

New Beginnings

By LimeyLady

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Introduction

Hi, I'm Mikki. I am twenty-four and I am a lesbian.

I think.

I say "I think" because there might be a couple of discrepancies in that opening statement. Firstly, I'm really Mikela, but absolutely nobody ever calls me that. The twenty-four claim is accurate enough. I've got my birth certificate at home, if you don't believe me. The second discrepancy . . . the biggie . . . is the lesbian assertion. Am I or aren't I? I honestly don't know.

Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not. And how to be sure?

Here's a bit of background before I properly begin. I'm a Yorkshire lass, born in York itself but brought up in the Aire Valley. My family is typical two-point-four and home life wasn't in the least dysfunctional. My parents both worked and, although money was sometimes tight, we always had two weeks away in summer, usually in Cornwall, often in Penwith or, as they say in those parts, "The Far West".

Physically I'm tallish for a girl (five foot eight), with long auburn hair and tits that are slightly too large for my slender body. Looks-wise, I suppose my face passes. Don't get me wrong, I'm no classic beauty. Those A-list film stars won't be losing sleep over me. No, I'm quite comfortably on the pretty side of plain, but by no means beautiful.

Davina is the beautiful one. Well, she is when you look at her the way I look at her now. The way I look at her every time I get eyes-on. Goodness me, she is so, so beautiful.

Back to me and then on with the story.

I left school with umpteen GCSEs, four A-levels and my virginity. Keeping my virginity was, in my case, a lifestyle choice. I did have boyfriends at school but (pardon the pun) none of them ever had me. While others fell right and left, I limited myself to kisses and . . . only the once . . . a hand job.

University was great. I was a conscientious student if not a high-achieving one. On the social side I was "romantically" asked out many times, occasionally by girls (those propositions from girls were as interesting as they were exciting, but I always graciously declined). And, over the three years, I had two short-lived boyfriends.

Then I graduated.

In a perfect world I would have gone travelling. Sadly, student loans intervened. Relieved of my virginity and armed with a decent degree, I found barmaid work in, of all places, Cornwall.

Cornwall!

At this point I'll briefly digress with a warning: **DO NOT TRY THIS ON IMPULSE!** It might be the most beautiful place on earth, but jobs are rare in the duchy. Very, very rare. You nearly always need to know someone to get one . . . or know someone who knows someone. Even better, you could be related. Please don't think I'm being in anyway derogative, because I'm not at all. Work is scarce in Cornwall and they look after it as best they can. Consequently positions are seldom advertised and people from east of the Tamar ("they people") are seldom taken on.

I was lucky. After initially hopping from one delightful location to another, my family have been staying at the same pub/restaurant/B&B for the last eight or nine years. I'd stayed there with them the first few times myself. I knew someone, see? I wasn't one of "they people".

Anyway, I went down there with a job guaranteed, intending to see out the end of the season, and ended up staying for thirty months. And I worked through the two winters in-between seasons (jobs in winter, when the bulk of the tourists are gone, are even trickier to come by). I could have

stayed longer but, although I loved the leisurely pace of life, the banter and mild flirting with various colleagues and customers, I needed a career. With a huge lump in my throat, I said my goodbyes and came home.

Jobs in West Yorkshire aren't exactly plentiful, but at least they are advertised, more often than not. I applied for just about everything and, shrugging off the lack of replies and tons of rejection letters, finally got me an interview. And I got the position. Success first time! One out of one!! I was, my interviewer told me, just the sort of person he was looking for: calm, confident and capable of talking to anyone. Yippee! All that barroom interaction had paid off in spades.

Even though I didn't really know what a "credit controller" actually did, I was taught well and soon worked out the do's and don'ts. My new employers make gizmos for use in the construction sector, selling them on through a nationwide network of outlets. Basically, I make sure we get paid for our gizmos and keep our valued customers' accounts in order. Because of the terms of sale, my working life follows a monthly cycle (sorry about that, my fellow girls, it just does), but no two days are ever alike. There are literally thousands of customers and, between them, they do their best to ensure unexpected problems regularly arise.

I started being a credit controller last December. Just about everything has gone smoothly ever since, and my telephonic skillset has grown and grown, as has my knowledge of regional accents. Like massively. I came here quite proficient in West Yorkshire, East Lancashire and Kernowek (that's "Cornish" in Cornish); now I can have a fair crack at all sorts.

Proper job, as they say, St Austell way.

Anyway, enough about me. Let's begin.

Chapter One

A fortnight ago, one fine Tuesday morning, my PC wouldn't start. There were lights on the tower and keyboard, the screen lit up showing my saver but, other than that, it didn't want to know. I turned it off and, scrambling under my desk, unplugged the power. Plugging it back in, banging my head in the process, I scrambled upright and tried again.

