love knocks on my door
every day.
I swing the door open
and see she
brought a wild idea
fluttering with vibrancy.
I'm listening to the new song
she left on my doorstep.
I'm learning how to sing.

companions arrive and I choose
new lives.
I kiss the centers of their chests.
they call goddesses
I never knew existed
out from the forest of my being.

thank you to Love.
your surprise gifts
teach me
what I was born to learn—
how to pay attention,
touch another person,
bend the right amount,
listen without losing myself.

you are the best neighbor I ever had,
bringing all these kale leaves,
sprigs of parsley,
strangely shaped tomatoes,
eggs warm from the hen.

I'll thank you right someday.



Self-portrait. Artist trading card 2.5 x 3.5. Acrylic paint on found-product packaging cardstock.

lightning from a storm cloud
strikes the mountain.
I'm so lucky
the four-leaf clovers
are shaping into my name.

Nest Valorfixer is a queer sexblogger, describing the indescribable since breakfast. Please find her at www.fallingintotheblissfulsublime.com.

2 poems by k.l.zelaya

Ode to the Emotionally Unavailable

She kisses me like we aren't
in the men's bathroom
at a drag show.

Her touch is so light
I wonder if she knows
what she is doing.

She breathes into me
like she was never gone.

King Princess and Hayley Kiyoko serenade us.
The beginning of each song
is the crashing of a wave,
and we are a buoy tethered
to a bottom we cannot see.

I feel her fingers hanging on my belt loop,
and I can't stop myself from blushing.
So what is it called when
I am baptized by a woman?

But it's been two years, and now I think
if our kisses were a church,
I entered the building like the prodigal son,
lost and in search of relief.

I thought I saw her once, and
I wished I had worn my Sunday best.

I thought I was baptized when she touched me,
but I no longer believe I need to be forgiven.

I knelt at her feet and she let me,
like she knew of such things.



The Three Sisters

Did you read that poem?
The one by H.D., you said
in the morning you would read it.

When I whispered that I hate men,
did you hear me? I said that you
are the most beautiful person
in this room. I said that only you
have my eyes tonight. I said
please, forgive me.

In that pub, our fingers laced
in a web just as beautiful as
a spider's. The faes and the kelpies
celebrated when we caught our
first fly and ate it.

We should have stopped there,
but we told our stories of June
and God. They flooded our mouths
and spilled from our lips
like river water after a storm.

Are you reading this poem?
I'll knock on your door and
conjure a trail of silk
so that you can follow me
once I leave.

k.l.zelaya is a poet. Her passions include crocheting sweaters for her dog, taking walks at 4 p.m., and supporting independent bookstores.

I am not your Manic Pixie Dream Girl

By Martine Mussies

Dating is difficult, complicated, messy, and awkward for everyone, I assume. But autism adds an extra layer of turmoil to that already unstable cocktail. Especially if you're bisexual—and those last two identities often go hand in hand. Still, relatively little has been published about these intersections. In this essay I would thus like to share something of my experiences, somewhere in the triangle of dating, bisexuality, and autism.

Of course, I cannot speak for all women with autism, but I can tell you that for me, the whole game of dating seems to work a little differently than for most neurotypical people I know. "You don't participate in the ritual dance," my partner once eloquently said. Where others seem to see the dating game as such a dance, of challenging, teasing, sometimes taking a distance, then coming closer. I simply stand next to someone, I take their hand and if it's up to me, I won't let go.

Netflix' *Love on the Spectrum* (*LotS*) is therefore bizarrely recognizable to me from the first minutes of the show, when Michael shows the beautiful wood carving he made five years ago for the lady still unknown to him, who one day will be his future wife, and later when he describes somewhat bitterly that girls his age are actually mainly interested in "intercourse" and not in a steady relationship. I often fall into that trap.

Or take Chloe from *LotS* who, when talking about what she wishes for, indicates that a potential partner should also love Marvel, so that they can talk together about the new films and comics that are coming out. Check—I always thought I would need someone to do performances and concerts together. And that, too, has screwed me up more than once.

At first sight, the sad incidents from my own love life seem to be mainly about the naivety and gullibility that go with my autism—and not so much about bisexuality. Nevertheless, I think the fact

that I am bisexual and profiled myself as such on dating sites has contributed to the misunderstandings. For example, when a girl calling herself "bi-curious" only wanted to kiss me to turn on her boyfriend. I thought she liked me and I felt like an object. Used. As if my feelings were worth less than those of the straight couple.

In her fairest moment, my ex-girlfriend Steampunk Redhead said, "I just fear that in the end, you'd rather be with a man," and from that uncertainty she withdrew—or in modern dating jargon she "ghosted me." Maybe this was just an incident that had more to do with her own psychological make-up. Yet it is striking how many of my exes—men and women—have made statements indicating that a relationship between two women is less real/valuable in their eyes than a relationship between a man and a woman. Think of men's remarks like, "I would break up if you were cheating on me; well, not with a woman, of course, I'd find that exciting."

The latter is also problematic—many of the men who pretended to want to have a relationship with me did so as they hoped that dating me would be the shortcut to having trio-sex with me and a friend of mine. When I found out that one of my exes, let's call him The Contrabassist, had been on a trip to Paris with another woman without telling me, he was also quick to refer to my sexual identity: "Why do you claim me like this?! I just want to have a fun and relaxed time with you, play music and have sex together, have a threesome or a quartet... that's what you do, right, you do it with everyone, man or woman or somewhere in between?!"

As far as I can judge, these statements were sincere, as if, for these men, bisexuality is a synonym for promiscuity. Don't get me wrong, if someone wants to have several hookups one after the other, I will be the last one to judge. But it is the prejudice about bisexuality that makes me angry and sad. I am bisexual and apart from that I am "the most loyal dog in the kennel" (as a friend once described me), and those things are totally separate in my world. Yet also that inner image regularly clashed with the reactions of the outside world.

What was it, then, that got people on the wrong track so often, in my teens and twenties? In the words of a good friend: "It's the whole picture—a kooky, colorful loving free spirit. Colorful, lively, bubbly, funny, a bit artistic. You are always full of surprises, happy tunes, and funny outbursts. Everything is welcome; you listen for hours. You cheer people up. And then you are bisexual and talk enthusiastically about sex..." It wasn't until I went to study film theory tropes that it clicked for me: apparently, men often confuse me with the cardboard character of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl.

"The Manic Pixie Dream Girl is that bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures."
— Nathan Rabin (2007)

Martine, continued on next page



Martine, continued from previous page

According to popular descriptions, a MPDG “lives freely and loves madly.” She is “like a ray of sunshine into the otherwise drab world.” And she lives “every day to the fullest” and “always in the moment.” In the films using this stock character the MPDG often doesn’t exhibit a strongly developed inner self, let alone a desire for personal growth, independent goals of her own and mutuality in the relationship. She is just there to support, enable, and provide for the male character in the story. Which is strange, for women have a life of their own. And besides, why would a grown-up man need a girl to “fix” him?

