

[MOANING]

[BED ROCKING]

**PRESENTER:** The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Oh, yes, you've tuned in to *After Hours*, a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston, 90.1 FM. The crew of *After Hours* is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music geared for gay and lesbian people. Here at *After Hours*, we may be diverse, but we have one thing in common-- we are out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets. That means standing up for yourself, taking responsibility for your own life, and being proud of who you are. Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of age, job, or frame of mind. That's OK. We're here for you, too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of *After Hours*.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**JEWEL GRAY:** Hi, you've caught *After Hours*. My name is Jewel Gray.

**JIMMY CARPER:** And my name is Jimmy Carper.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And we're here to amuse and bemuse you tonight.

**JIMMY CARPER:** We are here to amuse you, yes.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And we got lots of interesting stuff going on tonight. We have a tape interview that Diane did recently of--

**JIMMY CARPER:** Of Robbi Sommers.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Who does lesbian erotic poetry-- not poetry, everything.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Everything erotica.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Everything erotica. I don't know if she does any art. I keep looking for some really good lesbian erotica art, so I can hang it on my walls-- all over my walls. I'm looking for something for my walls. So today was an interesting day. You were just saying something about Fuzzies?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Fuzzies, the newest gay bar in Houston.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, yeah? Where's that at?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Well, actually, it's not a gay bar, but it was tonight. Fuzzies is located in the 1700 block of Milam, and it's a cop bar. It's where cops hang out.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, yeah I remember that. Fuzzies.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yes. And along with all the bar raids that have been going on in Houston lately at Q.T.'s and at the Triangle, and transgenderal people being picked up for hitchhiking and the bar raid over at Q.T.'s with ski masks, and all this kind of unsavory stuff, I'm growing concerned. Yeah, a bunch of folks thought it would be a good idea to just kind of hang out in a cop bar and just do what we do.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Cool. How many was a bunch of folks?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Gosh, people came and went. There's probably a dozen, all told. Ray Hill, and Tom Richards, and Stubblefield, and a bunch of people from the Triangle, and public news were there.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, great.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah, there's some pictures and people came-- Rainbow was there in drag.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, boy.

**JIMMY CARPER:** It was fun. We were watching the guys playing pool and making comments and coming in and kissing each other-- hi, how you doing? Brian Bradley was there doing the Brian Bradley thing. It was fun.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I'm sorry I missed that.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Actually, it's a very nice bar.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Where did you hear about it?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Well, let's see.

**JEWEL GRAY:** This, obviously, was an organized effort.

**JIMMY CARPER:** This was kind of an unorganized thing. I read it in one of the publications that this was going to occur because, I believe, Ray talked with the police and said, hey, this is what we're going to do. You come in to our bar, so we're going go into yours.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I think it's a wonderful idea. It's very Gandhi.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah. So let it be known, Fuzzies is now the new gay bar of Houston.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So if you and your sweetie are looking for a nice place to hang out-- nice and safe, no need to worry about being mugged or robbed or-- I mean, God, you can't think of a safer place, "supposedly", quote, unquote.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah, it was kind of neat, too-- all these young guys in tight pants.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Guns and uniforms. I'm really into guns on women, let me tell you. Put a gun on a woman, and I am just melt. That sounds like a great idea. We've got to do that all over town. That's a great idea. We ought to, really, just turn that into the new gay--

**JIMMY CARPER:** You bet.

**JEWEL GRAY:** --rebelism. That's kind of like tribalism.

**JIMMY CARPER:** We just sat and talked and admired the views. And--

**JEWEL GRAY:** Cool. I love that idea.

**JIMMY CARPER:** --had fun.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, where are we going to go next with it? Where do you where do you think we ought to go next?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah, the next bar tour.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I think we ought to go to City council meetings-- just hundreds of us walk in City council meetings. That would really scare them. They're so used to looking at some of those people. Have you watched city council meetings on the municipal channel?

**JIMMY CARPER:** No, I don't get cable.

**JEWEL GRAY:** It's better than Comedy Central, and you know what a fan I am of Comedy Central.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Oh, I know. I know.

