

LGBTQ+ Short Story Competition

“Mum, I-I'm a Non-Binary pansexual” I stuttered out.

Nope not happening. No way was I telling my mum that. I looked in the mirror at myself trying to say the words and sighed. Why couldn't I just tell her? Ugh. This was hell. This torturous feeling. I ran my fingers through the little hair I had on the sides of my head. I had to beg for weeks for this haircut. I tried again.

“Mum, I am a Non-Binary Pansexual and I have a girlfriend.” I said with some more authority.

Nope. Nope. Nope. I remembered when I had asked my mum what she thought of Pansexuality and Non-Binaries.

“I don't really think about them a lot.”

Not really judging, or even bad, but something in her tone... I don't know, maybe it was just my anxiety.

Once more.

“Mum. I, Camila, am a Non-Binary Pansexual and I have a girlfriend called Veronica.”

God. Now I am thinking of Veronica. My amazing girlfriend. Her coming out had been rough, to say the least, so she understood why I was cautious to come out. I thought now about her hair... so soft. The curves on her face. She was beautiful. Not just her body, but her soul. She was the person that made you feel guilty on the street when she gave homeless people money. She was caring, loyal and so, so generous. What attracted me to her was her smile, so bright, always there to lighten your day.

I first met her in my math class. Her hand would always pop up. Despite the groanings of the people around her, she never wavered. Her mind was brilliant. After the lesson, I walked up to her and introduced myself. She smiled.

“Hi. I'm Veronica.”

I have been in love ever since. I didn't think I believed in love at first sight... but it was impossible not to fall in love with her. After weeks of hanging out with her I went to her house where she came out to me as a lesbian. She stuttered as she

forced the words out of her mouth. She looked up at me with her amber eyes and I hugged her.

“Thank you so much for telling me.” I murmured to her shoulder.

As we pulled out of our hug, I made an impulsive decision. I leaned forward and kissed her softly. She looked at me in shock and then leaned her head against my shoulders. I reached for her hand and held it. We sat like that for ages. On her sofa, listening to our favorite musical soundtracks.

She didn't ask about my sexuality. She waited until I was ready and hugged me when I came out as Non-Binary and Pansexual, in the same way I had to her. She was so herself. People would always tell her that, if she wore nicer dresses, or makeup, she would get a nice man for herself. They would tell me that if I acted more feminine, grew out my hair, men would actually like me. We would look at each other when this happened and smile, because we knew, no matter how much of a bad hair day, no matter how many bags were under our eyes, as long as we had each other, it wasn't our bodies, it was our souls.

Woah. That train of thought was offtrack. Not even offtrack, like off rail. I brought my mind back to earth. My mind was racing. Veronica was so brave. If she could come out, then so could I. Another time.

“Mum, I'm a non-binary pansexual. I have a girlfriend called Veronica. I love her.”

Maybe I shouldn't tell her I have a girlfriend straight away. Maybe it would be too much for her to process it all at once. Even though she had never displayed any sort of prejudice towards the LGBTQ+ community, I had a feeling that she wouldn't be over the moon with this. I mean she had been planning my 'Big Straight Wedding' (trademark) since I had bumped into my neighbour when I was five. My family was Spanish, and whilst most of my cousins weren't homophobic, most of my aunts were quite religious. Like, pray before and after every meal, religious. Most of my family loved my new haircut, yet there was that one aunt (you know the type) that looked me up and down and told me:

“Madre de Jesus, Camila what did your mother let you do?”

Then she grabbed my mum and started nagging about how I was never going to get a boyfriend like that, so annoyed she was practically whispering (that's a big deal in my family) in her Spanish as if I didn't understand. I could have sworn I saw my mum crack a smirk at this, but it was probably just at my aunt's whole aura. All my cousins were struggling not to laugh at our little old Hispanic aunt whispering/screaming in my mum's ear. That night, as my cousins drove us over to their house, we made fun of her tone.

"Madre DE JESUS!!!" My cousin laughed, struggling to breathe.

After this, my mum leant over and whispered in my ears.

"Don't take notice of that viejita, okay mija? Be yourself."

I thought about this now for a while. Could she know about me already? Even if she did, it was a risk. Veronica had a rough time coming out, and I didn't want to experience that. I was there when she came out. She gathered her family in her living room and pulled me next to her.

"Mum, Dad, I have something to say." They stared at her expectantly. "I'm Lesbian."

What happened next was... unexpected. To say the least. Her mum burst into tears. Literally. Her dad just left the room. At this point my mum texted me to leave, so I had to, but I called her later that day.

“Hey, Ronnie, you okay?” I queried. I heard soft gasping on the other side.

“I-I’m leaving my house” She whispered. I realized what the gasping was.

“Baby, why are you crying? Why are you leaving? What’s going on?”

“My dad called my grandma to pick me up. He said he doesn’t want me in his house.”

“Oh sweetie... Are you already at your grandma’s?”

“Yeah...”

“How about I come over? Stay the night?”

“Yeah... That would be nice.”