Nathan Rabin, the film critic who coined the term, described the MPDG as “an archetype [...] that taps into a particular male fantasy: of being saved from depression and ennui by a fantasy woman who sweeps in like a glittery breeze to save you from yourself, then disappears once her work is done.” Thus, as Gordon So (2019) explains, “the trope reduces women’s individualities to a type in a disparaging manner, similar to the ‘dumb blonde’ stereotype where a type is used to mock women who possess certain traits.” As I often quite like the movie characters based on the MPDG trope, I do not understand why they are reduced to playing only this role. I would love to see them as the protagonists of the stories, like Pippi Longstocking in her 20’s, 30’s, or even 70’s. She could be the female hobbit to bring the ring to Mordor! But up till today, the MPDG is a two-dimensional and sexist portrayal of women and this is harmful.

Steampunk Redhead tried to frame herself as a MPDG—skipping over any complicated feelings, just presenting herself as a carefree sunny spirit—and then had to break out of that framework. The Contrabassist resented me for not being a MPDG. When I pointed out to him that I am a living creature, with feelings and wishes, he replied that I should “quit being so dramatic” and went on telling mutual friends and fellow musicians about this “complete shift” of mine, calling me “hysterical” and a “Borderliner.”

It speaks volumes about the expectations with which he started dating me, a quirky and colorful bisexual girl. The histories of oppression of unconventional women by labeling them as “hysterical” have been well-documented. Calling someone a “Borderliner” is just old wine in a new bottle, and a very nasty way to dismiss a group of people with mental vulnerability. (I consider myself lucky that I do not have to suffer from an emotionally unstable personality and all the prejudices that come with this label.) Apparently, the Contrabassist would prefer to have his girl blissfully wrapped up in fiction, rather than reality. And when the MPDG fiction did not fit his experiences anymore, he just switched to the opposite trope—the “female hysteria” narrative—to tell our social circles about the break-up. Both these stories are equally shallow and excessive. Myth-making like this fills the empty vessel for those who, in Jungian terms, haven’t integrated parts of their unconscious self into their conscious ego, and thus leads to unrealistic expectations.

That’s why I’m happy with a series like *LotS*, because although it’s

easy to come up with a whole list of criticisms—the participants are mostly white, middle class, and the show is full of bad advice, infantilizing speech, lack of nuance, sentimental, stereotypical representation, dumb musical cues, etc., etc.—the show is about real, realistic people. No shallow MPDGs or “hysterical women,” but multi-faceted portrayals of interesting persons. Like Chloe, who dates both men and women, and finds a spark when plucking sunflowers with Lotus: “I can’t stop smiling!” and “We were talking non-stop!” And it is good that the series emphasizes the importance of talking.

Communication in queer relationships is perhaps even more important, because you do not want to follow the social escalator. And communication can be difficult for people with autism, especially if you have to deal with all kinds of unspoken expectations and prejudices about your sexual orientation. If a woman is looking for a man on a dating site, it is assumed that she is heterosexual. If as a woman you are looking for a woman, then you fit in the lesbian box. But if you insist that you are bisexual, you soon come into contact with all kinds of other assumptions. And that can be very confusing.

Stories matter as fiction creates real life. Many individuals, especially those with an avoidant attachment style, do truly believe that there is a “perfect” person for them, somewhere, and try to present themselves as “perfect” as well. Looking back, I recall a conversation I had with Steampunk Redhead, on a picnic with her kittens. After eating some of her glitter cupcakes, she started creating me garlands from daisy flowers. “I am just always happy,” she said, and although I knew that this was not true (she had scars from automutilation), I did not consider it to be a red flag. Same goes for the Contrabassist on our first date, who told me, “You are a little crazy, heh?” with twinkling eyes. When I tried to have a conversation about this comment of his—“please define crazy”—he just made a joke out of it. But somewhere deep down, I already knew that he did not see me for who I was, that he was fooled by my appearance, just like Steampunk Redhead (subconsciously) tried to fool me.

No matter how quirky you are, which colors you dye your hair, and whether you are bisexual or autistic or both—we are all on this planet to be the heroes of our own story, not two-dimensional supporting roles in somebody else’s. I am happy with *LotS*, but still waiting to see movies in which a man leaves his head with MPDG stardust/dreams/fantasies behind to marry an emotionally supportive adult woman, who has her own life story to live. No need to hide or even toss your magical joie-de-vivre, you can be a cheerful, quirky lassie if you’d like to, but just be careful about being “manic pixie-zoned” by yourself and others. Discover yourself in your own terms and allow others the same, for idealizing a person actually devalues them.

Martine Mussies is a Ph.D. candidate at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, and a professional musician. Her other interests include autism, (neuro)psychology, Japanese martial arts, video games, King Alfred, and science fiction. More: martinemussies.nl.

When You've Sworn off LDR, then COVID Comes Along

By Lara Z



During early 2019 I was riding high. I had a new book out sharing some of my experiences as a bi woman in an open marriage (but fictionally). I had a girlfriend and was going to visit her for a whole week while doing the book's West Coast tour. I'd be appearing at events with her accompanying me and

advancing with some quality time what had been for a while a long-distance relationship.

But the distance had apparently broken the relationship, and we ended up acknowledging that. We'd gotten together over several shared interests and when she moved to take a good job, I missed her. We tried to remain close through texts and phone calls. Then those tapered off. She'd always been supportive of my writing, and I enjoyed hearing about her work and life in this new town. I dedicated my new book to her when I finished it, but I'd apparently not done the "little things" that keep a relationship truly healthy. She hadn't reached out voicing problems either, though. When we did get together, it seemed clear our tastes were changing. Still, I'd thought communication was just something we needed to work on.

I took time to gain perspective and mourn. A friend had told me mourning the end of a relationship was an important way of acknowledging its importance to you. I acknowledged my part in the end of the relationship, and I realized I still wanted to be "out there" and find someone to connect with. Everyone said I needed to be on OKCupid or join a swingers or poly online group. But I wanted, no, I needed, in-person meetings. Maybe it was "once burned, twice shy," but I didn't want to get into any relationship where we couldn't get together in person to build the relationship. Using technology, it felt to me, was the path for miscommunication and my missing the signs of where the relationship really stood. Otherwise, I'd screw up like last time.

I have made several friends through in-person group meetups, and once I thought I had potential for more with a partner I met through a dating app. Despite the "interested in a relationship not a hook up" status, turns out the dating app person was just keen on hook ups, and I got the vibe after our first date. Once the hook up happened, it ended. Another potential

partner agreed to a breakfast date meetup and then practically attacked me in the parking lot when I was just looking for maybe a second date. I ended that, too, and then closed the dating app account. I kept going to the in-person meetups though, in the hopes that a friendly conversation within the group setting might grow into more.

