

VALENTINE VIGNETTES

Local lovers share dates that were, dates that might be, and dates that should never have been

by Risa Krivé

photos by Linda Kliever

The arrow on the clock of the year will soon swing around to Valentine's Day. Are you ready to have your heart pierced? Wondering about dating do's and don'ts? Is there a recipe for a great date? Sample this smorgasbord of memorable dates from a few of your peers. These sweet and sour stories from local folk may spark your memories or inspire your future dating games. Some names have been changed to protect the shy.

Rose: *Bottomed Out*

I returned to my college town in California after spending a year as a model in New York in the late '70s. The town was a hotbed of lesbian feminist activism. I had spent my undergrad years there in regulation drab dyke drag. My first public outing to reconnect with my old lesbian friends was at a talk given by a woman considered to be a founding mother of the lesbian sadomasochism movement. Her initials were P.C., at a time when the subject was not.

I chose to support her visit by coming out at the event in full femme S/M drag. The town had never seen a woman, let alone a lesbian, dressed in full makeup, strategically silver-studded skintight leather, slave collar, black patent leather spike-heeled pumps, handcuffs swinging at her side. I had won the Most Outrageous Outfit Contest on Fire Island. I was in the running to win the title of Miss World when I dropped out of the pageant, earlier that year. I had held New York in the palm of my cockring-braceleted hand. I was dropdead gorgeous, and I knew it.

I introduced myself to the speaker and invited her to spend the night at my house rather than in a hotel. She accepted. I anticipated an exquisite evening.

We went home. I gave her something to drink and changed into a slinky, black lace negligee. I perfumed the sheets. I was at the peak of perfection in my power as a temptress.

She informed me that she had no intention of having any sort of sexual encounter with me. She told me she was attracted to fat women. She said thin, beautiful model-types were a real turnoff for her.

I didn't miss a beat, nor bat a New York-attituded eye, as I told her I had no expectation that anything was going to happen between us. I was simply extending the hospitality of my home.

I had no guest bed. She slept on one side of my double bed while I lay awake all night on the other side, listening to her longingly call out the name of the woman she wished she was with. It was the ultimate S/M experience.

Julio: *Down by the Schoolyard*

It was a good date simply because we were each other's first. It was real romantic. We had no rules as to how we were going to go about it. We both went to school together. I was a junior, he was a senior, in high school. We weren't out to our families, so we couldn't meet and have fun. I would take my parents' car without them knowing, and stick it in neutral. Trying to roll a Volvo down the street is not easy! I'd roll it down and then I'd start it, and I'd go over and pick him up and we'd go over to the park and we'd swing. We had a blanket and we'd kiss a little and spend time with each other. Three or four hours later, we'd get home at 1 or 2 in the morning and have to get up for school. It was fun.

Lissa: *Too Hot to Trot*

I was nearsighted and vain and found contact lenses uncomfortable. So I went without glasses, which worked most of the time, but not on this date. I went out to dinner with the woman I was madly in lust with. I was rapidly falling in love with her. She was an owner and vice president of a San Francisco telecommunications corporation. She took me to dinner at a formal Japanese restaurant, where we sat on the floor at a low, wooden table with my lover's business partner—the president of the corporation—a chic, sleek woman who was there with her yuppie boyfriend and their friends, an upscale heterosexual couple.

The year was 1980. Sushi was the symbol of San Francisco sophistication. The proper Japanese way to eat sushi is to put the whole piece in your mouth at once and immediately chew and swallow it. I impressed everyone with my knowledge of Japanese culture and cuisine, even ordering and chatting fluently with the waiters in Japanese.



This particular restaurant had particularly hot Japanese horseradish. Simply smelling it was enough to clear the most clogged of sinuses.

I reached from the communal serving tray for a piece of what I thought was sushi. In one graceful motion I put it in my mouth, chewed and swallowed.

Sushi is green. So is Japanese horseradish, which is served in a round hunk—approximately the same size as a piece of sushi—from which one breaks off a tiny grain to mix with soy sauce.

In the blur that was my vision I had, of course, accidentally swallowed the entire dinner's worth of horseradish. There was that cartoon-like moment when my eyes nearly bugged out of my head as everyone stared at me while I struggled for control. Then I exploded in an avalanche of coughing and spluttering, tears streaming out of my eyes from the sinus bomb. They gave me gallons of water. It took a full hour for me to recover physically and a decade to recover my dignity.

