

REAPPROPIANT-NOS de les nostres vides

CARMELINA

I was 14 years old when I had my first relationship. He was a boy a few years older than me. It was a very troubled story which caused me suffering.

A few years later, when I was 17, I met a girl and fell in love. We were together for 7 years. When the story began, I was still residing in the country where I was born. To be more specific, I was living in a small, narrow-minded town in Western Sicily with a very well-known family.

In that context, my only concern was to hide the relationship and make sure nobody would ever find out. I did not have enough time to sit down and analyse what was going on or to ask myself about my identity and my sexual orientation, even though I am generally a reflective person.

I was not worried about feeling attracted to a woman but I was definitely concerned about the impact it could have on a social level the fact that my relationship would end up in the public eye. For all this, I remember that period with pain.

Despite the prudence and the agreements, rumours began to circulate in my little town. Those who, back then, I believed to be my friends, pretending to protect me, began to ask me details in a very inquisitorial way, and advised me not to spend time with "that girl". In their opinion, I was a good girl who was being manipulated by her, and it was her fault if neighbours had started gossiping about me. I wanted to get away from them, but to avoid further gossip, I decided to continue with these fake friendships: There was no other choice!

Finally, the gossip reached my father's ears, and he started to limit my freedom: I had to let him know of every move I made - who I was hanging out with, where I was going - and forced me to come back home earlier than usual, and kept my phone out of my bedroom. My every move was being watched by my mother and him. She even read my secret diary. Under this circumstances, I did not find the courage to admit I was having a relationship with a girl, and I denied any accusation. She probably pretended to believe me, refusing a reality she could not cope with. It was a very difficult year, during which I felt like a prisoner.

Fortunately, after graduation, I could move to Palermo, a bigger and open-minded city, to attend university. Probably my parents' desire to provide me with a good education prevailed over the will to keep me under control.

In Palermo I finally found my space, feeling finally free to express myself. After a few years, I felt restless, and I start asking myself: Who am I? What is my sexual orientation? What will my future be? Meanwhile, the relationship with my family deteriorated further, I did not do so well in university, and the relationship ended.



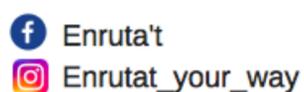
Soon after that, I met an intelligent and non-judging man, with whom I feel totally free to express myself. We are still married and we have two daughters, to whom we teach respect to oneself and to others, we share with them that strength lies in differences. We encourage them to think critically, to fight for what they believe, not to judge others, to treat others as they would like to be treated.

It was because of him that I learned to love myself, and I understood that I love people regardless of their gender. I do not feel the need to define myself in a rigid way but with an open mind to be continuously evolving.

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