It's 2020 now, and the pandemic has put the kibosh on in-person meetings. LDR, texting, and video chats are all there really is for starting a relationship. Now that I know I need in-person quality time to build a good relationship, the irony that I can't is painful.

Lara Z is a writer and editor living in Orlando, Florida. She is the author of We Three: One and One and One Makes Three.

Visit Our New ETSY Store!

A photograph showing a variety of colorful pins and small flags. The pins feature various messages related to LGBTQ+ rights and social justice, such as 'BLACK LIVES MATTER', 'QUEER', 'SMASH THE PATRIARCHY AND HAVE A NICE DAY', 'I'm bisexual and I'm not attracted to you.', 'love outside the lines', 'build communities not walls', 'This is what a feminist looks like.', 'I AM NO LONGER ACCEPTING THE THINGS I CAN'T CHANGE. I AM CHANGING THE THINGS I CAN'T ACCEPT.', and 'EXIST. PERIST'. There are also rainbow and bisexual pride flags.

PINS. Amazing pins.

Also, bisexual and pansexual pride flags. And bi, trans, and rainbow earrings.

That's one of the ways we raise funds to cover the production, printing, and mailing costs of this publication. There are 49 amazing bi, pan, lgbtq+, anti-racist, and other social justice pins on our new ETSY page. Please take a look. Favorite. Order. Then write a review. Spread the word!
www.etsy.com/shop/BiProducts.

Finding Love with a Compass and Without

By Deb Morley

Those who have known me only the past seventeen years know me as a bi woman in a long-term, monogamous relationship. You may even know me as married. Those who have known me the previous seventeen years know more.

I was once asked, “What do you look for in a partner?” I remember pausing and thinking to myself, “What do I look for?” as I cocked my head to one side. “You know, what are the qualities you look for in a person? Whom do you choose to be with? How do you know you’ll be compatible?” continued my inquisitor. Compatible. The word hit me solid in the face and melted down my chest into my heart. Scanning over the memories of lost loves, dashed hopes, and fantasies of having found “the right one,” the truth that I had been trying to begin, sustain, and/or find happiness in relationships with another with whom I was incompatible was startling. Incompatible. In the words of Dictionary.com, “(of two things) *so opposed in character as to be incapable of existing together...* (of two people) *unable to live together harmoniously.*” It was so obvious. Why had I not seen it?

Part of the answer to this question existed in the word choice. Looking back, I realized that I had done very little active choosing of those whom I had gotten involved with but instead had participated in a passive acceptance of those who had chosen me. *I need a tool*, I thought. A method, a way to discern early on whether or not I am compatible with this person. Compatible. In the words of Dictionary.com, “(of two things) *able to exist or occur together without conflict.*” I was on to something.

As this epiphany unfolded, the four directions emerged in my mind’s eye as a pathway for moving forward, as a kind of compass for finding love:

North. Earth. The physical. Am I physically attracted to this person? And, does this person match my desire for physicality in my life? Movement of the body, hiking in nature, bending, stretching, and sweating?

East. Wind. The mental. Are we a match intellectually? Not exactly alike, but does this person’s way of thinking excite me? Challenge me? Turn me on?

West. Water. The emotional. Are they in touch with their feelings? Has this person done their work? Do they even know there is work to do?!

South. Fire. The spiritual. Does this person have a spiritual life? Their own beliefs that may differ from mine, but that connect them with the universal spirit, the web of life, the energy that lives within and beyond us?

And so, I returned to the game of love with my new tool, my compass for finding love. It was a revelation. It empowered me to make choices about whom I got involved with and why. Even if

only two of the four directions were a hit, I went in with eyes wide open and more realistic expectations of what the relationship was and could ever be. And then I met my match who aligned well enough with my compass for finding love that we made a go of it. And if this were a fairy tale, I would now say “we lived happily ever after.” But this is not a fairy tale and life can be hard. I met my match who is the love of my life, and somewhere over the years,

I noticed that the needle of my compass for finding love had changed directions. It no longer pointed outward but pointed inward into me. Following this new direction has been essential.

What I have learned on this journey is that in order to truly find love in the world I’ve had to find the love in me, for me. So while aligning with the four directions was a useful tool that helped me avoid some pitfalls and reinforced what I felt to be true about the compatibility between my life partner and me, a line from the last song ever recorded collectively by all four Beatles, *The End*, says it best: “And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make” (Paul McCartney, 1969).

Deb lives in Haverford, PA outside of Philadelphia with her wife Gina and kitty cat Everett.



This artwork is a collaboration between Sophia @nomsikka on Instagram and YouTuber Jessie Paige @jessiepaige on Instagram.

Bring on the Cats

By C.K. Larsen

You should know that I am terrible at dating. I'm in my thirties now and haven't entered the dating scene for at least ten years. Thankfully, I've been married to a wonderful, supportive husband, who loves me for who I am. I suffer from depression and anxiety, so large crowds and socializing with new people are not exactly fun for me. This has only increased over the last several years. So, if forced to utilize the current tools in the dating world, then I definitely would've ended up alone with a bunch of cats and been completely okay with it. There is no doubt in my mind about this.

Years after my mother's divorce, when she felt comfortable reentering the dating scene, I would glance at her inbox with her and be absolutely horrified. As stated, I'm not the greatest in the dating world or a smooth talker by any stretch of the imagination, but some of the messages had the worst pick-up lines I've ever heard. They should've remained far down in the depths of terrible Hollywood satire that can only be spoken in movies and a mere exaggeration of the truth, but apparently, they're real. My mother is straight, so I'm unsure if women flirt this way too. Either way, I doubt I would've used a dating app for more than a day.

However, searching for a woman to date would've been equal parts exciting and nerve-wracking as my experience in this area is lacking. My denial lasted until adulthood, despite the numerous instances that left no doubt that I am in fact bi+.

My first kiss was with my best friend. We told ourselves that we were just practicing for when we got boyfriends. And more days than not we were together, even going so far as to visit each other after I moved away. Yet, after a few years of living so far apart, the distance took its toll, and eventually we stopped

speaking to each other, which was likely due to my bottomless levels of denial.

I had boyfriends throughout most of high school, but when I had a second boyfriend tell me he was gay, I blamed myself. So many nights I would fall asleep crying because I just wished to be "normal" and not wonder about kissing the girls in my school. I worried that maybe I was just too weird for my past boyfriends. In my irrational state, I panicked, thinking that maybe those boys told me that just to end our relationship. Or perhaps somehow I had changed them, as though my attraction to girls had infected them somehow. Don't ask me why I thought that. I'm not sure I could've explained it even back then.