**JEWEL GRAY:** It's better than Comedy Central. I mean, it's a riot. No wonder these guys want to get this job? It's a riot to sit there and watch these people. I mean, guy comes in and wants the city to start mowing around his tree in his front yard. He spends his allotted 20 minutes or whatever it is, I don't know.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Three, I think.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Actually, this guy went on for several times because he had his wife on right behind him, and he took her time.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Oh, I see. I see.

**JEWEL GRAY:** But going on and on and on about getting the city to come out and mow around his-- and I thought, no wonder these guys want this job. What a cushy job. I want that job. So next year, you'll be seeing my face on posters all around, running for city council. What seat do you think I should get? Hey, I'd like an at-large seat.

**JIMMY CARPER:** [LAUGHTER].

**JEWEL GRAY:** But I think that's a wonderful idea. We ought to start doing things like that.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Shoot, yeah. Why not?

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, that's cool. We're going to be doing-- well, we got all kinds of people here. We don't know who might just pop in. We might talk-- I don't know if Michael is still here. Might get Michael in here for a few minutes. We always light up the boards when Michael and I get going.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Oh, yeah. Makes me nervous, but it sure is good radio.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And Evelyn's here, and Sarah's here, and Matt's here. And we have some friends from Q-Patrol.

**JIMMY CARPER:** We sure do, and we've got some really special going on.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Making an announcement. A winner was picked from a drawing, I believe. What are they going to win, now?

**JIMMY CARPER:** I don't know. Evelyn has all the details.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, I'm going to let you go with some music.

**JIMMY CARPER:** And here she comes.

**EVELYN** It's a share of the pot. Q-Patrol is going to be drawing-- we had a raffle and the winner-- the grand prize winner--  
**CARROLL:** takes half of the money raised.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, how much is that-- the grand prize is going to be tonight?

**EVELYN** Oh, well that's yet to be announced.  
**CARROLL:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, yet to be announced.

**EVELYN** Yet to be announced.  
**CARROLL:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, jeez, I'd want to know how much I was winning. OK, so you got some music ready, Jim? No, OK. Do you want to bring the Q-Patrol in here now? Let's do it now. Let's do it now. Let's hear a round of applause for the Q-Patrol.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah. Woo!

**JEWEL GRAY:** And whoever won. Yay. Maybe it's me. No, I think I'm probably considered--

**JIMMY CARPER:** Are we disqualified because we do this thing?

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, we're probably disqualified. What are we going to play when we get through here in a minute? That looks interesting.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Oh, a perfect song for the winner.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, good.

**JIMMY CARPER:** *Everything I own* by Boy George.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, yeah. Boy George. Well, are we here? Oh, we haven't drawn yet. Somebody draws. It hasn't drawn yet. OK.

**JIMMY CARPER:** Have a seat.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Come on in. Sit down. Don't be shy. Nobody can see you, so it's not like, you know.

**CONNIE** You mean I have a bad hair day--  
**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, nobody would care. Yeah, it's cool. You can have eyelashes hanging down. Nobody would care. So we're going to draw now. You are?

**CONNIE** I'm Connie Sawyer. I'm co-president.  
**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** And you're co-president. And you?

**NANCY:** Nancy [INAUDIBLE].

**JEWEL GRAY:** Nancy. And you're a volunteer, Nancy?

**NANCY:** Mm-hmm.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And you both are walking the streets?

**CONNIE** In a manner of speaking.

**SAWYER:**

[LAUGHTER]

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, I'm glad to know. Hey, I'll be out there more often. Believe me. So we're going to draw? Who's going to draw?

**CONNIE** Actually, we were hoping one of you people would.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** How about Jimmy? How about Jimmy?

**JIMMY CARPER:** I can do this. I can do this.

**JEWEL GRAY:** All right, let's draw. Let's get a drum roll. [MOUTHING DRUM ROLL]

**JIMMY CARPER:** Oh, boy. I hope it's nobody I know.

[LAUGHTER]

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, what do we got? And what do they do? Let's wait. Before we announce who it is, what do they do if it's their name?

