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Yes, Girls Too

Asha Galindo

I took the doors off my closet and expanded my room by another 2x4ft. rectangle. My closet didn't have clothes, but I had a collection of small plush animals and cartoon characters on a little chair inside and a big cube where I kept my collection of *Rolling Stone* magazines. On top of the big cube, I had my own TV/VCR combo that I had bought for myself after an entire summer babysitting my cousin, Stevie. My uncle paid me about \$50 a week to watch him. It was pretty good money for a teenager. At most, I had to argue with a 7-year-old about eating his mac and cheese before buying a Big Stick from the ice cream man and keep him from carrying a purse when he played dress up with my little sisters. My mom was okay with his wearing dresses, but the purse was too much. "Mijo, here. Here is a backpack."

Like most 16-year-olds who earned \$50 a week babysitting their spoiled cousin, I considered myself grown and only a boarder in my parent's house. I enjoyed the modern cosmopolitan convenience of independent study from a local charter school and a door knob with a key. I used part of the money I earned over summer to buy it so that no one could go in my room and rifle through my stuffed animals and rock magazines. Not that I left very often. The lock was almost strictly used from the inside.

Since I didn't have my own closet to hide secrets, I used my parents' instead. There I found the teal metal box filled with VHS tapes, some with handwritten labels: *Sex and the Single Girl*, *Hot to Trot*, and my fave, *Guerilla Girls*. I had already long discovered the joys of masturbation: humping the rails of my day bed or pushing the mound under my underwear in a way that felt nice, like scratching something bumping under the skin. Budding sexuality.

I wasn't so innocent that I didn't know what the tapes were. I took them one at a time into my closet, flipped the lock, and watched them with the sound level at 1: loud enough to hear the moans, but low enough that no one outside my closet could. I felt dirty afterward. I'd rewind the tape to whatever

position it was in when I popped it in, paranoid of the embarrassment of being caught.

When I couldn't steal the porn, I turned to creative writing. I had begun to write short erotic stories about convening in a storage room with another young woman, reclining on sacks of flour as we explored each other. I was pretty sure I wasn't a lesbian; I was just fantasizing. In the garage, I found my older sister's things that she couldn't schlep all the way to Hawaii, where she lived in a tent reeking of patchouli. In her crates, I found *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the feminist FUBU of women's health. I was interested in the chapters on sexuality, including frank discussion of masturbation and even personal testimonials from women of their fantasies. My pulse raced as I read about women who desired men, women with strap-ons, men and women at the same time, and missionary sex. I masturbated to the testimonies, too, making sure to put the volume back in the crate under the pile of old schoolwork each time.

Our Bodies, Ourselves said that masturbation and fantasies were normal and, of course, natural. I was a natural woman. I was validated. I was pretty sure it was a "for adults only" thing; the tapes belonged to my parents. I wasn't supposed to look at them. I still felt the guilt that secret thoughts entail, but I at least knew that some people knew I wasn't a weirdo, that I wasn't obsessed with sex.

Of course, I wasn't grown enough to know that loving women outside of my closet wasn't as easy as fantasizing about them, and loving dudes was not as complicated, but just as difficult. I didn't know that just not mentioning it was the same thing as being closeted. The wide world of sexuality blew off my closet doors, but I still put a lock on the door to the outside.

I sleep with the door open now. I'm not sure there's even a lock on my bedroom door, my closet still has no door, and my life spills out all over the house.