Nothing.

When I told Joyce, my line-manager, she asked me if I'd tried switching it off and restarting. I said I had so she told me to ring "IT Helpdesk". She gave me the number and I called right away. A guy with an Irish accent listened to my explanation then asked me if I'd tried switching off and on again. Biting my tongue, I said that I had. He said he'd send somebody up to have a look.

I spent the next half hour putting my paperwork into alphabetic order. That didn't particularly help in the scheme of things, but I couldn't do anything else without my computer; shuffling paper was better than sitting there, twiddling my thumbs.

At last I saw Joyce had company. It was a bloke and he just had to be a techie. IT was on the floor below ours. I'd been there just once . . . as part of my induction tour . . . and the people I'd seen were all out of the same mould. All male, all deserving of having "nerd" tattooed on their foreheads. Well, perhaps that wasn't true. IT had at least one woman. When I was there she was on the phone, obviously sorting something out. She looked to be cool and efficient.

The nerd with Joyce was, I decided, better looking than most of his colleagues. He was about as tall as me with very short, light brown hair. Although his clothes were shapeless I guessed his body would be lean. As for his glasses . . . nerd convention or what! They were supersized with thick black frames that dominated his face.

'This is Dave,' Joyce said in introduction. 'Dave, this is Mikki. And that's her PC.'

'Have you tried restarting?' he asked in a surprisingly soft voice.

'Yes,' I said sharply, sick of being continually asked the same question. 'Of course I have.'

Dave sat in my chair and switched off the tower. He waited perhaps twenty seconds then switched it back on . . .

And the fucking, bastarding thing started first time.

Sorry about the bad language, but it was very annoying. Why do embarrassing things like that always happen to me?

Anyway, I begrudgingly said thanks and Dave left, grinning.

Just so you know, I have vowed to myself that I'll tell the truth in this account, warts and all. Let's move on with that in mind.

Tuesday/night, Wednesday morning. I'd gone to bed early, planning to sleep right through to my alarm, as per usual. But I didn't. I came awake abruptly, sometime in the small hours, bare seconds from the end of a wet dream.

A wet dream!

My first in years!!

And it was about Dave!!!

I'll excuse myself by saying I was still half-asleep. That might even be true. One thing was for sure, though: whatever else I was, I was desperately in need of a cum. Dave was probably at home in his own bed, quite possibly in Star Trek pyjamas, dreaming about heroically repelling invading fleets of Klingons. But not in my imagination. In those murky depths he was about to become only the second man who'd ever been able to make me orgasm.

With a little help from my trusty left hand, that was.

Afterwards I stayed on my back in the dark, wondering what was going on. I've always been awkward around men. I like them, I think . . . or used to think . . . but not in the crushy, gushy way some of my school chums like them. Or used to claim they liked them . . . as I too used to claim I liked them. Perhaps I'd been a victim of peer pressure. Perhaps I used to think I should like guys and was kidding myself when I "noticed" someone hunky.

Back in warts-and-all mode, I'll fill in some history. It won't take long. Remember I mentioned a hand job? I was in the upper sixth, at Carole's eighteenth. Tommy Smith, the captain of the school rugby team and much admired, cornered me at the bar. Now believe me, Tommy was highly sought after. I let him pick me up because nobody but nobody turned him down. If I'd turned him down I would have instantly lost my street cred. No, I would have become a social outcast. Overnight. A pariah. Maybe even a leper.

Not that Tommy got the shag he expected. I just wasn't up for it, so I told him it was my wrong time of the month (little white lie), and offered him "something else" as an alternative.

Tommy took it well. Indeed he took it so well it was sexually empowering. Best of all, he didn't gossip afterwards. Not that others didn't ask. He "no commented" so much I was taken to be a raving nympho.

Me, an eighteen-year-old nympho! Fifteen minutes of fame for silencing the school stud. No word of a lie, I almost fell in love with my own public image.

Giles finally took my virginity at uni, in my second year. *Who on earth loses her cherry to a guy called "Giles"?* I hear you ask. Me, that's who. Giles is a chemist. He's a nice person but, try as he might, he never could make me cum.

Joe was more successful. He made me cum on his very first attempt. Twice! I think I agreed to go steady with him out of sheer gratitude. And it was steady; we kept seeing each other for five whole weeks. Then he fell off the wagon (I only-too-late discovered he was a recovering alcoholic at the age of just twenty) and started clubbing and whoring. So I sent him down the road, hot on the heels of Giles.

And that's about it. There was a guy in Cornwall. I honestly forget his name. He was a tourist down from Birmingham. His last night coincided with my night off and I let him take me out. He got the time-of-the-month white lie too. And that's all he did get. Poor sod went home hand job-free.