**CONNIE** Well, they can give us a buzz, but we're going to call them.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, you are going to call them, too?

**CONNIE** We're going to call them and let them know.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Oh, tonight?

- Why don't we announce the phone number--

**CONNIE** Well maybe not tonight.

**SAWYER:**

- --in case they're listening?

**CONNIE** Yeah. Well, sure.

**SAWYER:**

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah, our phone number here at *After Hours* is 526-5738.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So if your name is the one they pick, you can give us a call here and talk to them here.

**CONNIE** And we have-- the name drawn is Denise R. Didn't give her last name, but we've got a phone number, and we'll  
**SAWYER:** be calling you.

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, Denise. So we announce to everybody that you're going to be drawing on *After Hours*?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yeah.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So, Denise, call. What was the number again?

**JIMMY CARPER:** 526-5738 or JAM KPFT.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I just have a mental block with that phone number. It's the only one I have problem with. OK, so we're going to have Boy George?

**JIMMY CARPER:** Uh-huh.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And what is it?

**JIMMY CARPER:** *Everything I own* for the winner.

[MUSIC - BOY GEORGE, "EVERYTHING I OWN"]

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, we're back. And like I said earlier, you've caught *After Hours* and I'm Jewel Gray. I'm sitting here with Connie, from the Q-Patrol, and-- I'm sorry, I--

**NANCY:** Nancy.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And Nancy. Connie and Nancy from Q-Patrol. And we just had a drawing, and Denise R. won the pot. And if you're out there Denise, you can call in here. And that's JAM KPFT, the phone number. And, Connie, we were talking while we were gone here about you got some more stuff coming up and some exciting things happening at Q-Patrol. You want to tell us a little bit about it?

**CONNIE** Yeah, we've got a couple of fundraisers coming up in the very near future. For one thing, the good people at the  
**SAWYER:** Lambda Roller Skating Club will be holding a skate night for us in which they'll split the proceeds with us. And that's this Wednesday night at the Dairy Ashford Skate on Dairy Ashford, just South of Memorial, from 8:00 to 10:00 PM.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, they're some great people. I was out there with friends who didn't skate, and there was no one out there looking at them strange. They were, really, very great people.

**CONNIE** They're a good gang, and I learned to skate with that group. And I do a lot of skating at this point. They're good  
**SAWYER:** people. In addition, on the 9th of August, Heaven will be splitting their door with-- I forget what the other organization is, but half of the door is going to go to Q-Patrol. So that's going to help us enormously because we are trying to raise a large amount of money, primarily to upgrade our radio system. For anyone who knows or has been involved with Q-Patrol, you know how woefully inadequate that has been.

We use a CB radio system. And if you know anything about working with that in the downtown area, it's subject to lots of interference, either malicious or otherwise. And we also want to cover a lot more distance, frankly. We want to be able to visit the bars on Richmond or go in that area and maybe down to the Ranch. We want to see if we can really expand our range because we feel like it's a shame that we're having to serve, really, a fairly small portion of the community by concentrating in the bar district here in the Montrose.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, that's a great idea.

**CONNIE** So that's a big area.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** So those dates for-- the first one is the fundraiser at the skating rink.

**CONNIE** That's right, and it's the 3rd of August, and that's this coming Wednesday--

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Wednesday night.

**CONNIE** --from 8:00 to 10:00 PM. And then there will be the 9th of August, which is a Saturday, at Heaven.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Great. So if you want to help the Q-Patrol, and you want to have a good time--

**JIMMY CARPER:** The 9th.

**CONNIE** Yeah, the 9th. Wait a minute. I'm sorry, I may have the day of the week messed up.

**SAWYER:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** --and you want to have a good time, then you can participate in one of these events and help cute Q-Patrol, so join in. They're a great bunch of people out there. I love their t-shirts. And they've been there when nobody else was in the wee hours of the morning, and I know that you guys have done wonderful things.