I developed depression and social anxiety in my teen years and again stuck to dating only guys. It was a weird point in my life where, while I enjoyed intimacy with my boyfriend, I also had to push away any urges toward women. I remember dreaming one night that I slept with a girl and enjoyed the feelings and connection. However, when I woke up and realized what had happened, I was immediately flooded with shame. I swore never to speak of it again.

This embarrassment lasted with me for some time. It wasn't until a few years ago that I finally had the courage to speak about it to my husband. I was somewhat worried due to his Mormon upbringing, but he is more practical than most and seemed surprised that I'd had reservations about discussing it with him. His acceptance slowly chiseled away the years of fear and self-loathing until I no longer worried about who knew anymore. If part of my family or friends couldn't accept it, then that was that. I was tired of playing a role and never feeling like myself.

In some ways, I wish my younger self could've been braver. I sometimes wonder what my life would've been like if I had dated women. But if things had been different and it meant that I could not be with my husband, then I'd do the same thing all over again. And while it has been a bit of a wild ride in my marriage at times, I love how he supports me no matter what. I wish I could've reassured my younger self that despite all the pain and heartache, it turns out so much better than I ever expected. Because, in the end, the only person that had to accept me was me.

C.K. Larsen is a bi+ fantasy writer with a debut novel, Theme Song Panic, available on Amazon and Kindle Unlimited. They've won awards in the On My Own Time Awards with the DFW Business Council of Arts and with the SFF category of the Writers' League of Texas Manuscript Contest. Check out more at: ck-larsen.com.



Love Happens

By Sara Bardhan

For quite some time I treated my bisexuality with a benign attitude. Convinced it could never yield anything but hardships for me, I had directed my care and nurture toward relationships that would expectantly bring to me matrimony, motherhood, and love. Even as a child of nine or a pubescent teen in school, I knew which desire is condemned and which is celebrated. Now, I realize that erotics and desire may occur naturally, but imply deep-rooted power implications. As a fourteen-something, I would stare at pictures of women on the internet and wonder why I felt so queer. I did not want to be different. I did not want to be part of a community everyone considered filthy and perverted. I was frightened. I wanted to be *normal*.

In high school, I vividly remember telling my friend how watching a video of Ruby Rose made my loins tingle—starved of sex education, I did not understand what this strange sensation meant. A few breakups later at fifteen, I knew I liked women; a few of my friends did too. It was no secret to those around me. I was greeted with an occasional, “Are you going to become lesbian?” but I patiently explained the difference between being lesbian and bisexual. Despite my newfound confidence, I was sure that at least in this country, I couldn’t find a woman to love and grow old with. Queer-specific nightlife in India is restricted to those with deep pockets and an abundance of disposable income to spend on alcohol. I couldn’t afford it. I still cannot. Yet, I yearned to be in the company of people like me. I yearned for the tender touch of a woman, their soft laughter in my ears, their scent enveloped around me—but, I dismissed my yearning as impossible.

It was fiction until I found love in my best friend. She trod softly in my life, loved me gently and so did I. It did not feel strange, uncomfortable or filthy—I had never felt more comfortable in myself, honest with someone else, and vulnerable in love. Bisexuality manifested in me like a second puberty: giddy with anticipation of perusing a new world. One of excitement, devotion and purity. When Section 377 of the Indian Constitution was struck down, I remember frantically calling to tell her that we are no longer criminals in this country; free to love like everyone else.

Soon enough, I was disillusioned abruptly when the slurs started pouring in, even from close friends, and I began re-evaluating my perception of the relationship. I felt small, undignified, washed away. Even though I had finally discovered queer love, I felt dissatisfied. I was haunted with questions: “Do I love her enough?” “Am I a con?” “Is there any future for us?” Once my euphoria had dwindled and the relationship had eventually ended, I felt empty and doubtful.

Post-break-up, my infrequent Tinder- and Bumble-related escapades had resulted in humdrum conversations, meaningless hookups and growing emptiness in my heart. Love would not come to me like this. I have been infatuated with many women, sometimes even smitten, but to love deeply is an experience that is not orchestrated, it simply *happens* to me, I decided.



The truth is, I am still reconciling with being a bisexual woman in India, but, after my first relationship with a woman, I know love can grow on barren lands, as well. The sapling of deviance which I had buried shamefully had sprouted into a queer garden of Eden within me; laden with the sweetest fruits and traversed by the most beautiful nymphs.

Love has come to me in strange ways. Meaningful, sometimes. I have searched for love, like all of us do, in many places; in embarrassing ways, sometimes out of loneliness, sometimes libido, sometimes existential despair, but love has come to me in quaint places, on silent nights, whispers, in my sleep, when I least expected it. Love has come to me when I wasn't looking for it.

Sara Bardhan is an undergraduate student at Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, India, and a lover of Manto, cheese, and feminism.

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Panned Attempts at Dating

By Tiggy Upland

Welcome, my Wild Deuces, to *Panned Attempts at Dating*, where BWQ readers anonymously share a panoply of stories in which their searches for love and/or sex resulted in panic, pangs of shame, and even pandemonium. Please consider these stories not as pandering but as a panacea for the embarrassment of your own dating mishaps. After all, if you can't laugh at yourself...laugh along with other bi+ women.

In 2000, I went on a date to a Nader rally with someone I met on PlanetOut.com. As we waited to get in, she informed me that she almost refused to date me because my profile said I liked Sting. OK, kinda rude. She followed it up by saying she was afraid that there would only be losers on a dating site. She didn't seem to understand that I was on that dating site, so she was essentially calling me a loser. OK, even ruder.

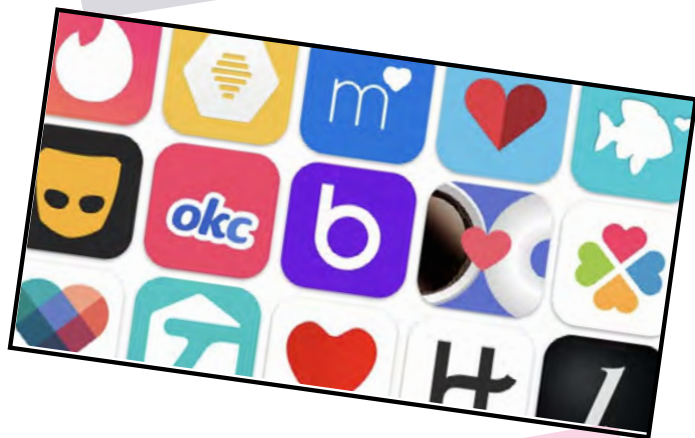
I asked her what musicians she liked besides P!nk and she said she didn't like her. Oops—I realized that I was thinking of someone else's profile! I tried to play it off, but she knew what I had done and said, "I think you're reading too many dating profiles." After the rally, she got us lost trying to take me to the subway which was alarming to me because I didn't know the area at all. What a jerk! I decided she was right: I was officially doing too much online dating. - Helen N.