Stevie and Dianna: *Motel Madness*

I was just acknowledging to myself after fortysomething years that I was a lesbian. I was falling in love with a woman at work. I asked her what she wanted for her birthday. She said she wanted me.

We went out to dinner and then to a hotel. I had to sign the register. My automatic reaction was to give my real name and address. I gave it and all of a sudden I started panicking. Being truthful is very

important to me. I already felt I was living a lie by falling in love with this woman while I was married to a man. So now I was a wreck. I thought they were going to call my family.

I had never had anyone see me naked except my husband, and I was petrified that I was gross. I had stretch marks, I had two kids. I felt that here was this beautiful woman with this wonderful body whom I was going to be with, and I felt like this old fart. So I made her go into the bathroom while I took off my clothes and shut the lights off and crawled under the covers so that she couldn't see my body. I had brought out a tape recorder and romantic music. I lit candles.

When she walked out this was all set up. It was a wonderful evening. We had to end at a certain time because I had to go home to my family, who thought I was at work. This was the most tense, most horrible, but most wonderful evening, because I had wonderful feelings with the person I was with, but fear beyond belief because I was lying to my family and the motel was going to call...it was such mixed emotions.

I had never experienced such a closeness to another human being as I felt with her. I thought I had it in my marriage, but until I really experienced it, I didn't know that you could have those kind of feelings.

I got a divorce. We've been together for six years. My daughter has put a request in her will that if anything should happen to her husband and her, my partner and I will raise their child. If anything should happen to me, she wants my partner to raise

the child. We've come a long way from that first evening.

John: *The Dangling Conversation*

It was shortly after I arrived in Portland from New York. I was still getting used to the fact that people here are more friendly and more outgoing and you can have a conversation with a stranger and it doesn't mean anything out here, whereas back East that would never happen. Even in a bar, there's a lot of standing around and posing.

I was leaning over the rail at Waterfront Park watching the Dragon Boat Races at the Rose Festival. I fell into conversation with this young man next to me. He was cute. We ended up spending the entire afternoon together and having amazing conversations walking around the Rose Festival, sitting on a park bench and talking for hours. We talked about everything except what was going on between us. We talked about believing in diversity. We didn't talk about sexual orientation, but it was sort of implied. He had a date that night with a woman. He said that he wasn't happy with that woman or with women. I think he was fishing for me to say something, but I was still having some of my East Coast hesitancy about opening up to someone, because you're very defensive when you live in New York and you have your guard up always. The fact that he was a policeman made me a little nervous, too.

Women talk. Men don't talk that way. It was rather extraordinary. At 6 o'clock he had to go off to get ready for his date. We agreed it had been a wonderful afternoon spending it with each other. We said goodbye, and that was it. I've never seen him again. We didn't exchange phone numbers. I don't know if you'd call it a date, although we did end up spending a more intense time and a longer time than most dates are, and we got to know each other fairly well on an intellectual level.

If this had happened two years later, when I was more used to the ground rules in the Portland area, maybe we would have had a different date that night and this story would have ended differently.

Lori: *Disco Fever*

I went on a heterosexual date when I wasn't sure I wanted to be on a heterosexual date, so I decided to numb myself up with Kahlua and cream. We went to a Japanese restaurant. We were sitting on the floor. I had fried shrimp tempura, which didn't mix with the Kahlua and cream very well. All of a sudden I realized, "I'm gonna be sick." So I got up and ran out of our private room. In between me and the bathroom was a lake in the restaurant, with these little stones placed throughout it. I was drunk enough that I couldn't see a way around it. I figured that I had to go over it. I tried to walk on the stones, but I slipped into the water. I barely made it to the door, soaking wet, and I threw up all over myself. I washed myself up as much as possible and went back to dinner. I knew I didn't smell very good after that. The guy still wanted to go out dancing afterwards. We went out dancing and I got sick again, right in the middle of dancing, all over him. I never got called back. I'm not sure why.

Dee: *Straight Up Surprise*

This straight woman I was friends with picked me up from work on Friday night. We went to a hot tub. She had a few drinks and relaxed. We picked up Chinese food and we went to her 32-foot cabin cruiser moored up in Camas. We sat there and had dinner, and she lit candles and made it quite romantic. You look out on the Columbia River and the lights are shining like fingers reaching across the water. The boat rocks and barges glide through. It's beautiful—so relaxing you don't want to leave.

She told me that if she was going to be with a woman she would want to be with me. I really

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