

Defining a Bisexual

Bisexual: of, or relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both sexes

You meet a man in a bar. You find him attractive. You agree to join him at his house for another drink. Later that night, you agree to join him in bed. In the morning, you leave, satisfied with the outcome of the encounter.

You meet a woman at the gym. You find her attractive. You agree to join her for dinner. That night, your dinner progresses to drinks, which leads to agreeing to join her in bed. In the morning, you leave, satisfied with the outcome of the encounter.

You get a text from your mom. She asks about your love life. You tell her that you've been going on some dates. Exciting, she tells you. It's great that you've been meeting people.

Bisexual: of, or relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both sexes that is discovered, but not acknowledged, in junior year of high school

In English, notice the girl who sits in the corner. She doesn't talk much. Appreciate the way she absentmindedly plays with her hair while she tries to hide the book under her desk. Smile at her when she looks up. Laugh to yourself when she looks over her shoulder to make sure that you're smiling at her. Wonder why you like the way she blushes when she's embarrassed. Wonder why you catch yourself thinking more about her than the book that you're supposed to be discussing.

Go home that night and turn an unattractive shade of red when your mom asks you why you're smiling so much. Pretend that you didn't hear the question and run up the stairs to your room. Look the girl up on Facebook. Spend too much time looking at her profile. Mentally photoshop yourself into her pictures. You would complement her cinnamon hair and favorite red shirt much better than that other girl who's in all of her photos.

Think about sending her a text. Why you haven't texted her before? How did you get her number again? Remember your project together freshman year. Think about the ways she made you smile even though you hated the rest of your group. Wonder why your heart beats faster when you think of her laugh. Wonder why you're thinking of how it would feel to run your hands through the hair that cascades down her back in an amber waterfall.

Send a text. Immediately panic. Why did you do that? Throw your phone across the room and flop face down on the bed. Panic. Hear your phone chime. Feel your palms sweat as you try to find your phone in the piles of clothes on the floor. See the glimmer of the screen. Run over and pick it up. Smile when you see it only took her a minute to respond.

Realize you have a crush.

Hide your phone behind your back when your mom walks into your room. Try not to look guilty as you feel it buzz again in your hands. Use every bit of self-control you possess to not look at your phone until she finally leaves after what feels like an hour of forced conversation.

Feel your cheeks flush red when you see the text asking you if you are free on Sunday.

Bisexual: of, or relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both sexes; a term that cannot apply to a person who only likes boys

Look at the boy who sits across from you in Chemistry. Notice the way he smirks every time the guy that sits next to you tries to impress you with his astonishingly bad knowledge of the subject. See him try to glance at you when you're not looking. Catch his eye and smile softly. When the period ends, brush his hand as you're leaving; pretend that you don't notice his grin as you say you'll see him next class.

Go home and think of the way he makes your stomach clench when he brushes your hand with his. Spend a sleepless night imagining the ways your heart would melt when he finally kissed you. Realize you haven't felt this way in a long time. Wonder if he's feeling the same way. Wonder if you'll ever tell him.

You're in Chemistry again. You spend half the class making faces at him and half of it trying to convince yourself not to run up to him and scream I love you. On your way out of class, feel a hand gently grab your arm and guide you into the

hallway. Shake a little as he softly whispers a question into your ear. Nod in affirmation. Feel the blood rush into your cheeks as you flush and shyly wave as he walks away.

Go home. Squeal when you tell your mom that you finally have a date.

Bisexual: of, or relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both sexes; something you come to terms with when you're in the midst of a long-term relationship

Think of the girl from English. Wonder how she's doing. Pull up her Facebook; she has a girlfriend now. You haven't seen her in three years, but you still remember the way your heart twisted when you said goodbye at graduation. If you close your eyes, you can feel her arms gently holding you. Her perfume, a seductive combination of lavender and vanilla, curls around you and you feel her warmth against your skin. A whisper of a kiss glides against your cheek. Hide your phone when your boyfriend asks what you're doing.

Nothing, just reading a book.

Grab his hand before he can walk away. Remind yourself that you love him. Him. Kiss his knuckles and whisper anything that reminds you of how dedicated you're supposed to be. Look at the ring on your finger and force a smile.

Lie in bed next to the man you love and wonder what it would be like if it was a woman. Realize that you wouldn't mind if it was a woman. Realize you would like it if it was.

Realize you'll never have a chance to be with one.

Feel the tears slip down your cheeks as you try to keep the sobs from leaving your body. You don't want to wake up your boyfriend. There wouldn't be any good way to explain why you were crying. Dig your nails into your palms and convince yourself that it's okay. You're in love right? That's all that should matter.

Bisexual: of, or relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to both sexes that will eventually pass on as all phases do

Sit nervously across from your mother. Notice how her wedding ring reflects the light coming in from the window. Glance at the picture of your family sitting on the mantel. Weakly clear your choked up throat. Think to yourself, she'll understand. Start to speak, only to stumble over your words as you grasp at the phrases that float out of reach.

Try again. This time, start with normal conversation. Ask how her day was. Did she go on a walk? How is her best friend? What's for dinner? Listen to her answer, clearly distracted by the screen that sits in front of her. Try not to picture the ways this conversation could end badly. There are so many different ways.

Start to dwell on conversations that have come before this one. Remember the walk in the woods when she told you that no one could love men and women; everyone always settles for one. Start feeling the same way you did then: slightly ashamed, mostly embarrassed. Remind yourself that she could have a different opinion now. People change, you tell yourself. Right?

Look at your mother. Notice that she's still distracted by her screen. If you do it now, maybe she won't notice that you said anything. Her hearing is bad anyway. I'm bisexual, you whisper, I'm bi. She shifts, her hand batting away your words like a fly. You're not sure if she heard you. Her hand goes back down to her keyboard, her face unchanged. She didn't hear you. You breathe in.

Mom. I like girls.

She glances up from the screen. You see her look at you. You see her mouth twitch. You don't know what to expect next. Her hands go up to her face as she covers her mouth. It's not the gasp of surprise that you expected. Instead, a giggle comes out. Then, a full-blown laugh. Her hands slide beneath her glasses as she wipes mirth-filled tears from her eyes.

You don't like girls, she says. She laughs again and pats your knee. She looks back down at her screen. The conversation is over.

Maybe she's right, you think. Maybe you're just confused. She would know, wouldn't she?

She likes girls, too.