So there I was, back in the present, lying in the dark and thinking about Dave. I'd immediately liked the look of him . . . which was unusual in itself . . . but letting him into my dreams? How had that happened? Was it subliminal? Had he attracted me by stealth?

I know the answers now, but didn't know them then. In the end I concluded I'd simply gone too long without a man. Joe was my last actual lover, three years or so earlier. Maybe Dave was in the right place at the right time. Maybe I'd been attracted because he was small and not in the least bit hunky. And maybe he was as inexperienced as me.

Maybe we'd be good together?

Next morning I was early into the office. I held my breath as I booted up but no need; I was into the system straightaway. No need to do make-work or thumb-twiddle. Yippee!

My logon procedure is always the same . . . at least it is when I can get in. First I access the sales ledger so I'm ready as and when the phone rings. Then I check my email. There were only a few so far that day, one of them from an address I didn't recognize.

"How is your PC this morning?" it said. "Let me know. x Davina."

I assumed Davina was the cool, efficient female. She'd looked like a mother hen type; the sort of person needed to co-ordinate her dithering male colleagues. I reckoned she was checking to make sure my problem really had been fixed, not just ticked off a list, so I emailed her saying everything was fine.

Ten seconds later a response bounced back. "What time do you take lunch?" That seemed to be a strange question for an IT co-ordinator to ask, but I guessed she intended to send some techie up to double-check my machine while I wasn't using it. "Twelve", I replied.

I got caught on the phone so it was more like five past when I headed for the canteen. Dave was outside the office when I left.

'Hi Mikki,' he said in his soft, sexy voice. 'Are you heading for the canteen?'

That was my day for assumptions. I instinctively thought Dave fancied me and had recruited Davina as a sort of matchmaker. *Okay, I decided. He's good-looking and he was in my dreams. In a way he even made me cum, so I can't be rude.*

'I am,' I told him. 'Care to accompany me?'

I'm sure you've worked out what should have been obvious. It took me perhaps twenty more minutes to get there. By then we'd walked down to the canteen together, bought and eaten our meals together and fallen into easy conversation. Dave is a good conversationalist. He started telling a tale about one of the IT programmers. This guy, Ted, had gone to see a big rugby league match in St Helens. He'd come out of the ground to find his car had been not only clamped but also boxed-in, presumably by an irate local resident . . .

I was listening but thinking too. Multitasking like a good 'un. Up close and personal to Dave, only a tabletop between us, I could see how smooth his skin was. Smooth and bristle-free. He looked as if he'd never shaved in his life. His eyes were hazel with lots of green and brown. They were nice eyes. Very nice eyes indeed. He had lovely long lashes, like . . .

Shit! He had lovely long lashes like a girl's.

In fact he was a girl!

Dave smiled at me, obviously noting my shocked expression, but kept on telling her tale. In it the clampers eventually turned up, wanting to tow the programmer's car away. Humourlessly, they'd told him that the clamp could be removed for a hundred quid. He'd said all right, fair enough, but he was boxed in. Couldn't they just tow the other vehicle away instead? Wasn't that parking much more out of line than his? They could tow it, they agreed, but if he wanted the clamp removing as well, it would cost him an extra fifty notes . . .

Omigod, I thought, I brought myself off thinking about a girl!

For some reason that made me laugh out loud. Fortunately my hilarity coincided with the end of Dave's tale. She laughed with me then said, murmured almost, 'You've twigged, haven't you? Finally. Hurrah!'

My face felt like a furnace. It does again even now, thinking back on it. And I couldn't think of anything to say. Not a single word. Me, known as I am as the barmaid with an answer for everything!

'It happens all the time,' Dave said. 'And thanks.'

'What for?' I managed.

'For not running out on me. That happens a lot as well.'

I was in a bit of a cleft stick and I knew it. I was also aware that, rather than wanting to run off, I liked being in Dave's company. She was even more attractive as a woman than she was as a man. I mean that. Okay, so I'd not been able to accurately identify her sex until now, but she did look good. In fact the more I looked, the better she got. If she grew her hair and wore even slightly flattering clothes, she would be beautiful. And her voice was terrific. It was a voice I wouldn't mind hearing as it whispered sweet nothings into my ear . . .

I shook myself at that. What was I thinking of?

'I like dressing this way,' she said, apparently reading my mind. 'It helps me fit in with the guys I work with. The "Trekkies", I call them. Given half a chance, they'd prefer me to dress up as Lieutenant Uhura, but I don't have the tits for that.'

Not being much of a Trekkie myself, I frowned. 'Is Uhura the stunningly beautiful black actress?'

