

3. LUCY AND ETHEL

We'd probably loved each other for years, but it took a pitcher of margaritas and a Monty Python television marathon to push us over that last hurdle.

Naomi was the best friend I'd ever had. I was terrified that these sexual feelings would destroy our friendship.

In the morning we both started screaming rape and accusing each other, but after breakfast, we decided to take a bubble bath together.

Into this section fall the women who had no prior attraction to women, who seemed the typical wives and mothers, or in some cases, single career women. Their first lesbian experience came with another heterosexual woman, a friend who may also have been taken off guard by the physical attraction.

Usually, the realization of sexual desire came gradually. Often it was triggered by an outside stimulus, and was frequently accompanied by alcohol or an erotic environment.

Usually, these women didn't identify themselves as lesbians after their first sexual encounter. They felt instead that they had succumbed to circumstances, and the experience could be dismissed as unimportant, a temporary weakness.

This type of lesbian experience happens to many heterosexual women, often with no lasting propensity towards lesbianism. With these women, however, things were different. The lesbian experience touched some hidden chord in them and released a suppressed desire. It was the first step towards a future lesbian life.

Carol's Story

We lapsed into silence then, finishing the beers, me, probably both of us, thinking about what it'd be like to make it with a woman.

It all started with the movie *The Color Purple*, which Lois and I rented on a Saturday night because her husband was out of town for the weekend. Mine was living in a tiny apartment downtown, having moved out two months earlier. Lois and I had been friends for years, had helped each other through crisis after crisis, had talked over cups of coffee about faked orgasms, sagging breasts, Tom Selleck, and all of the issues of our lives.

My son had even dated Lois's oldest daughter briefly, a trying experience for our friendship. In our forties, we talked each other through more serious problems with our marriages. Mine had come apart. Lois and her husband Sam were trying to patch things up after his latest affair.

With her youngest child now in college, Lois was alone in the house that weekend. She invited me over to watch a movie. She made popcorn and we drank beer, sitting on the floor of their family room amid a nest of pillows.

It was a good movie, powerful and moving. Lois always cried at movies, and this was no exception. The box of Kleenex was strategically placed behind us.

When Celie and Shug kissed, I felt it deep in my abdomen. I turned to Lois who stared glassy-eyed at me. How many beers has she had, I asked myself.

When the movie was over, Lois rewound the tape and stumbled into the kitchen to get us each another beer. We settled into the pillows.

“What'd you think?” Lois asked.

“I thought it was good.”

“What'd you think of the two women getting together like that?”

“The men weren’t worth much, so it made sense, I guess.”

“Most men aren’t worth much,” Lois said, echoing an ongoing sentiment we expressed freely with one another, typical of straight women with men.

“No,” I agreed.

“She didn’t know what an orgasm was. Fucked hundreds of times and didn’t know what an orgasm was. Can you believe it?”

“Sure.”

Lois’s speech was slurred. She was obviously drunk. “What do you think it’s like?”

“What?”

“Sex with a woman?”

I shrugged. “I guess at least you’d have an orgasm. I guess.”

“Yeah, probably. Nothing to go limp on you.”

We lapsed into silence then, finishing the beers, me, probably both of us, thinking about what it’d be like to make it with a woman. When I looked again at Lois, she lay on her side, hand propping up her head, staring at me. She just stared, an odd expression on her face. After a moment, she said, “Kiss me.”

“What?” I asked, puzzled.

“Kiss me.”

Boy, is she drunk, I thought. Then I leaned down and kissed her, a light touch of my lips to hers. Her arms went around my neck and she dragged me down to her.

We made love there on the floor, on the pillows. We finger-fucked each other, then fell asleep. When I woke, Lois was in the kitchen brewing coffee. Slowly I remembered what had happened. I was feeling ill, and sleeping on the floor had left me with an aching back.

“Morning,” Lois said, smiling.

After an Alka Seltzer and one cup of coffee, I said, “Do you remember last night?”

She nodded obliquely.

“Well?” I asked.