Her grandma already knew about her and was happy to have me over and let me stay over whenever I wanted to. Of course, she was cautious with us. Like it would

be if I was a boy. I asked my mum and said I could go. I grabbed some pj's and went over. Her grandma lived close by, so it wasn't a long travel.

I knocked on her door. Her grandma, Benita, opened the door. She just pointed to Veronica's room there and I ran over.

"Knock, knock."

"Who's there?" I heard her reply, obviously through tears.

"It's Cami."

I didn't hear anything from her, so I edged her door open. She was sitting in the dark, with her childhood blanket around her. I walked forward and sat down on her bed.

"Hey sweetie." I stroked her face.

"H-hey C-Cami." She sobbed. I held my arms out and she leant into me.

"Oh baby, shh, shh, hey it's okay." I heard her soft breathing under my arms.

"They threw me out. Th-hey don't w-want me anymore. They don't love m-me."

Her breathing sped up. I knew what was happening from my own experience.

“Hey, hey, I’m here now. Breathe, breathe. Can you do that for me, darling?” She nodded and slowed down her breathing.

After 10 minutes sitting like that, she turned to me.

“How did you know what to do?” she asked.

“I’ve had my fair share of panic attacks. Remember I also listen to ‘Michael in the bathroom’ quite a lot.” She giggled softly. ‘Michael in the Bathroom’ is a song from ‘Be more Chill’ the musical in which a character has a panic attack in the bathroom.

“You always know how to make me feel better, Cami.”

“One of my many talents.” I joked.

“Hey, big-headed much?” She said. I gasped dramatically at this.

“Moi? Big-Headed? I’m offended you would even suggest such a thing!”

She laughed loudly. I looked over at the clock.

“Hey, it’s getting late, maybe we should sleep?”

“Good idea.”

“Lemme get changed.”

I came back from the bathroom, to find my girlfriend already sleeping on the bed. Aww. She was cute when she snored like an elephant. I climbed into bed behind her and held her. I was asleep within minutes.

Her relationship with her family didn't improve much after that. Her grandma went over to scream at her dad once or twice, to no result. It's ironic that an old Cuban grandma could accept her granddaughter as Lesbian while her father couldn't. Sometimes Veronica still cried, and I would comfort her every single time. I would tell her that it's okay to be sad, no one expected her to be happy every day of her life. Slowly she got happier, she didn't cry as much. I was with her throughout the whole thing. I wouldn't have left her for the world.

I looked at myself in the mirror.

“Mum, I am a Non-Binary Pansexual. I love you, but that is who I am, and I won't change myself to be accepted by you.”

That was good. It was short, concise and explained my feelings on the matter. Still, it needed more work. I stared at my reflection in the mirror. The short hair. The baggy shirt. The high waisted jeans. The rainbow vans I wore were a little too tight, but I didn't care. I had my nose ring in and my spiked choker. I remember once when I was out with Veronica and I wore this outfit.

Veronica had been asking me to go with her to a Pride Club. I liked the idea of it, but I tended to get anxious in situations like that. She knew about this and didn't pressure me to go more than twice. After a while of thinking, I decided that I would go with her. It would be a good thing to experience and if I was with Veronica, I would be okay.

So, we went to a club in London, with permission too, from our adults (Of course my mum didn't know exactly where we would be). Veronica was wearing a tight green tank top with short black shorts. The club was amazing and filled with people. We sat down at the bar and ordered drinks (non-alcoholic, obviously) and talked. After a while, a girl wearing a short, tight red dress walked up to us and started talking to Veronica. Like, outright. We were literally in the middle of a

conversation and she pulled her wrist and started talking. She had a rough British accent.

“Hey there, pretty thing. Wanna dance?” The unknown girl asked.

“I, I, Um, well” Veronica stuttered, her red creeping up her face.

“C’mon then, do you or not?”

“Excuse me, if you hadn’t noticed, she’s here with me.” I shot at her.

She then turned to me and wrinkled her nose. She turned back to Veronica.

“Leave this girl behind. Why would you have her when you could have me?” She pursed her lips, which I noticed were a shiny red, to match her dress.

It felt like a slap in the face. I hadn’t been misgendered in months, except for my mum and family. I felt my eyes watering slightly. Veronica turned to me and saw this. She slid her hand along the side of my face. For a split second, I thought she was going to leave with the other girl. I think the other girl thought it too because she spread those red lips in a triumphant grin.

When Veronica slapped her, she wiped that grin right off her face.

“First of all, they are not ‘she’, they are ‘they’” She shouted.

“Jesus Christ how was I supposed to know! They have breasts!”

“I would have thought that being a member of the LGBTQ+ community, you would know to ask people’s genders! Their body is not their Spirit!” Veronica retorted. “Secondly! You may not think that they are beautiful, but that would just mean you are shallow! Because this human being is the most beautiful person in the world. Inside and out! I wouldn’t cheat on them with a shallow, vain person like you! Or anyone for that matter!”