'Yeah. She's the reason I watch all the reruns. Those short skirts . . .'

I couldn't help looking at Dave's chest. It was hard to be sure with her baggy sweatshirt, but she seemed to be as flat as a pancake.

'It's the voice that usually gives me away,' Dave went on.

'Your voice is lovely,' I assured her, surprising myself with my sincerity.

'Thank you,' she said. 'You've been to university, haven't you?'

'Yes.'

'LGBT?'

'No,' I replied, doing another furnace impression. 'I'm straight.'

'That's a pity.' Dave laughed lightly. 'You're certainly attractive to girls. Well, attractive to me, anyway. But I suppose you've already guessed that.'

Chapter Two

Another warts-and-all confession. Make that confessions. I masturbated that night, and not just once. I did it in the shower. Then I did it naked on my bed for at least half an hour before going back in the shower and doing it again. And then again later, before falling asleep.

I thought of Dave all four times. Dave the girl, that is. Dave the boy has never featured in my naughty thoughts again. Never will.

Oh yes: masturbation. Why not get everything out of the closet? I've been self-abusing myself for ages. Ages and ages and ages. Having had plenty of practice, I like to think I've become quite good at it. I'm certainly better at making me cum than either of the two men in my past. And I am very well-practiced. I may have gone three years without a hard cock, but I must have sorted myself out at least twice a day in the meantime.

Blush, blush and humiliation. But aren't we all equally guilty? Hand on heart . . .

Well, whatever fibs you might tell me, I am guilty. And often, at that. Sometimes I do it with my one and only toy. Usually I do it with well-practiced fingers. The toy is a green, phallic-shaped dildo that does the job perfectly. Fingers are best for me, though. Always will be.

And I know what you're thinking: I'm a sad and lonely, horny cow. Ask me if I'm bothered.

Moving ever onwards: Thursday morning started with confusion. Waking an hour before my alarm, I mused on the meaning of life, the universe and everything. For me the answer wasn't forty-two. I was, I knew, attractive to women. I didn't just have Dave's word for that, I had all those other propositions from uni to back her up. And I'd had girlie propositions in Cornwall, too. All right, most of them were from drunks, but I could have scored with girls if I'd wanted to.

Hell, the number of my girls' propositions wasn't so far off the number of my men's. And men proposition because they are expected to. More out of duty than hope . . .

So what was I? I wondered. Like everyone else these days, I watch porn on the Internet. And, I suspect, like everyone else, I shop around. There's only so many times you can watch guys and gals having straight sex, isn't there? So over time I've watched plenty of . . . well, "girlie variations". Was that it? Had watching girl-on-girl action turned me into a lesbian? No, I didn't believe it had. In my opinion, watching girls had broadened my horizons but hadn't changed me at all. No, not one iota.

I arrived at work early that day, as usual. Again my PC let me straight in. Letting the sales ledger go hang I went straight for my email. To my delight there was one for me from Davina. I opened it with trembling fingers.

'Hi,' it began. "Fancy lunching with me? x Davina."

I emailed back at once, not giving myself chance to think about it. "Certainly do. Meet me at twelve again? And which do you prefer, Dave or Davina?"

The response soon arrived. "I'm Dave at work, although the network controller insists I use my given name. In bed, however . . ."

My heart stopped. Dead in its tracks. I knew I was getting in too deep (who wouldn't know given a cue like that?) but could I back out?

No, I couldn't. I responded to her response: "Davina sounds sexy. It suits you."

Her reply was lightning fast. "In bed I can be Dave or Davina. Work it out. And I'll see you at twelve."

She was waiting outside our office when I exited, promptly this time. I must admit I caught a few curious glances from colleagues but did I care? Make that a no. I didn't know what game I was playing . . . didn't actually have a clue . . . but it felt right. A couple of my uni friends had been openly lesbian. I hadn't had propositions from them . . . not apart from a few earthy, jokey ones, anyway . . . so I felt qualified to play my part.

Whatever it was.

That second lunchtime followed the path of our first. We bought and ate our meals. Conversed. The only difference was that Dave was not keen on telling tales. She was inquisitive instead.

No, I told her. No current boyfriend. And no, no girlfriend ever. Did I like blokes? No, not very much. I was three years fallow. All my recent lovers had been of the celluloid variety. Well, maybe digital . . .

Back to girls, she insisted. Wasn't I even curious?

I admitted I was Men Behaving Badly with that. When she asked me what that meant, I more or less quoted Tony. "If I was a girl, I'd definitely give it a go." Then, blushing more furiously than ever, I said I was a girl but didn't have Tony's spirit of adventure.

Dave smiled and said, "Shame."