My favorite thing that you guys do is when you take the license plate numbers and send postcards to the house. I think that is just genius. I just think that's genius. I would just freak if I had a child, and, suddenly, I got a card that said my car was in Montrose and seen cruising around. Boy, I would just freak. And let me tell you, I'd hang that kid up by his ears-- her ears. So I think that's a great thing. I was just thrilled when I saw the first one. Evelyn showed me one of them, and it also has the hate crimes hot line number underneath of it. So I thought that was great.

Well, I'm glad you came down. I'm glad you had the drawing on the air. And we would like to talk to you more often. Off and on, we've done the live on the air reports from the streets, and we really have a lot of feedback positive feedback about that. So we really like that. And it's kind of exciting to hear from it right from the corner of Pacific and Grant-- what's going on. You can hear Heaven in the background and the Mining Company at the same time. So we kind of like that. And I appreciate you coming down tonight and talking to us a little bit. You guy can welcome here. Any time you want to talk about something, just give us a call and say, we're coming down, because we have a great, big front door, and we have a lot of time to talk about organizations and community events here.

So you've been listening to Connie and Nancy. I did it right? All right, Connie and Nancy from the Q-Patrol. What do we got going, Jimmy?

**JIMMY CARPER:** We're going to go to another piece of music, this time from Pink, last week's TWIT cover woman.

**JEWEL GRAY:** That's right. It was a good TWIT cover.

**JIMMY CARPER:** And she has this great song for the gay and lesbian community called *Give and Take*.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Great.

[MUSIC - PINK, "GIVE AND TAKE"]

**JIMMY CARPER:** Yes, that was *Give and Take*, by Pink.

**JEWEL GRAY:** It sounds like a porn star-- Robbi Sommers-- for some reason. It's just one of those names that sounds like one of those-- I'm sorry, no insult to Robbi Sommers. Robbi Sommers is a lesbian who writes a lot of stuff, and it's all erotic, and it's about lesbians. And unfortunately, I haven't read any. As much as I have heard about it, I don't know why I haven't. And Diane talked to her on June the 21st when she was in town to sign a book, wasn't it?

**JIMMY CARPER:** No. She was in town, but Diane did a phone interview last week.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So that's why Diane went to do the interview-- because she was in town. That's right. And because Diane, of course, got to talk to the person who wrote the stuff that Diane is reading to Karen this moment and not down here. So we're going to go to that interview by Diane Williams. She interviews Robbi Sommers.

**JIMMY CARPER:** OK.

**DIANE WILLIAMS:** Well, this is Diane Williams with *After Hours Radio*, 90.1 KPFT Houston, and we're here talking, via the telephone, to author extraordinaire, Robbi Sommers. Hi, Robbi.

**ROBBI SOMMERS:** Hi, how are you?

**DIANE WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI SOMMERS:** I'm just fine. How are you? I'm so glad you can talk to us today.

**DIANE WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI SOMMERS:** I know. I'm really happy to be here. Thank you.

**DIANE WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI SOMMERS:** Well, I'm sorry we missed you and didn't get to talk to you a little bit earlier. I know you were just in town here in Houston. Have you been in Houston before? What did you think about Houston while you were here?

**DIANE WILLIAMS:** Well, I was in Houston-- what, for like seven hours?

**ROBBI SOMMERS:**

**DIANE WILLIAMS:** Yeah. A whirlwind signing tour.

**ROBBI** Right, I'm burning my way across the South, across Dixie. So I was in Houston a really short time, But I had a very nice time. I really enjoyed the women that I met. And I had a really good turnout for my reading, so it went really nice. And then we got lost in Houston late at night and were sort of surrounded by a gang through downtown for a short period of time. And so that was a little bit exciting.

**DIANE** So it wasn't a lesbian gang or anything?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** No, if it was a lesbian gang, I'd still be in Houston now, wouldn't I?

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** Yeah, we would have kidnapped you, probably.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Oh, my God. No, it wasn't a gang that I was really familiar with-- the type.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** OK. Well, tell me a little bit about yourself. Where are you from, and how long have you been actively writing?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Where am I from in the beginning-- like the day I was born-- or where do I live now?