“We were drunk. It was just one of those things. It doesn’t mean anything. Forget about it.”

I nodded, unsure. “Okay. It never happened.”

But I had a hard time forgetting about it. I kept remembering the feel of her warm pussy sliding over my fingers.

For the next few months, our friendship followed its usual course. The incident wasn’t mentioned. I began dating a man from work, Robert, and soon he was sleeping over.

In October, we prepared for an annual tradition, a costume ball at the police station where Sam worked. This year Robert would be my date, and we decided on a Robin Hood theme. I was Robin Hood, Lois was Maid Marian, Sam would be the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Robert would go as Friar Tuck. Unfortunately, Robert required almost no adornment to fit his part of the bald, portly churchman.

A week before the event, I asked Lois to stop by my house to try on her gown. I was the seamstress of the group, so it was my job to make the costumes.

She twirled around in the shimmering sea green, medieval dress, her bosom protruding at the top.

“You need more of this,” I said, pushing her breasts up and together. “You need a more bosomy look. I’ll pad the bodice a bit.”

Looking at her breasts reminded me of our drunken cavorting. I wasn’t drunk now, but I felt drawn to her, aroused by her closeness.

I moved away. “So what do you think?”

“It’s lovely. Is Sam’s done?”

“Yes. Take it with you and have him try it.”

I unzipped the gown and slipped it down over her body, leaving her in her slip. I carefully laid the dress on the end of the bed, then turned to see Lois standing there watching me. The look on her face wasn’t unlike the look she’d given me that night when she asked me to kiss her. Almost against my will, I stepped towards her. I felt flushed and confused. I slipped the strap off her shoulder, then kissed it at the spot right inside the muscle. Her skin was soft. I pressed my cheek to her neck. I felt her hand on the back of my head.

When I tried to kiss her mouth, she turned away. “No,” she said. “No, no, please.”

She practically ran away, then, dressing in haste and bolting. I was thoroughly confused. Why was she trying to seduce me . . . and why was I responding?

This incident pretty much ended our friendship. There were overtures and pretenses and lots of excuses. After a while, we didn’t see each other anymore. We exchange Christmas cards, that’s about it. Now, since I’ve become a lesbian, Lois blames the whole thing on me, but she forgives me, she says.

I broke up with Robert after the Halloween party. I had never really liked him anyway. Looking back, I think he was just an excuse, a reaction to my desire for Lois.

Becoming a lesbian wasn’t easy for me. It took several years and professional counseling. I hid from my attraction to women, and I denied it.

It’s been three years since Lois and I watched *The Color Purple*. I’ve begun a relationship with a young woman who’s incredibly patient and kind. I believe I’m falling in love. It feels very natural. Scary, too, but worth the risk. I adore making love with her. I adore everything about

her. I've never felt more comfortable with another person. I'm envisioning old age with her. Even if it doesn't come to that, I'm hooked. I'm a lover of women.

Lana's Story

One time, after we came back to her apartment after a night out, we sat up talking about that pussy-eating woman."

Penny and I used to hang out together on Friday and Saturday nights. We'd become buddies in college, she a girl in her twenties, me a divorcee of forty-two. For some reason, we got along great. Sometimes we went to bars and flirted with guys. We protected each other when the guys got belligerent. I don't think either of us ever really wanted to pick a guy up. We just enjoyed the game.

We went to see the Chippendales a couple of times too. We talked about sex a lot. We compared our experiences. Penny had more, even though she was so much younger than me.

One night I asked her if she'd ever done it with a woman. She said she'd had her pussy eaten by a woman once. She said it had been a blast. Sometimes, when I was horny, I asked her to tell me about it, about how it felt and all.

One time, after we came back to her apartment after a night out, we sat up talking about that pussy-eating woman. I asked Penny if she had really liked it. She said yes. She said no man had ever licked her pussy like that. I was feeling awfully generous towards Penny those days. I asked her if she wanted me to do it to her. So we ended up eating each other. I liked it both ways, giving and getting.

