

Some Kind of Ellen Joke

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Choice is making the decision to be true to who you are and to act on your feelings. To gather the nerve to ask her for her number no matter if she is a girl just like you and to react to the flip in your tummy and the palpitations of your heart when you see her in the morning by your side; that's a choice.

I came out, that was something I had to do. I came out to a complete gathering of strangers who were also coming out to people who were queer like them. I tried it on. It did not fit perfectly, but I knew I would grow in to it. Eventually I worked up the nerve and I went on a.m. radio. I proclaimed, "My name is Lisa, I live in a small town, and I watch Ellen every week and can not wait for her debut as a lesbian on national television." I came out on the radio. The station was out of big city Windsor – how could anyone possibly know which small town I was talking about. I laughed on the radio, I spoke, and I joked around with Robyn the woman who ran the group one-in-ten to which I belonged. The show was such a hit and we had so many callers that the radio host continued to interview us. I even skipped the day of school. It was a.m. radio and I thought for sure no one I knew would be listening. My best friend, Sandy, well her mom Ruth was listening. So, Ruth listens and recognizes my voice and my name and thinks, "Nah. That's not Lisa." Then she hears me laugh. She hears my laugh and I never chose my laugh, but there it is and it is mine and that's just the way it is. There is no mistaking it is me, Lisa, her daughter's best friend. So, when she sees Sandy, she says to her, "Why did you not tell me that Lisa is lesbian?" What does Sandy do? She calls my house. She calls my house and my mother answers the phone and she says to her, "Why didn't you tell me you were a lesbian!?" To which my mother replies, "Um, is this some kind of Ellen joke?" Sandy stammers, "Uh, yeah. Sorry about that. Tell Lisa I called." So, I call her when I get home.

There was no hello, nothing like that, just, "Are you a lesbian?" from Sandy's mouth when I called.

"What are you talking about?" I responded with a question trying to bide time.

Sandy tells me about how her mother heard me on the radio and how proud Ruth is of me and how Sandy better not be rude to me and all of these words that I had no idea I could possibly hear from another person in the same small town as me. She even told me that if my parents were not okay with the whole thing, that I could go and live with them.

"I knew you were a lesbian because you never carry a purse," Sandy says to me matter-of-fact like there is no other explanation in the entire world that could define the reasons why I would rather spend my intimate time with a woman. It is true, I never carry a purse. The reason, I had money stolen from my purse when I was 10. I left it at an aunt's house

and my cousin, who is older than I am by about 9 years; she stole \$50.00 from me. I was 10; \$50.00 was like a million bucks. I never got the money back and I just knew that it was okay because Sally was not well and she did a lot of drugs and slept around a lot and never listened to her mother. I just knew not to bother asking any questions.

So, now I was out to most of my friends; next was my brother. I was so scared and worried, high and drunk the majority of my time all the while trying to finish high school. I was a mess during my coming out and hiding out. I chose the path of being scared and worried and paranoid and all feeling unloved and dirty and wrong and unsure. I chose that path because I knew it would be worse to not be me and to live a lie. And I knew that at some point I would feel more comfortable being true to me.

My brother was a bit upset with me for not telling him sooner. He was upset because he said that people at school were talking and he felt that he needed to defend my honour. He was upset because he was saying that I was not lesbian. He would have preferred to have told them with pride that yes his sister is lesbian because he would have known the truth. Telling the strangers, then the friends was all a build up in confidence to have the nerve to tell my family. My brother was awesome about the whole thing. Even said he contemplated his own sexual orientation because he never knew anyone queer before. In the end he figured if he had to think about it, he probably was not.

I have been thinking about my sexual orientation for so long because it has been fed to me by the forkful, spoonful, plateful, and I'm pretty sure that I even smoked a bowlful of it a few times, that sexual orientation is a choice. The only thing that really feels right is when I am with a woman. It should never be a choice in how to live our lives. It should be our prerogative. It should be our right. Our right as people to be who we are no matter what label we put on the container.

No matter if we lie in bed with our same, opposite, non identified gendered partners at night and squeeze their little tummies just enough to get a giggle and whisper to that person, "I love you. You feel good right here next to me." It is my life, not my choice.

I have made many poor choices in my life. My sexual orientation is not one of them. I did choose the clothes I'm wearing today. I wear them because they are comfortable.