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** I suppose so.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** I started in Cincinnati, Ohio-- Midwest farmer's daughter type.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** Midwestern girl.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Yeah, Cincinnati. And then I left Cincinnati when I was about 23 and moved out to Northern California. I'm about

**SOMMERS:** an hour North of San Francisco.

**DIANE** And you're still there?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** And I'm still there.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** Do you like it out there, I take it?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** I like it a lot. It's really beautiful.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** So when you started writing-- I write, myself, and there are times when I said to myself, what am I going to write?

**WILLIAMS:** What do I write? Most of your material is erotic in nature. How did you decide to write primarily erotic art?

**ROBBI** Well, it started-- I was in therapy, and I have a little dark issue-- oops-- where--

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** Spill the beans. It's midnight here in Houston.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Well, it's this thing and-- I have trouble being monogamous in relationships. It's my dark side. I embrace it. OK, so

**SOMMERS:** I was working on it in therapy. And so my therapist-- I was in a relationship with this woman-- and I really wanted to have an affair with my ex-lover. And so my therapist felt that instead of acting that out, that would be my best interest to, perhaps, go home and write a short story about what I'd like to happen.

**DIANE** Fantasies.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Yes. So I went home and wrote the story about being in this relationship and wishing that I could connect with

**SOMMERS:** my ex, and wrote the whole story, and took it into my therapist the next week, who went, whoa, oh, my God. And then I showed it to a couple of my friends who were just like, oh, my God. And Meanwhile, I really enjoyed writing the story. So then I thought, well, what can I do next? And so then I continued writing and all of a sudden, I had 12 stories. And that's what my first book, *Pleasures*, is.

And so I thought, well, maybe I should get these try to get these published because I didn't see any-- I hadn't seen any erotica that really soothed my needs. I like really explicit, graphic words. And if I watch a movie, I like it right in my face. It's like a thing. So I thought, well, maybe there are other women out there that would like it a little bit more explicit than what's really out there right now. And so I tried to get it published and then, boom.

**DIANE** And it worked, obviously.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Naiad Press said, we want this.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** So let me ask you something real quickly. What was the general reaction to it on the home front? What I mean by

**WILLIAMS:** that is there's a perception of the lesbian community that we are non-sexual beings. It's always, I think, gay men that are portrayed as being sexual. And then lesbians-- at least in the past-- have been perceived as being non-sexual human beings. There's that phrase that's called "lesbian bed death" that talks about what happens to lovers once they get in a relationship and things like that. How did you embrace your sexuality, and did the lesbian community that you were involved with at the time embrace it, too?

**ROBBI** Well, I don't know if this is part of it or not, but I've only been a lesbian for eight years-- or out as a lesbian. I had

**SOMMERS:** no idea before that. I was married. I was married a couple of times. I used to masturbate to Penthouse, but I thought everybody did-- after I finished having sex with my husband.

**DIANE** Well, don't they?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** They do, don't they? I would sneak downstairs and-- but anyway. So basically, I never really-- when I became a lesbian-- I didn't know what I do know now about how lesbians had sex and the lesbian bed deaths and all that kind of stuff. I had no idea about all that. All I knew, as myself, was I was a very sexual person. Whether I was a lesbian or straight, that carried off into whatever relationship I went into. And so that was never really a consideration for me. And the people that I'm friends with-- I'm just trying to think if any of them-- I know some people that have those kind of relationships, but I didn't have a lot of people say to me, what's this about?

**DIANE** How can you do this?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** This is the way it or-- yeah. I had critics who reviewed the first book who felt that because I wrote exactly what I felt like writing about and didn't concern myself with political correctness, I had some people confront me on that issue-- that even in our fantasies as lesbians, we shouldn't be fantasizing about dildos or penetration or some of the things that I included in that book. But *Pleasures* became an overwhelming bestseller right away. It sold out all the issues within six months. And so the reviews became more kind because women did want that. Women were looking for that, even in their fantasies.

