The Femme Monologues: My First Women's Dance

© 2011 Story by Marusya Bociurkiw & Graphics by Terri Roberton

Erica and Kelly were my first lesbian-couple friends. Like a speeded-up time-lapse photograph, they'd come out and fell in love with each other almost overnight.

I was still a virgin, neither lesbian nor straight, but definitely feminist. I wore baggy men's shirts and baggy khaki pants. Short hair, no makeup. It was such a relief. It was as though I didn't even need to have a body.

Erica, Kelly and I were very active in the Women's Peace Movement. We went to demonstrations at nuclear power plants and wove ribbons into the wire fences that surrounded them. We sang our hearts out at those demos, holding hands, and sometimes even dancing in the streets. It was like playschool and the French Revolution rolled into one.

Erica, Kelly and I were inseperable. But the lesbian thing was a real game-changer. I could smell it off them: the sweet, sweaty, oceanic aroma of the girl-sex they'd been having day and night. It was distracting. It made me anxious. It made me wonder.

Erica and Kelly became Erica-and-Kelly, an early, pioneering model of lesbian fidelity, virtually unknown in our promiscuous circle. And I became a curiousity, or, a challenge. Was I lesbian or bi or het?

No one knew. Everyone cared.

It was early February sometime in the early eighties, that Erica and Kelly began their campaign to get me to the Rape Crisis Centre's Valentine's Dance. Women-only. I told them I'd feel like an imposter. I didn't "i.d." as lesbian. I was planning to have het sex after the revolution, when feminist men would be plentiful, and abortion was legalized.

Erica-and-Kelly waited me out. On the night of the dance they invited me to dinner.

They'd spent all day having sex, smoking pot, and making things out of the Moosewood Cookbook. Its author, Mollie Katzen, was our Julia Child. They made Brazilian Black Bean Soup. Tabouli. Tofu Salad. Broccoli-Mushroom-Noodle Casserole. And Iced Carob Brownies for dessert.

Still the good Ukrainian girl, I hadn't done any kind of drug, not ever. While Erica-and-Kelly were necking over the kitchen sink, I ate an entire brownie. They were kind of dry, but the icing more than made up for it. Erica saw me licking the last of the crumbs from my plate, and groaned.

An hour later, we were on the streetcar, bound for the women's dance. For all I knew, we were on a spaceship headed to Venus. The brick facades and neon of downtown Toronto swirled fluidly across my field of vision. At a bus shelter at Dundas and Spadina, I pulled out the magic marker I kept for feminist graffiti actions. I pretended to be a weathergirl, drawing meteorological patterns across the transit map of Toronto. That cracked up Erica and made Kelly anxious. I had ESP, too: I could feel everybody's vibe.

At the dance, I strolled around like a tourist. Profoundly stoned, I marveled at the proliferation of men at this women's dance; the sensitivity and gentleness of its male gender. While Erica-and-Kelly's backs were turned for just one moment, I asked one of their species to dance. It happened to be a slow number, and I had to admire the languid and considerate manner with which my partner ran "his" hands down my back and on to my butt.

It was Kelly who found me in the cloakroom with Louise's tongue in my mouth. Kelly knew Louise from Women Against Violence Against Women. I knew Louise hardly at all, and had insisted on calling her "Lou". She did not protest. Neither, it must be admitted, did I.

I woke up the next morning recalling nothing. The name Lou, and a phone number were scribbled in magic marker on my left arm, like an autograph, or a tattoo. I phoned not Lou, but Kelly, who gently told me the story of my first lesbian dance, and the butch who finally recognized me.