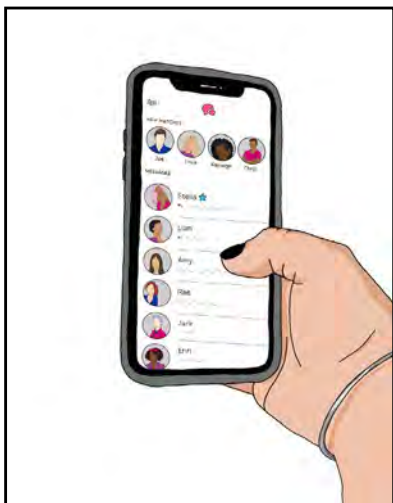
I was at Dyke Night at House of Blues, and this really hot person was dancing with me. In the middle of showing her my smokin' hot moves, I realized that I didn't have my wallet. I freaked out and began frantically searching for it. She said, "Oh...it was on the floor," and retrieved it from her pocket to hand to me. To this day, I can't decide if she just danced with me to pickpocket me or if she really thought I was cute. - Dana R.

So my favorite and most memorable date was about 10 years ago. My new love had taken me out to a very nice dinner. I invited her in when she took me home. We kissed for the first time. My roommate offered us some "special" brownies, so we sat in my kitchen feeding them to each other. We ate way too many. We ended up on my bed and unable to stand up to go back to the kitchen for water. We helped each other walk while leaning on the walls. When we went back to bed, we ended up having to just lie there for several hours until she was okay enough to drive home. -Jodi S.

On a blind date at a diner, I went up to the counter and asked a guy there, "Are you David?" He said, "Yes, are you Susan?" We began talking and were having a nice time until another David came up and asked my name. I had started the date with the wrong David! We all laughed, and David #2 and I got another table nearby. The other Susan came in and we helped her find David #1. Truth be told, I liked the first David better. - Susan G.

I had a date at Trident Cafe before iPhones were a thing. We chatted a bit beforehand, and I guess I gave him my last name. At Trident, we settled in at the counter with some mochas. He proceeded to recite my resume, personal life details, and assorted history! I was completely freaked out because this was before the days when it was normal to check out someone's online footprint before meeting. I got out of there and vowed never to give my last name before meeting a date! -Susan G.





At the time of this date, I had created this spacey, somewhat proper, utterly sweet & bizarre character named Tiggy Upland and was blogging as her. I met this woman more or less through the blog.

Our first date was seeing this fantastic indie film on rap that she suggested. Her entire essence was pretty much the opposite of what you might expect from a rap connoisseur. Afterward, we went out for sushi, and she gifted me a few little notebooks. She was quiet and nervous; a bit strange but generous and kind. I kept getting the feeling that we had met before.

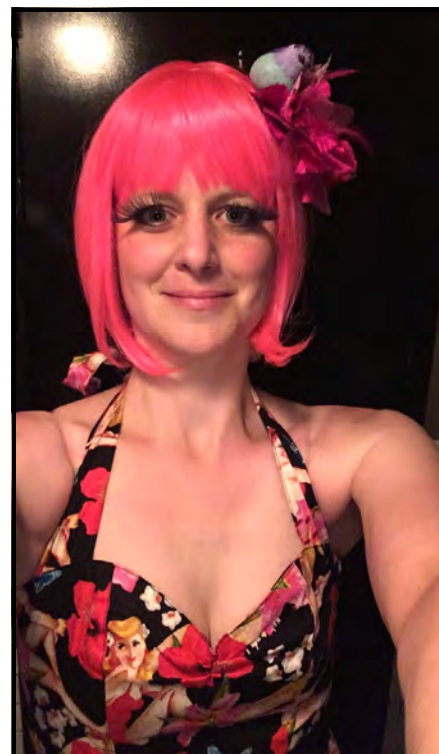
With a mouthful of edamame, I realized: holy crap, I was dating Tiggy Upland. All she needed was the pink hair. Later, I used those same notebooks to write every episode of the webcomic, Upland. Weird. - Jen B.

I had been booked as the keynote speaker at a historic trans event and had ended a pretty long-term relationship the night before I was set to travel. Arriving, I was full of emotion but stuffed it all down and put on my public-figure face.

A few days in, the evening following my successful keynote, I found myself having a thoroughly excellent time with this very cute trans woman I had been nursing a crush on. Much to my delight, the crush was mutual! Drinks led to flirting, flirting to kissing, kissing to my hotel room. Soon, we were hot and heavy, and this lovely trans woman began to give me a delightfully pleasant blow job.

I relaxed. Every bit of reserve and carefully maintained public face fell away. And I began to sob. Not just a few little tears mind you, but heaving, uncontrollable, post-break-up sobbing.

I gently lifted my rather startled and confused sexy friend up towards me and held her in my arms. Tried to assure her, through the tears, that it wasn't her, really, it was a very well-done blow job. But the moment was thoroughly shattered, and she returned home. We remain friends, though never again more than that. I always feel super awkward when I see her. How do you properly apologize for ruining a perfectly good blow job with a sudden crying jag? - Angelica B.



Tiggy Upland

Tiggy Upland lives and works in a hostel in Boston. You can find her advice column, blog, webcomic, and various media at www.tiggyupland.com. Artwork by Em LaLiberté.

Serving Up Some BACon!

By Fire Sia

The Philippines is a small country in Southeast Asia that has seen many firsts in the world, including the very first Pride March in Asia back in 1994. During that time, the LGBT community was labeled as the gay and lesbian community with very little recognition of bisexuals.

Since then, the struggle for bi visibility has taken many twists and turns in Philippine LGBT history up to where we see ourselves today.

Side B Philippines was established in 2016 by Raffy, Rhye, and myself as a message of visibility and unity to the LGBT+ community and the rest of the country. We established the first bisexual organization, which focuses on Employment Equality, Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Education, and most importantly—bisexual visibility.

In 2019, we held the very first Bisexual Awareness Conference in the Philippines, also known as BACon 2019. With fewer than 10 active members, the conference brought into attendance representatives from other LGBT+ organizations who were eager to learn about who we as bisexual people really are.

This year, in the midst of the pandemic, BAConPH 2020 was held in a virtual space that saw attendance of not only Filipino participants but a number of foreign guests.

The topics for this year were carefully chosen to ensure their meaningfulness and relevance to the current advocacy landscape.

We opened our conference with a keynote from our Quezon City Mayor, Joy Belmonte, a staunch LGBT+ supporter, and were treated

to a personal opening and welcome message from international bi advocate Robyn Ochs.

Through the program, participants enjoyed Raffy's session on Bisexual Myths (which we discuss yearly because it never gets old), Fire's presentation on Employment Equality in the Philippines, Lot's session on Stress Management for Mental Health, and an activity on Coming Out Stories facilitated by Rhye.