And so I feel that my books started to change the perception that lesbians-- I think it gave women more of a feeling that anything can go, and it's OK. And you can still be a lesbian. Whatever you do in the privacy of your own home between two consenting adults is OK-- whether they wanted to act it out or not or just fantasize it-- that it was OK. And that's one of the things that I wanted to provide for my readers is that they can enjoy whatever they want without having to deal with consequences. They can privately read the books, have a good time. So, yeah.

**DIANE** So do you do you advocate self satisfaction and masturbation? What kind of study have you done?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** If I had a choice, I would not do it, but I think it's great. Of course. Yes, I think masturbation is wonderful. It's not my preference. See, this is what's odd is that I don't really see my books as something people buy to masturbate to. Isn't that that's sort of odd, I guess, because they are erotica?

But because the stories hold themselves, I believe the stories, on their own, stand up, even if you took the sex out of a lot of the stories. They're funny, they're interesting. There's commentaries on the way women think, the way women have relationships with each other. And so I think it's that. And also, yes, I know women buy them to masturbate to. But also, not only masturbating, but people read them to each other-- couples. And so it's a way to maybe break through the lesbian dead bed death. There you go. Read me a story. OK. And then I have the audiotapes now, too, where you can just stick them in the tape player, and you don't even have to read.

**DIANE** I saw those at our local bookstore that I went to. And when you were coming in, I had a friend that had heard your name and had read your first book and was interested in picking up. And we were under the impression that you were coming in to do a reading and didn't know what that was. And we talked about it. And I said, well, I guess she's going to read excerpts from her book. And she's like, you mean she's going to read them? Out loud? Stories?

**ROBBI** Actually, I perform them.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** So that's what we were kind of talking about. And I didn't get a chance to go. I missed it, but all the people that  
**WILLIAMS:** I've talked to that have gone said that they just had a great time. So how did you decide to take your book on tour, so to speak? I mean, when did you start realizing that had a marketable thing there? And do you have another job, or when did you quit it and things like that?

**ROBBI** First of all, I do have another job. I'm a dental hygienist. I clean people's teeth.

**SOMMERS:**

**DIANE** Easy access to dental dams.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** There you go. Yes, and the latex gloves. Plenty of those. And I do that, right now, 2 and 1/2 days a week. I may be increasing because I want a new car. But the writing-- I make money from the writing, but it's not enough, at this point, to pay all the bills. I'm an expensive woman. So I have six books out there now, and they're bestsellers. But still, a bestseller in the gay and lesbian world is a lot different than having a bestseller in the mainstream, where you get like \$300,000 up front and all that kind of stuff. It's totally a different thing. So I do clean teeth two to three days a week.

And the question that you asked me-- oh, about bringing it on the road. Originally, when I first put out the book, *Pleasures*, my publisher said, now you'll go around the bookstores in your area, and you do readings. And so I didn't know what I was going to do. Because of the sexually-charged content of the material, to just go out and read sex can create a lot of tension in the audience.

**DIANE** Dangerous, I imagine.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Well, it's just sometimes, people have trouble sitting through something like that and feeling comfortable. And so I chose stories that are real humorous. And I thought, well, I'll choose the funny ones, and that'll relieve the sexual tension, give people a chance to sort of break away from that for a period. And then I went around to see different people read, and I was impressed by one reader who did poetry. Most people would sit and read their work, and that would bore me after a period. But one poet did a piece where she really got into it and expressed it, and you almost felt that you were with her, the character, in this poem-- living it with her. And I thought, well, maybe that's what I should do. I should bring the character to life and let people actually be there with the character. And so that's how it started.

And then each book, it got bigger and more props and costumes. And people started really enjoying it. And I became known for that. And so that's almost a separate thing from the writing. The writing is one thing that I do and then the show, which is actually what it is. The performance is another thing. They are two separate entities. And so that's how it came into being.