I masturbated again that night. Five or six times. Half my brain was asking me what the eff I was doing, the other half was egging me on.

I was thinking solely of Davina by then. Every second of every self-abusing stroke. My lovely, lovely Davina.

There was no need for emails on Friday morning. We had already agreed that, it being POETS day, we should go to the pub. Dave met me outside my office . . . as had become habit . . . and we set off, overcoming the impulse to go hand in hand. At least, I overcame the impulse. I can't honestly say what impulses she felt.

Apart from the urge to fuck me, that was.

Sorry for another swearword but, from the moment I knew she was female, I'd known Dave was up for the fuck. I'd suspected it before, of course, when I'd thought she had balls and a cock. The urge was growing day by day, however. And I feared my resistance was crumbling.

By the second.

Boy, oh boy!

Or, rather, girl, oh girl!

Resistance? You may well ask. Why should I resist? Well, I was straight, remember? Not even a week ago I hadn't had a gay bone in my body. Watching girl-on-girl videos was merely curiosity, right?

Right?

And that Men Behaving Badly thing was only a throwaway line, right?

Oh go on then, suit yourselves. Don't believe me. As if I coco.

The pub was five minutes' walk from work. Dave asked me what I wanted to drink and, as she'd suggested "a pint", I went for Landlord. She ordered two pints and two roast chicken sandwiches.

'Don't want to get you drunk,' she said. 'Not in the middle of the day.'

Not knowing what I wanted . . . not even vaguely . . . I asked her what she had planned for the weekend.

'Rock climbing,' she said. 'Want to come with me?'

'Rock climbing,' I echoed. 'No thanks, I'd break my neck.' Then, conscious of Dave's . . . her, well, lascivious grin . . . 'Do you do that often? And where do you do it?'

'I climb most weekends,' she said. 'And I do it as often as I find a willing partner.'

'You're teasing me,' I complained, wondering why my heart was doing unusual things inside me. Pounding, plummeting . . . things like that.

'We're doing Brimham Rocks tomorrow,' Dave continued. 'Up in Nidderdale. It's well-used but there are more climbs than you can shake a stick at. You could come as a novice without risking a broken neck.'

'I wouldn't want to cramp your style,' I said firmly.

She came back with a challenge of sorts. 'What about hill walking?'

Hill walking? I'd done some of that in my time. 'It depends,' I said carefully. 'If you really mean hills I'm up for it. If you mean mountains you're on your own.'

'Next weekend,' she said. 'I'm rock climbing at the Cow and Calf on Bank Holiday Monday. Of all days! That'll be a gas with millions of sightseers watching us, hoping we fall. I haven't finalized it yet, but I was planning on walking in the Lake District on Saturday and Sunday. Why don't you come with me? I'll organize accommodation. Separate rooms, of course.'

'Is there a crowd of you?' I wondered.

'No, just me. And, hopefully, you.'

'Hills or mountains?'

'Hills on Saturday. Very titchy mountains on Sunday.'

'And you'll remember I'm straight?'

'Mikki darling, how could I ever forget?'

Chapter Three

Next day, Saturday, I got an unexpected call from Dave, late into the afternoon.

'Hiya, I'm done climbing and haven't broken anything. Can I buy some wine and come and drink it with you?'

My heart was pounding and plummeting, leaping and lurching. Truth was, I didn't know what I'd do if she made a move on me. Submit without a fight? Tell a little white lie? Fend her off? All options were open. The only thing I couldn't do was to decline her offer.

'Wine always sounds good,' I said.

'Red or white?'

'I'm easy. When it comes to wine,' I added hurriedly. 'Where are you?'

'Twenty minutes away, according to my satnav.'

It was over half an hour before she arrived at my poky little flat . . . Sorry, at my beloved, albeit rented abode.

'I stopped for Chardonnay and Shiraz,' she said in greeting. 'And these.'

She was thrusting a bunch of roses at me. A dozen of them. A dozen! Blood-red, they were. I had never been given flowers before, not even daisies. This statement of intent scared me. It also thrilled every nerve in my body.

Being honest as always, I must admit I wet myself.

Trying to be bold I asked her if she'd bought them from a petrol station. Maybe a posh one in or around Ilkley. She said no, she'd considered doing that, before detouring to a local garden centre.

If she'd tried to shag me at that moment, I would have let her. No, I would have let her with open arms.

And legs.

And everything.

The evening passed with us drinking wine (she'd brought three bottles) and watching sappy films on Sky. When she cuddled against me I didn't protest. Secretly I hoped she'd try for more.

And, secretly, I wondered what I'd do if she did.

Eventually, when the wine was all gone, she called a cab, telling me she'd collect her car in the morning, early on, once she'd sobered up. 'I'll be in and out like the SAS,' she grinned. 'You won't even know I've been.'