Penny and I started staying in on Friday and Saturday nights. Now we stay in most nights. She's moved in with me and we're devoted to one another. All that flirting and guy watching was probably overcompensation, just an excuse to get horny together, probably.

Carmen's Story

I begged Pat to continue our affair, but she said her marriage was more important. It was just sex, after all, she said.

It's been a year now since I had my first sexual experience with a woman. I still feel pretty much devastated by it and am not really looking for someone new. I have a feeling, though, that if I ever fall for another woman, she'll be a lumberjack (or is it lumberjill?).

My best friend Pat and I decided to make some extra money by selling firewood last fall, only one of our many business ventures. We could afford to fail, both being married to successful professional men. But we expected to succeed, every time.

We'd tried a deli, a diet center, a second-hand clothing store, and hadn't lost too much money, ultimately. In the process, we'd learned a lot and had a lot of fun. Pat and I were clearly in it for the fun, though we told our husbands it was serious business.

Neither of them thought the firewood idea would work, ascribing such a business to the domain of men. But all you really needed to know how to do was wield a chain saw and drive a truck. My uncle had forty acres of wild oaks and apple orchard in the foothills of California, just an hour's drive from our urban sprawl.

We started in August, in the blistering heat of the California summer. In September, my youngest child would be leaving for college, U. C. Santa Barbara, and I figured the physical labor would be a perfect answer to ward off loneliness.

I don't know why this job turned out the way it did. I don't know if it was because my children were gone, or because I was feeling the first symptoms of menopause, or because it was the most physical of the jobs we'd undertaken. The explanation I lean towards has more to do with Pat's appearance on those fall days in the hills.

She wore leather gloves, a flannel shirt, blue jeans, and boots. After slicing through the trunk of a tree a few times, sweat stood on her brow. And she got dirty, we both did. To this day, if I see a woman in jeans and a flannel shirt, my heart leaps.

We'd come home exhausted, our truck weighted down with wood. Then we'd spend the weekend splitting the logs, then stacking the wood in Pat's back yard. Gradually, I started getting used to the physical labor, and liking the feel of my muscles being challenged.

We were actually making money this time. How could we not, with such low overhead? After a particularly hard day, Pat and I would sometimes soak in my spa, letting the jets pound on our tired muscles. If it were after dark, we'd go in naked.

It was on such a night that we first began playing with each other. She'd tease my pubic hair with her toes. I'd clench her nipples in mine. Like children playing in a bath, we thought, we were just being silly.

But I remember one day, a chilly day in November, when Pat ran her chain saw through a tree trunk and I stood transfixed, admiring her, and thinking how I wanted to get her home and into that spa.

That night when her foot went creeping up my thigh, I didn't push her away as I usually did. I spread my legs apart. I felt her foot press against my pubic bone, her heel against my clitoris. The last time I saw her face, lit by a distant street lamp, she was smirking.

She put her big toe inside me, and then she bent her knee and came closer. I don't know who started it, but we kissed, and then retreated to the house to make love. That night released a monstrous passion in me. Pat and I became ardent lovers.

It lasted two months, November and December. Then her husband caught us. He told my husband. They made us swear not to see each other again. But I was in no mood to obey my

husband. I begged Pat to continue our affair, but she said her marriage was more important. It was just sex, after all, she said.

It wasn't just sex for me. I was in love with Pat. I suffered the loss of her with physical and emotional trauma. My husband left me because I couldn't stop loving Pat.

Pat and I have seen each other since, in safe surroundings, and she's been sympathetic, but she's adamant in her refusal to continue our affair. She's at least admitted to me that sex with me was always better than sex with her husband. It was the sex, the delicious, ecstatic sex that she remembered with longing.

Sometimes I wonder if things wouldn't have been better had Pat and I never known one another. Things would definitely be more comfortable. Perhaps some day when I'm over this I'll feel more sweet than bitter in remembering our affair. Now, I can't stop longing for her. In my fantasies, Pat is always wearing a red flannel shirt and blue jeans, a shock of her dark hair pasted to her sweaty brow. And I hear the whirr of a chain saw.