The event was live-tweeted through our twitter account (@sidebph) as key highlights touched the hearts of our participants.

While Side B may still be a small organization, our members' hearts are large and full of love and commitment to what we stand for. And this visibility resonates with our co-advocates where we find ourselves closely working with them as SOGIE educators, diversity and inclusion consultants, and loud and proud bisexuals.

In the four years that we have existed as an organization, we have seen ourselves become a significant part of the growing LGBT+ community where we tirelessly advocate for the B in LGBT.

Fire is a Training and Quality Director in one of the largest Business Process Outsourcing companies in the Philippines. His literary compilation The Scent of Flowers, to be launched in December 2020, will be the first book in the Philippines authored by an openly bisexual writer.



L to R: Raffy Aquino, Rhye Labrador Gentileo, and Fire Sia

Stand Bi Us 2020

Australia/NZ Bi+ Conference

MULTI-GENDER ATTRACTION AT THE INTERSECTIONS

By Ann K Addley

Celebrating Bi+ Visibility Day on September 23 has been growing in popularity since its inception in 1999. This year, despite various levels of COVID-19 lockdown, the need to connect and celebrate our community was stronger than ever. A collective of bi+ organizers across New Zealand and Australia decided to pool their resources and create the first joint Australia/New Zealand bi+ conference: Stand Bi Us 2020.

The conference ran September 18-27 and included over 37 free events mostly online, with some face-to-face where lockdown rules allowed. There was a diverse range of events: panels, workshops, shows, and meetups to suit all attendees. Including bicons such as Shiri Eisner (Author, *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution*), Sheela Lambert (Founder/Director of the Bisexual Book Awards), Jen Yockney MBE (Awarded the MBE for Services to the Bisexual Community in the 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours List), Hilde Vossen (Representative of the Bisexual Steering Committee for Europe and Central Asia), and Senator Janet Rice (Australian Greens Party Room Chair and Deputy Whip, and spokesperson for LGBTIQ issues), among others.

And come they did, with an estimated 700 attendees logging on from nine countries. In fact, we quickly realized that though COVID had forced us online, this format was more accessible than ever. It enabled the participation of community members with diverse accessibility requirements and those in rural areas, and allowed community members who are not out to participate and explore anonymously.

The decision to create the Stand Bi Us conference grew almost organically in response to both the cancellations of our usual face-to-face events due to COVID and a strong need for connection. It grew to a size that surprised us all, including 16 organizations across New Zealand and Australia. Organizing was done by a team of volunteers who built on their existing events and learned new skills in online content formats as they went. Collaborating and overcoming tech issues, we connected and celebrated our community with much chaotic bi+ energy and excitement over offerings we can provide in the future.

All events were well attended with a beautiful supportive community feel. Some conference highlights included a question and answer session with Shiri Eisner in the Opening Plenary hosted by Bi+ community Perth; BiCONIC's live Visibility Day extravaganza with tons of super talented queer acts; and Sydney's Bi plus network's BiLines storytelling event, presented in a new online format that worked well and was packed with bi+ history. I personally also loved the Bi Bi Bonanza's Play Bi Play panel about bi+ representation and access to sports.

Every time we create an offering for the bi+ community, there is an outpouring of love and gratitude. We are reminded that we are still struggling on many fronts. For many people, Stand Bi Us was their first experience of an inclusive bi+ community. These acts of visibility, education, and affirmation of community that reach beyond our own neighborhoods are extremely valuable. Seeing ourselves in others and exploring the different challenges and triumphs our community faces create a sense of validation in our bi+ identities. That new-found confidence and collaboration will grow into a new generation of bicons and gradually work toward a world in which biphobia is a thing of the past.

Recordings of several of our panels are available for viewing at www.standbius.com.

When not managing events Ann K Addley is primarily a travel and children's non-fiction author. She is a member of the Melbourne Bisexual Network and passionate about building Queer communities in New Zealand.



Conference session: The Art of Bisolation

A complete change in wardrobe ensued. Hormone Replacement Therapy, and a legal name change. I made an appointment for Gender Confirmation Surgery.

I knew that GCS was necessary for my transition and for my well-being, but I hoped that I would not be alone for the rest of my life.

A spiritual-healer friend told me that my new soulmate was "being prepared." She neglected to mention that I, too, was being prepared.

A few months later, there he was. We met online in a transgender support group for older folks. We fell in love and met in person. He proposed; I accepted; he moved to my home.

Next came his gender counseling, name change, HRT, and surgery date a year after mine.

We married and honeymooned in Hawai'i. I had my surgery, and we were considered a lesbian couple until he had his. Then the Navy computer agreed that we were a heterosexual couple and gave him his military ID card.

And we were a bisexual+ couple. Except for the sex part. Unfortunately, Emery didn't develop that deep sexual attraction to women.

So here we are, twenty-plus years later: a non-practicing bisexual woman married to a non-practicing gay man. All in all, we have a wonderful marriage, full of love and fidelity.

The sex part? Not important to either of us. Well, we both ogle the same young guys and remark to each other how cute, studly, whatever they are, and then we laugh. And I am still gazing at women.

Did I mention why it's not important to us? In simplest terms, Emery is 77, and I am 83.

We found the love, but, mercifully, the fires of passion are banked, although not completely out. Hence the dreams.

With Emery's blessing, I just sent flowers to my ex for her eightieth birthday. She never remarried. I wonder if she ever shares the dreams.

Robyn Walters is a trans elder. Her interests range from amateur radio and scuba diving to LGBT support, perpetual college classes, editing her husband's 50+ novels and stories, and helping to proof-read BWQ issues.



Since I've been with both partners for more than a decade and was feeling secure and comfortable with them, I noticed in 2019 that I was starting to take them for granted. I became complacent, i.e. lazy and slovenly. I just took it for granted they would always be in my life, and that if one partner couldn't attend an event with me, the other one would. However, I eventually learned that this wasn't always the case.

Starting in the Summer of 2019, there were more events that neither partner could attend with me. For example, the Education Director at a sex-positive center near the Canadian border was in the process of scheduling me to teach "Transcending Shame," a workshop I created and began presenting in 2017. We agreed it would be a good idea to schedule the class for October 5th, since a play party would take place afterwards. I could bring a partner with me so we could enjoy the play party after my presentation. Then we could spend the night and drive back to Seattle the next day.

But my partner G, who normally spends two weeks a month in Seattle and the rest of the month in another state, where his wife lives, would be out of town on October 5th. "No problem," I thought. "I'll just ask J." But J's long-distance girlfriend was scheduled to be in town the week before my class, heading home on October 5th, *the date of my class!*

After I completed teaching my class and getting something to eat, the Education Director and her husband drove me back to Seattle. Even though the class went well, I still felt disappointed and sad. Along with the disappointment and sadness was a feeling of déjà vu: "Here we go again!"