We waited for her taxi in my hallway. She was wearing a thick, outdoor shirt. It was blue and black check and probably rocky-outcrop-resistant. For the very first time I noticed her nipples. She was still flat-chested but not totally unfeminine.

'Next weekend,' she said, rousing me from wicked if hazy thoughts. 'Are you definitely up for it?'

'Without a doubt,' I assured her.

'I'll book the rooms tomorrow.'

I kissed her. No rational reason, I just did it. She kissed back but left all the instigation to me. She didn't even grope my bum. Which was a pity. I wouldn't have protested.

'Separate rooms,' she said again, smiling into my eyes.

'That would be best.' I hesitated then let the alcohol speak for itself. 'I can't promise you a night in bed; I'm not sure I'm ready for that. But I will mess about with you in the shower. If that doesn't seem too . . . too childish.'

'It seems like a good idea to me.' She grinned her lovely, captivating grin. 'Just so you're aware, I have been known to have up to ten showers a day. Sometimes I spend more time under the sprinkler than I do in bed.'

'Sounds like a plan,' I said, grinning back at her.

The working week absolutely crawled by. If it hadn't been for the lunch hours I don't think I would have made it. Honestly, I think I would have self-combusted. Fortunately, we could meet up every day, Monday to Friday at twelve on the dot. So we did, growing closer and closer all the time.

Most of that week (last week) has been forgotten already. I can't remember anything about my working activities apart from a "1-2-1" with Joyce on Wednesday, and then I can only recall our chat at the end. We'd got through the routine stuff when Joyce mentioned Dave. 'I couldn't help noticing you have found a new friend,' she began.

I was mortified when I realized Joyce was worried about me. First she confirmed that I was aware Dave wasn't a guy . . .

'I know she's not,' I told her. 'She's a very beautiful girl.'

That knocked a lot of wind out of Joyce's sails. Without ever using the word "lesbian" she . . . clumsily, if you ask me . . . speculated about Dave's sexuality. Eventually I'd heard enough. I like Joyce but couldn't have her controlling my life. Keeping it polite, I pointed out that I'd had all sorts of friends at uni and could look after myself.

Then I spent the rest of the day wondering what I'd let myself in for at the weekend.

That night I went online looking for definitions. A straight person had, I discovered, "an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to persons of the opposite sex". I thought about that and concluded I wasn't very straight. Okay, emotionally I wasn't immune. A lot of guys annoyed and frustrated me, but annoyance and frustration weren't attractive emotional qualities. Not to me, anyway. As for romantic . . . ha, ha, ha! And as for sexual . . . how often had I seen someone in the street and thought, "Wow, look at the lunch box on that!" Never, that's how often. Not even once.

Next stop was the bio of a bisexual person: "Romantic or sexual attraction to people of any sex or gender identity." I ruled myself out of "bisexual" without bothering to look up "gender identity". Hadn't I just ruled out men per se?

And so to the definition of a lesbian: "A female who experiences romantic love or sexual attraction to other females." I chewed that over a while. No denying it, I was sexually attracted to Dave. I still didn't know what that attraction would lead to, but it was definitely there. Yet the wording was "females", not "a female". As far as I was aware, I had never been attracted to any other female. Not unless you counted Beyoncé, Nichole Scherzinger and their likes. And that was more admiration than attraction, wasn't it?

Well, wasn't it?

Timeout for a brief digression. I'm not very big on masturbatory fantasies. Not for a girl who masturbates quite a lot. Usually I concentrate on what I'm doing to myself, trying to think of ways to improve. I very rarely fantasize about real people or (real or imaginary) situations. On those few occasions when I have pretended I was taking a lover, the lover had always been a faceless, well-built man. That doesn't mean, of course, that I haven't thought about some of those girlie videos while I . . .

Back to the definition of "lesbian". "Romantic love" was a term that thrilled and chilled. I had had schoolmates and friends at uni . . . girls, I mean . . . who I love. Meaning I loved them at the time and still do love them to this day. Only not in a romantic way. And I definitely hadn't been sexually attracted to any of them.

I think. Or rather, don't think.

That left Dave. Those roses were still taking pride of place in my kitchen window. They had been given as a romantic gesture, obviously, and I'd received them more than willingly. And Dave already had a place in my heart. I loved her just as much as I loved any of my other friends. No, I loved her more. Was it "romantic love"? Not yet . . . possibly not yet . . . but like it or lump it, it was heading in that direction.

I said it then for the first time. Words which have now become my mantra.

'I'm Mikki. I am twenty-four and I am a lesbian.'

'And I'm in love with Dave.'