**DIANE WILLIAMS:** Well, I know there's a lot of people out there that are very glad that it came into being. I want to ask you a little bit about-- in some of the interviews I do, I almost always ask people their coming out stories and things like that. You said earlier that you didn't really consider yourself a lesbian until like eight years ago. How were you introduced to that? How do you express-- how did you find out about your sexuality? How did you express yourself, and what are your conceptions now that you've been an active, participating lesbian for eight years? How do you feel about the word "straight" and "bi"? Do you identify yourself as a lesbian or a bisexual woman or all of the above? Express to me a little bit about what you think about what I just said.

**ROBBI SOMMERS:** OK. I'll start with-- you asked me three questions in there-- the change from being a heterosexual woman to then being a lesbian. It started, I believe-- it actually started before I was actually with a woman. I think the process started in therapy, where I became less of a male-identified woman, and more of a woman-identified woman. The more that I worked on some of my issues, the more I stopped being concerned about how I reflected myself through men and was more interested in how I reflected myself through myself. And as I became more self-involved and more self-interested and getting a sense of who I was, I think I became less interested in men. But I think that was a very subtle thing that was happening.

Along with that, I was working in a dental office for a woman dentist and a lot of our patients were lesbians. And so a good friend of mine was the dental assistant in the office, and I was the dental hygienist. And one day, one of the patients who came in-- a lesbian-- I cleaned her teeth and after she left-- she was also good friends with the dental assistant-- and she told her that she thought that I was really cute.

And so the dental assistant-- who was straight-- and I had lunch the next day, and she was laughing to me, saying how this woman-- this lesbian-- thought that I was cute and how she told her to forget it because number one-- I was very, very married, and number two-- I was very, very heterosexual. And she's laughing about this to me, and I'm thinking to myself as she's saying this, well, something about this woman intrigued me, and it wasn't sex. I don't know what it was, but there was something about her being interested in me that intrigued me. And so then I said to my friend, well, I'm sort of-- and I didn't know how to say this because she was laughing at the whole idea of it. And I just said, I'm sort of-- I don't know. Something about that interest me. And she said, oh, oh. And then the third one was, oh, well, do you want me to let her know? And I said, yeah, I do.

And so I really didn't know what that was. And it wasn't really that I looked at her, and I felt this sexual energy. It was just that I felt this thing. And so we ended up going out on a little--

**DIANE** A date?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** A date but not really a date. I mean, I said to my husband that this woman, who was a lesbian, and I were going to go out dancing. He was really happy about that because he knew that I had issues about monogamy and relationships. So if I was going out with a lesbian-- dancing-- to a gay bar, then he didn't have to worry if I was going to meet anybody or anything like that. So he was like, great. Go for it.

**DIANE** Have a girl's night out.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Yeah. Great, have a good time. And so we went out, and this was eight years ago. I was dressed like a-- I had this little dress and everything, and I was the only woman in the bar that was dressed like that. At the time, it was a little bit different where I'm from. And all the other women had jeans on and flannel shirts. They were all sort of dressed the same. And I had this semi-little outfit, and I thought, oh, God, I don't fit in here at all. I didn't feel attractive at all.

I thought, this is just-- and so then the woman that I was with-- we were in her car, and she took me back to my car. And she said, well, I had a really nice time, and I said, so did I. And then she leaned over to give me a little kiss. And once our lips met, that was it. I was just sucked into lesbianism. I mean, there was something about that softness, that plushness, that sweetness. Here we go. And that was it. I just kissed her back like-- and she looked at me and said, are you sure you're not a lesbian? Because I guess she was expecting this heterosexual housewife, timid kind of kiss. Oh, I don't know if I should do this. And I felt like I stepped over this line, and that was it.

**DIANE** Did you say the word, or did you say anything to her at that time?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** I didn't have to say anything as far as like, wow, that was really great. She knew it. I knew it. That was it. I'll call you. Good. And then I went home and said to my husband, wow, you know, I kissed her. And God, it's really-- but he didn't think anything of it. It was more like, oh, well, that was a little experiment that Robbi's doing that's, you know. But then I couldn't stop thinking about her. I couldn't stop thinking about it. And again, it wasn't really sexual. It was more-- there was something about that softness that, to me, is what women are all about that just compelled me to want more. And so that's how it started.