You see, before COVID, my housemates would frequently throw large parties and social gatherings, which were extremely problematic for me, being that I'm a person with autism and social anxiety. One such gathering was an annual event called "Dinner of Love," which was celebrated instead of Valentine's Day. I hated the first two I attended because my partners would always have schedule conflicts, causing me to attend the event alone. But I was so thrilled to learn that my partner J would be available to attend the 2019 event. However, when he didn't show up, I called him, only to learn that he got the nights mixed up! By this time, I was beyond disappointed. I broke down, sobbing in J's ear. "Once again, I didn't have anyone to come with me to the Dinner of Love!" I cried.

This brings me to a phenomenon I noticed that is unique to polyamorous folks who are partnered, but partnered monogamous folks never experience: *you can have more than one partner and still have nobody to accompany you to an event!* I mean, my housemates who were monogamous and partnered never had to wonder who they were going to bring to an event at our home. They would just bring their partner!

Finally, one night, I was sitting at the kitchen table by myself,

probably right after the incident at the sex-positive center near the Canadian border. One of my housemates could tell that I wasn't happy (in fact, I was depressed). He asked how I was doing, and when I told him what happened, he became blunt with me (something I desperately needed somebody to do). He said, "Gloria, you really need to meet some other people!" He went on to say, "I mean, all I hear you talk about is 'G and J,' 'G and J.' It's always 'G this' and 'J that.'" Boy, did that wake me up!

At that moment, I realized that I just needed to be honest and admit that I was interested in meeting other people and finding other partners.

Years ago, when personal ads were all the rage, I would hate to tell anyone that I was using the personal ads to find a partner, since someone would always say, "Oh, you can't find love when you're looking for it!" Someone else would say, "I was always looking for love, and was never successful in finding someone suitable. But as soon as I gave up, I found the partner of my dreams." And I remembered another person saying, "I couldn't find what I was looking for; I just kept looking and looking, and I finally took the attitude, 'Well, I guess I'll just be alone for the rest of my life.' As soon as I said that and gave up, I met my partner." Finally, someone else would say, "Oh, I never looked for a partner. I would just be living my life when the right one came along."

True, that does happen sometimes, when as soon as a person gives up on looking for love, they meet someone who's right for them. But that doesn't mean that you should *never* look for love, and that you only have to give up. In fact, giving up isn't necessarily the best idea. [Evita Sawyers](#) says something insightful about that:

The only way to guarantee that you won't find the partner you want is by giving up. Take a chance, keep hope alive, believe in your worthiness, and the lovers you desire will show up.

Besides, I know plenty of people who have looked for love and found suitable partners whom they wouldn't have found if they hadn't looked. I'm sure all of us know people who have met on OK Cupid or other dating sites and apps. They were clearly looking for love. Apparently, either way works!

Now, let's get back to those THREE QUESTIONS Kevin Patterson asked, whose answers changed my life:

1. What do I bring to the table relationship-wise?
2. What is my superpower?
3. What kind of a partner am I?

I was going to answer the questions myself, but I decided it would be best if I asked my partners to answer them. At first, I thought it was because they know me way better than I do, but

Gloria, continued on next page

that's not completely true. Sure, they've known me for years. But I believe it's more accurate to say that they can see characteristics about me that I can't. And when I received their answers, I was floored (in a good way)! I had to read their answers more than once, and just drink them in!

G's answers (and I'm paraphrasing, because of privacy):

What do I bring to the table relationship-wise?

You're affectionate and snuggly, which I love. You're open-minded, thoughtful, love to explore ideas, and you're fun to talk to. You also come up with great activities that don't cost much.

What is my superpower?

You're social and able to get along with most everybody. You have a positive and sunny attitude, even when life doesn't go as planned. You have a strong self-identity, and you know how you want to live your life.

What kind of a partner am I?

Comfortable, affectionate, caring, and empowering. You allow your partners the same freedom you exercise for yourself.

J's answers:

What do I bring to the table relationship-wise?

You are present and attentive when we are together. You are soft-spoken, thoughtful, and kind. You manage to come up with activities that we both would enjoy. I am glad to relate to you in your love

language of touch.

What is my superpower (no longer paraphrasing, but quoting VERBATIM)?

*Your own story. You feel deeply, connect deeply, and act with empathy, turning your own experience into a message of liberation for others: **Transcending Shame.***

[back to paraphrasing]

What kind of a partner am I?

You smile, but also relate seriously and honestly about your needs. I am glad you tell me about your other relationships and what they bring to your life. This makes me feel included and honored, knowing that you have other people who love and care for you.

As a result of reading these answers, not only did I fall deeper in love with my partners, but I also **fell in love with myself.**

You'd better believe I'm going to include these answers when I finally update my OK Cupid profile and compose new profiles for those other dating apps and websites!

Note: G's partner S passed away on November 2, 2020.

(Adapted from Gloria's May 22, 2020 [Woodhull Sexual Freedom Summit](#) Facebook Live talk)

Gloria Jackson-Nefertiti (she/her/hers) is a workshop leader and panelist, in the process of completing her memoir with the working title, "A Different Drum." She lives in Seattle, WA.

News Briefs

Norway's parliament outlawed hate speech against transgender and bisexual people on November 10th, expanding its penal code which has protected gay and lesbian people since 1981.

U.S. Elections

Jessica Benham was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in District 36, located in the greater Pittsburgh area. She has made history for being the first out bisexual woman elected to this legislative body, and she is also one of the few autistic lawmakers in the country.

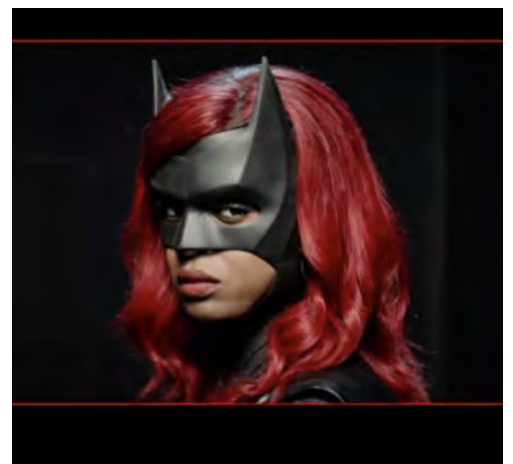
Christy Holstege has been elected mayor of Palm Springs, California, making her the only out bisexual mayor in the nation and first woman to be mayor of this desert city east of Los Angeles.

And Alex Lee, who is Asian American and openly bisexual, was elected to California's state assembly. His district is in the San

Francisco Bay Area. At 25, he is the youngest lawmaker elected to the Assembly in 80 years, and he still lives with his mom.