Chapter Four

We travelled up to the Lake District in Dave's red Mini (I haven't passed my test yet, and probably won't be able to afford a car until the year 2116). She picked me up as agreed at half past six and we chatted animatedly all the way. Dave had booked us in at a pub in Troutbeck. The plan for Saturday, hill-walking day, was to dump our bags in our rooms and hit the road at once. Three miles of steep gradients away lay The Kirkstone Pass Inn, the third highest pub in all of England. We were going to leisurely dine there then foot it back down to base camp.

As then, Sunday (titchy mountains day), was a magical mystery tour as far as I was concerned. Dave was keeping the details under her hat. Still wondering what to expect in the shower, I didn't press her.

Our pub was an old-looking, white painted building and it was massive. We made our way to the reception desk and Dave gave the young woman there our details. 'Oh,' she said after a bit of tapping on her keyboard. 'There's a problem.'

My heart sank. I didn't need problems. I'd been looking forward to fresh air, good food and good company, not problems.

'We've had a burst pipe in your room,' the receptionist told Dave. 'It won't be habitable again until after the Bank Holiday.'

Suspicious me; I wondered if Dave had somehow engineered this. She looked gutted, though. Absolutely gutted.

'We have two solutions,' the receptionist went on. 'We can refund half your money and you can share with your friend . . .'

That sounded reasonable to me but Dave wasn't impressed. 'Haven't you any other vacant rooms?' she said truculently.

'Only one,' said the woman behind the desk. 'That's our very best room. We can refund half your money and you can share that.'

'Why can't one of us just have the very best room?'

'We're expecting a regular visitor any moment. He hasn't booked but he knows we've had a last minute cancelation. He just doesn't know which room he's getting. I'm giving you the choice before he gets here.'

I thought Dave was going to bicker so pulled her aside. 'We'll never find anywhere else this weekend,' I said, 'So it's a full refund and back home, or half a refund and share a bedroom. And if we're sharing, we might as well have the best.'

She asked me if I was sure. I assured her I was and, five minutes later we were staring in awe at a four-poster bed. The room itself was wonderful but that bed was sumptuous.

'You made the right choice,' the receptionist said on her way out. 'I dream about sleeping in here myself, but it's always taken. Enjoy your stay.'

The Kirkstone Pass Inn was a welcome sight after our three mile climb. When Dave told me it was "uphill with steep gradients" she hadn't been joking. The road had mountains either side of it, some of them capped with fluffy white clouds. Not that there were too many clouds in the sky. The sun was out

with a vengeance and, although we'd brought bottled water with us, we were more than ready for beer.

'How are we splitting it?' I asked as we hiked towards the long, brilliantly white building. White seemed to be a popular colour for pubs in these parts, I thought. Not that I was knocking the décor. I'd rarely seen anything so welcoming.

'You buy the food and drinks,' Dave said. 'I've already paid for the accommodation.'

No way was I having that. 'You've paid for petrol as well,' I protested. 'I want to pay my fair share.'

She said she had a petrol card from work so that wasn't an expense. And she'd got half her money back on accommodation. She'd laid out eighty pounds and we were in a room with a tariff of nearly twice that. 'And I get to sleep with you,' she added. 'I feel like a lottery winner as it is, so let me relish it.'

I stopped arguing but secretly intended to make sure I spent at least eighty quid before we got home. In fact I hoped to fork out a hundred, to account for the flowers and wine.

There were plenty of people outside the inn but I spotted an empty table. 'Bag it,' I said, 'while I get drinks and menus.'

When I came back outside Dave was sitting on a bench under a big red and white parasol, admiring the view. 'That over there is Helvellyn,' she said. 'Fancy a race to the top and back?'

I passed her a pint of real Cumbrian ale and told her I'd mind the table while she was showing off.

'You can trust me,' she said as I sat beside her. 'Tonight, I mean. I'll ask them for a bolster, if you like.'

I had to ask what bolsters were. I'd heard the word in phrases such as "Leeds United need to bolster their defence", but didn't know where it came from. According to Dave, they are long, heavy pillows used to support invalids. They were used in olden day inns too, she said, so a double bed could be shared by two strangers.

'Men and women strangers?' I wondered incredulously.

'Probably just men.' She grinned. 'When I say "olden days" I'm talking stagecoaches. Women didn't overnight on their own. They had more sense.'

'Hmmm,' I went. 'What will they think if you asked for one nowadays? That you're apt to jump on me while I'm asleep, that's what.'

'There's always a chance,' said Dave. 'In a sleepwalking sort of a way, I mean.'

'Do you sleepwalk?'

'No.'

'Well in that case I'll trust you without a bolster. Now pick your lunch.'