I stared at her. She turned back to me and grabbed my wrist.

“C’mon, Cami, let’s leave.” She whispered in my ear.

I think this was when I realized she was my soulmate. I know, I know this sounds cheesy but... I really love her. The way she is always so over the top, the way that she screams along to her favorite songs. I can’t help it. Then something awakens inside me. I pull myself back to reality and stare in the mirror. I decided. For Veronica, who was brave enough to do this for me.

I walk out of my room and turn to the staircase. My legs turn to jelly as I walk down the stairs. I must hold onto the rails for support, because otherwise I will surely fall. After what seems like hours of walking, I finally reach the end and am

in my living room. My mum is sitting watching her telenovelas, on the channels she pays extra for. I must do this now, or I'll never do it. She notices me at the bottom of the stairs.

"Mami, I'm a non-binary Pansexual! I have been thinking a lot... And I just hope this doesn't change your opinion of me." I practically shouted out.

My mum stared at me. It was quiet for a moment.

"Finally!" She exclaims and pauses her telenovela just as Soraya Montenegro gasps in Spanish (She is watching María la del Barrio).

"W-what?"

"I've been waiting for you to come out for ages!" She says with a grin on her face.

“How did you know?”

“You aren’t particularly good at hiding things like that, Mija. I had suspicions when I saw you looking at the pride flags when we went to the market 3 years ago. You touched two and they were Pansexual and Non-Binary ones. I wasn’t sure, obviously, but once when I went to get you from Veronica’s abuelita’s house, me and Benita were talking, and she said how happy she was that you and Veronica were together. Benita said that otherwise Veronica would never have had the courage to come out. She didn’t realize you weren’t out to me yet and when I asked more, she told me. She asked me not to ask you about it, she wanted you to be ready.” I listened to her talking and smiled at the mention of Benita. She had the best intentions.

“So, you aren’t... angry?”

“Obviously, I’m not! I’m just annoyed you didn’t tell me sooner! I bought something for the occasion. Hang on I’ll be back!”

She rushed up and went to the cupboard in our hall. I sat down on the sofa. She came back and handed me three wrapped parcels and an envelope.

“Open the envelope last.” She told me.

I hesitantly opened the first, small, round parcel. Inside were two bracelets, one with the pattern of the pansexual flag and the other with the non-binary flag pattern. I smiled softly and slipped them on. I turned to the next, thin square parcel. I tore the edge and pulled out a piece of fabric. When I realized what it was, I grinned widely. It was the pride flag I had seen at the market. It had the background of a non-binary flag and there was a heart in the middle designed with a pansexual flag pattern. My mum was smiling as I moved to the next parcel. It was slightly thicker, and square. I practically tore the paper off (I like opening presents, okay?). There were two T-shirts inside with different patterns. Both were black. The first one said GENDER at the top with 3 different tick boxes. The first was boy, the second was girl and the last one said ‘Non-conforming Boss who doesn’t believe in the gender structures of society’ with a tick next to it. The second said I’M A PANSEXUAL THAT MEANS: at the top with 3 tick boxes like the

other one. However, the tick boxes said, 'I am attracted to Pans', 'I am the same as Bi' and 'I Love people regardless of Gender and I am a lovable Chibi bean'.

Obviously, the last one was ticked.

"Wow, Mami, you really went all out!" I laughed.

"You know I can't resist a sale, mija"

I finally picked up the envelope. I opened it and a card fell out. The front said, 'Congrats on coming out!'. I looked inside.

'Dear Cami,

I know how hard this must have been for you. I am proud of you, my darling child. No matter what you do, I will always support you. I hope that you are happy, and that one day you see this card. Thank you for trusting me and I pray that you grow up, and that I will see the amazing human being you turn into.

Loving you, no matter what,

Mami

X'

I felt my eyes watering and started crying softly. Mami looked at me with a concerned expression.

“Is something wrong Mija? Did I do something wrong?” She asked.

“No everything is absolutely perfect. These are happy tears, Mami.”

She hugged me. After a while she turned her telenovela back on and we watched it for a bit. An hour later I stood up.

“I’m going to call Veronica.”

“Okay Mija.”

I walked to my room and dialed the all too familiar numbers. After two rings,
Veronica picked it up.

“Hey Cami!”

“Hey Ronnie.”

“What’s up?”

“I just came out to my mum.”

“Wow. That’s... Wow! How did it go?”

“Amazing! She already knew! She had bought tons of Pansexual and Non-Binary
stuff for me and wrote an amazing letter to me!”

“I’m so happy for you!”

“It wouldn’t have happened if it weren’t for you...”

“What do you mean?”

“I think you’re my soulmate Veronica. I wanted you to know that. I thought that if you were brave enough to come out for me, then I would for you...”

Silence. I started to panic. Had I stepped over the line?

“You’re my soulmate too, you goofball.”

I smiled. Some part of me knew that in past and future lives, we had found each other, in different bodies, but the same spirits, the same minds. Because I know that spirits always find each other.

Word count: 3,159