

Elena Azzoni Breaks Down Gender Roles in 'A Year Straight: Confessions of a Boy-Crazy Lesbian Beauty Queen'



 By Steven Zangrillo

Whether you classify yourself as straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual stock, there's clearly an intrinsic value and emphasis that our sexual orientation and relationships play in our overall identity. As our society has matured, we continue to poke and prod at these sexual boundaries, blurring the lines with each passing day. The concept of "sexual fluidity" is beginning to overtake the archaic and rigid ideals of classifiable sexual identity.

Elena Azzoni has chronicled the ever-shifting perspective on sexual roles by actually engaging in the shift herself. A lesbian for most of her life, Elena was suddenly entranced by her yoga instructor during a class. This lustful interaction drove Elena to open the doors to the hetero-dating world. We had the chance to speak to her and attain some perspective on gender roles, sexual attraction, and how our the values in our society have begun to shift from one end of the spectrum to the other.

What was it about the encounter with your Yoga Instructor that "flipped the switch?"

That is the great mystery, it's been everyone's biggest question. After coming out as a lesbian I never expected to

be attracted to men again. I always had seen him as a very handsome, aesthetically pleasing man. I had never really saw him in a sexual way, but it was literally that moment where he was laying on top of me during pigeon pose, pressing his chest down onto me. I'm not sure what happened, but all of a sudden I went wild.

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It seems that sexual attraction spurred this journey. Was it about the sex or was it something more?

It wasn't just the sex, maybe more like a "man-hunt." I studied Gender and Sexuality Studies in college, which was all about de-constructing gender and saying "No! Women and men are actually the same! We're just socialized to act differently." Once I started this man-quest, however, I realized that we are so different. There was sort of a joint fascination with that adventure in the hetero-dating world, coupled with the initial yoga lust.

Give us your perspective on the emotional advantages that both men and women bring to the table. What are the differences?

It's funny because I find that my straight friends ask me that same question now. I'd have to generalize a little bit to answer that. In general, I've found my personal experiences with women to be more mutually analytic and empathetic. If there's a problem at your job, for example, I find that women partners would want to talk it out and would generally empathize. Men, on the other hand, would drive right to the point and try to find a logical solution instead of having an emotional conversation about it. They're very different approaches, but I've learned to appreciate them both.

Do you think that being gay is a choice or a genetic occurrence?

I would almost say that it's neither for me, I don't believe

who you [fall in love](#) with is a choice. I do believe that for some people it is totally genetic. Some of my friends swear they were born gay. My place on the spectrum is definitely different, and it's one of the reasons why I wrote this book.

There's something to be said about the concept of sexual fluidity. There's great research that's been done, specifically by Lisa Diamond. It was found that most people don't fall into these strict categories of Gay, Lesbian, and Bi-Sexual. A woman can be married to a man for 25 years, get divorced, and suddenly fall in love with a woman. You know, that doesn't mean she was a repressed lesbian before. I would say that, for me, the best way to describe it would be "sexual freedom."

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Given this "sexual freedom," did you begin to place an emphasis on mutual values over the gender of your partners?

Quite honestly, it comes down to who you fall in love with. That's tied into your values, because the partner you choose is supposed to balance you. You're choosing a better half.

What would your advice be to gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual people who are looking to start dating the opposite gender, or have had interest in exploring those ideas?

Don't do it!!! ...I'm only joking! I guess it would be my hope for everyone to be true to themselves. There is equal pressure on either side because we have such strict sexual identities these days. Those roles served their purpose, but I feel that we can evolve past that. My experiences with this book and subject matter have shown me that what I've done isn't a very abstract concept. A lot of people have related to my experiences. Many lesbian women and straight women that I've spoken with have worries about being ostracized by their respective communities. It's my advice to them to not subject themselves to these social restrictions. You could be passing

up a fulfilling relationship.

Do you think our sexual identities are starting to shift and change socially?

We are, as a society, a lot more open to it. There's much more conversation about it. Look at all the gay characters on television now, for example.

Of all of the experiences in your book, which situation yields the best lesson for readers?

In the book I talk about the first few months of dating Theo. I had been trying to relate to him as though he was a woman, not the best idea. He was working as a cook in Martha's Vineyard while I was down in New York. Every time he didn't call for a few days, my mind would go wild. Naturally, I would delete his number from my phone and write him off completely. I would come up with about a million different scenarios and over-think everything. Sure enough, every time this happened he would end up calling like "Hey, babe. I was just watching the game when you called! I miss you." It was always something so simple that I would extrapolate into something crazy. So, the lesson is that whatever scenario you've conjured up in your mind, take that and divide it by 1500. It's probably even less than that.

Visit Amazon to pick up your copy of Elena Azzoni's new novel, *A Year Straight: Confessions of a Boy-Crazy Lesbian Beauty Queen*. You can also follow her on Twitter and Facebook.