We both went for homemade steak and ale pie. As I returned from ordering, armed with more pints, I overheard two guys talking at our neighbouring table. Not noticing me, they were deep in a "yes it is, no it isn't" exchange. They were obviously debating Dave's gender and, as well as being angry with them, I was astounded by their stupidity. Okay, Dave's hiking gear wasn't catwalk material, but her shorts exposed plenty of smooth leg. And her face, enhanced by fresh air and sunshine, had never been lovelier.

Resisting the temptation to apply beer shampoos, I re-joined my friend. Sitting beside her once more I put my hand gently under her chin. And, as she turned to look at me, I kissed her. She reacted exactly as she had before, kissing back but leaving all the instigation to me.

There, I thought as we broke apart, chew on that, you homophobes!

The two guys were still debating when our meals arrived, casting regular glances our way. With an inward sigh, I realized my kiss had only stirred their coals. They remained undecided; now they were wondering if I was a hiking-whore or gay. Or so I assumed.

Walking back to base camp was easier than walking up to the inn. The steep down gradient did, however, test out a completely different set of muscles. Chatting as we went, I discovered Dave was twenty-six (all those cosy conversations and I hadn't previously thought to ask!) and had never had a boyfriend. Her last girlfriend had upped and gone travelling three months ago. And good riddance. She was tending towards lesbian bed death anyway, and they hadn't been together long.

Needless to report, I had to ask what she meant. Laughing, she said bed death was probably a myth but her ex . . . who'd started out hot and horny . . . had been noticeably losing interest in sex.

For the last couple of downhill miles we discussed old lovers. I character-assassinated Giles and Joe but said Tommy had been a true gentleman. She never named names but seemed to have notched up a reasonable score, most of them far from indifferently skilled.

It was after four when we arrived back in our wonderful room. During the week we had agreed that we'd have a meal in Bowness, amid a minor pub crawl. Because Bowness wasn't exactly on Troutbeck's doorstep . . . and because I rejected Dave's offer to drive . . . the service of a taxi was required. So too were showers; all that walking and sunshine had taken a toll.

'Let's save the "big" shower 'til morning,' said Dave, grinning at me. 'After I've proved my self-restraint.'

I agreed and said she could go first. Then I just stood there, staring at the four-poster bed and thinking about nothing but her.

'I'm Mikki,' I murmured softly. 'I am twenty-four and I am a lesbian.'

'And I'm in love with Dave.'

My feet made the decision for me. They turned me around and carried me to the door of the en suite. Then my hand took over, turning the knob.

Dave didn't notice me at first. She was under the shower, lathering her lovely light brown hair. The shower cubicle was in the corner of the bathroom, two sides white tiled, two glass. The glass was steamed up a bit but not at all opaque. I could quite clearly see her.

'Oh,' she said, suddenly sensing my presence. 'Are you joining me after all?'

'No.' I shook my head and moved a couple of steps closer. 'I just need to see you.' And that was the truth. I didn't want to see her, I *needed* to see her.

'Well go ahead,' she invited, holding hands above her head like a posing starlet. 'Feast your eyes.'

I did, starting with her legs. They were a little thicker than mine (mine are slim without being actually skinny), but womanly. Then her groin. Rude of me, I know, but I couldn't help myself. Suds and running water made it hard to be certain, but she looked as if she'd never shaved there, ever.

Strange, I thought. I'd expected to see a clean-shaven pussy, like my own.

Dave has wide-ish hips and a surprisingly thin waist. While she is far from "hourglass", she's definitely shapely. Wondering how on earth she ever managed to seem man-like, I shifted my attention to her chest, via her fat-free tummy. She did, after all, have tits. They were tiny, but there nevertheless. Her nipples were tiny too, although, I noticed, they were getting bigger as they rapidly hardened.

Wow, I'm turning her on!

I stepped right up to the glass and stared into her eyes. That was the first time I'd seen her without her nerd convention specs on. Some people . . . in my opinion at least . . . look odd without their specs. Myopic or hyperopic or whatever. Dave just looked lovely. Her eyes may be hazel but, depending on the light, they can appear to be green, brown or even amber. Right then, staring back at me, they were amber.

Holding her gaze, speaking loudly enough to be heard over the jetting water and extractor fan, I said, 'Davina, you are the most beautiful person I have ever met.'

She smiled at me. I'm sure she was pleased. I retreated a little but stayed in the bathroom, watching her finish her shower and towel herself dry.

'You can watch me if you want,' I offered. 'Showering, I mean.'

'I'd better not,' she said after a hesitation. 'Not if you want to sleep unmolested.'

She went back into the bedroom before I could comment on that. And, I'm sad to say, she didn't sneak back to grab an eyeful.

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