I didn't really call myself a lesbian for a few years. And even though I wasn't sleeping with men and had no desire to sleep with men, I really could identify with the term lesbian. I didn't really feel like I fit in. I didn't feel that I was attractive to women because-- well, I found out later that I was told that I was intimidating-- my look was intimidating rather than that I wasn't attractive. So for a long period of time, I didn't really-- and I didn't really look at women across the room and go, whoa-- that kind of stuff-- for a couple of years. And then all of a sudden, I woke up one day and checked out a woman for the first time a couple of years later, and then I thought, I'm a lesbian.

**DIANE** I'm checking out women.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** I'm checking out women. I'm looking at them when they walk away in they're jeans. I'm looking at their breasts, that kind of stuff. And I'm wondering if they're lesbians, too. But now, as far as how I identify myself with straight, bi, or lesbian, I would say that I really don't like titles. I'm a woman who prefers women, and that's who I want to be with. I want to be with women, and that's it. I suppose I'm a lesbian because of that and because my interest isn't in sleeping with men. But none of that really means anything to me. I'm really open about all of that, as far as, I don't have issues. I think you can be a lesbian and sleep with a man if you want to, on occasion.

I know a lot of women that confide in me-- butch women-- all kinds of lesbians that say to me, well, I wouldn't mind, on occasion, having sex with a man. But they don't want to tell anybody. They feel uncomfortable about it. They feel comfortable talking to me about it because I'm a real open person. But I don't take any issue with that. I think a woman can still be a lesbian and experiment on occasion.

**DIANE** And do you think that there are particular roles that women play in relationships and in their sexual play? I'm talking about the butch femme thing. You kind of alluded to that when you when you went to that first bar. I think that there's all kinds of women. And do you find yourself fitting in a role, or do you switch? Do you address that role play at all?

**ROBBI** OK. First of all, I feel-- well, I'm very femme looking, and I'm femme acting, so that's, basically, the kind of aura that I give off. And I'm really attracted to butch women. That's the kind of woman that actually catches my eye. I think there are a lot of other kind of women that are really attractive. I've dated all different kinds-- androgynous, femme. But mostly, the kind of woman that will catch my eye from across the room is more of a butch kind of a woman that has an attitude.

**DIANE** Powerful?

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Self-assured. I like a woman with confidence. I like a woman that looks like they could handle situations. As far as role playing, I feel that-- I also, on many times, have felt that I have a very butch side. And I used to make-- in fact, I wrote a short piece about being a trans-butch dyke-- being a butch trapped in a femme's body. And a lot of times, I'll write from a butch perspective. I'll write from both perspectives, but sometimes, I'll write from a butch perspective because I think I could pull off a really cool butch. But I try to do it, and I have this hair, and I have this [? little ?] thing, and it doesn't pull off really well.

So I think I have more of a top-- toppy kind of side.

**DIANE** Well, there's that old saying, "A butch on the streets, femme in the streets".

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** Isn't there many of those butch women that are like that? But I feel that there's all different kinds of women, and I like that. I really like that women aren't really stuck in roles. And I also like when I'm with a butch woman who can surrender in bed. They don't have to always be top. I like that. I like them to be top a lot of the time. But I also, on occasion, like to be able to be the top and let them let go, and that's fine with me. I like to see butch women. I like to see femme women. I like to see the androg women, the jock women. I like it all. And I think the more types, the merrier.

And so when it comes to the gender or role playing and all that, I like it all. And I think that women, more and more now, are feeling less restricted to having to have a certain look as a lesbian. It's becoming more and more open and looser, and more women are saying, this is who I am. This is what I want to look like. If I want to put on lipstick, it's OK. If I want to wear jeans and boots and a flannel shirt, it's OK. If I want to shave my head and have a pierced nose, that's OK. It's all OK, depending on the city you live in.

**DIANE** The neighborhood, in particular.

**WILLIAMS:**

**ROBBI** The neighborhood. Right. So  
**SOMMERS:**