Finally, in January, The CW's *Batwoman* will have a new star. She will go by the name of Ryan Wilder, and the actress who plays her identifies as bisexual. "I am extremely proud to be the first Black actress to play the iconic role of Batwoman on television," Javicia Leslie said in July 2020. "[A]nd as a bisexual woman, I am honored to join this groundbreaking show, which has been such a trailblazer for the LGBTQ+ community."

[from Mashable]



Avocado Toast Review

By Jen Bonardi

I hope that at the time of publication, you're reading this as you luxuriate in a far-off land. Or perhaps you're perusing this while at a friend's home, or even your office downtown—anywhere but still trapped inside your house under the pall of the pandemic. But if you are still under COVID's thumb, you'll need more TV to binge. Luckily, Amazon Prime is serving *Avocado Toast*.

Avocado Toast is about 30-something Molly who comes out to herself, and now others, as bisexual upon falling in love in England and returning home to the States. It's also about her relationship with work-hard-play-hard friend and roommate, Elle, and the trouble they face in understanding their respective parents' sex lives.

I'm happy to report that this show delivers the bisexual goods: they repeatedly say the word "bisexual," demonstrating a boldness heretofore only seen on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. The viewer gets to enjoy satisfying bi moments like Molly championing bisexuality to a sex ed class and her aversion to sexual identity words that force her to say "sexual" in front of her parents. Her feelings surrounding her burgeoning bi identity and the reactions of her loved ones all come across as authentic. From beginning to end, the show depicts how bisexuality weaves into Molly's life in unexpected ways.

The journey of Molly and Elle's friendship is enjoyable in its complexity. Elle knows that she's extra and doesn't know how to have friends; her growing vulnerability surrounding close relationships is satisfying to watch. The two get real toward the end and while I don't love the acting (save for Andrew Moodie as Roger), the reckoning feels sincere. *Avocado Toast* also tries to make a point about judging the sexuality of the over-50 set but it gets lost in the distraction of questionable morals.

In recent years, audiences have been spoiled with unprecedented hyper-real TV series on friendships between young adult women, warts and all. This one isn't quite there, so don't expect *Girls* or *Broad City*. *Avocado Toast* occasionally devolves into Millennial cliché, whether it's getting stuck with weird guys from online dating sites or the series title. The parts that resonate so well



with bi+ folks, however, make up for any scenes that don't ring 100 percent true.

Avocado Toast makes a solid showing for its first season and the second is already in production. I'm looking forward to the growth of various relationships and the development of characters like bartender Jake and administrative assistant Jordan. With ten episodes at a bite-sized 10 to 15 minutes each, the series is eminently watchable. And considering its unique bi material and excellent soundtrack, you can't afford not to add it to your menu.

Jen Bonardi served on the Bisexual Resource Center (BRC) board for 5 years and created bisexual character extraordinaire, Tiggy Upland.

We maintain a list of folks interested in submitting writing or artwork to BWQ, another of folks interested in proofreading, and a third list of folks interested in volunteering in other ways. If you'd like to be added to one or more of these [private] lists, email biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center. Address listed at biresource.org.

Ongoing Events

During COVID-19, check the bi community calendar (right), MeetUp, or with listed contact person to find out if an event is happening online.

2nd Mondays:

Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. 7pm. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com

Tea with Bi Women Partnered with Men. 7pm. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com

1st Wednesdays:

BLiSS (Bisexual Social and Support Group). 7pm Info: bliss@biresource.org

2nd Thursdays:

Young BLiSS Group. (20s & 30s) 7pm. For bi folks 20-29. Info: Gabby at young-blissboston@gmail.com

3rd Saturdays:

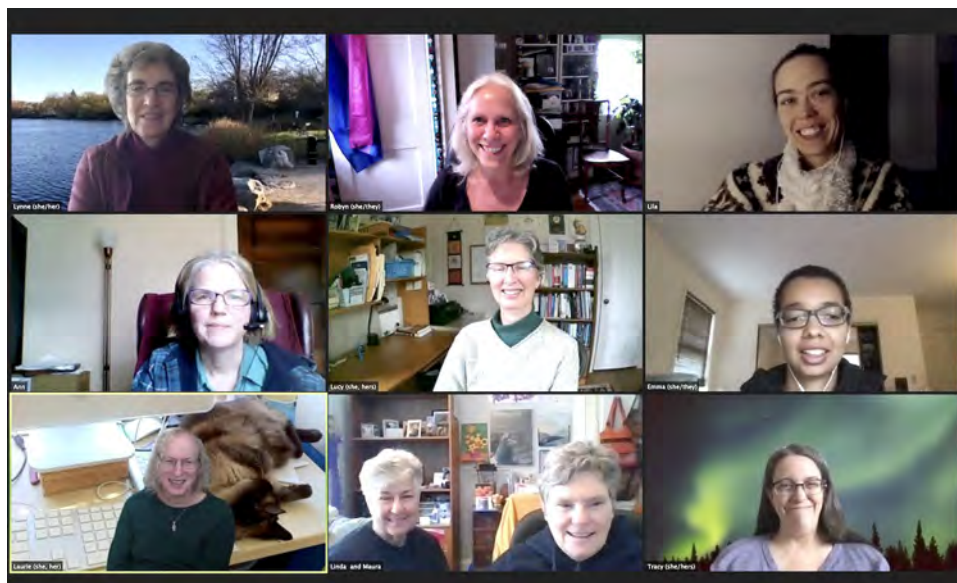
Biversity Brunch. 11:30am

More about Boston-area groups biresource.org/boston-groups/

Metro-Boston women: Keep up with local events by subscribing to our Google group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/biwomenboston>

We offer FREE digital subscriptions to this publication. Sign up at biwomenboston.org.

[not your usual] CALENDAR



November's digital brunch!

Did you know? You can find all kinds of bi+ virtual events at meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities. Please note, some of these events are gender-specific, and some welcome all genders. You can also find great bi+ virtual events on our own calendar at <http://biwomenboston.org/calendar>. Don't hesitate to connect at any of these events—even if you're not in the Boston area.

In fact, I would like to make a special invitation to our readers who are not located in the Boston area: please consider joining us at one (or all) of our online brunches—just be aware times listed are US Eastern Standard Time. We are proud of our community of women (trans and cis) and nonbinary folks, and we would love to make friends across the country (and globe). Grab your coffee or tea and some brunch while we chat about bi issues and other fun topics. You can find more details below!

Sunday, December 13, 1 pm US Eastern Standard Time

Sunday, January 10, 1 pm US Eastern Standard Time

Saturday, February 13, 1pm US Eastern Standard Time



Consider this: If you rarely (or never) see people like yourself represented in print, your voice is especially important. When you lift your voice, someone, somewhere will FINALLY see their own experiences reflected, perhaps for the first time. (See our call for writing on page 2.)