



*You're*  
*You*

METTE BACH

# If you love someone new, does it change who and what you are?

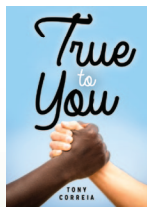
You're You

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Freyja is outspokenly lesbian and politically active in LGBTQ issues. When her girlfriend Rachel breaks up with her, she is too upset to continue with the online video blog they created together to celebrate their pride. Freyja needs a new cause, and starts volunteering at the food bank. But she can't figure out why the team leader at the food bank, a guy named Sanjay, doesn't seem to approve of her. And she also can't figure out why she cares.

Freyja learns about food justice, and becomes attracted to Sanjay's passion for the cause. As her friendship with Sanjay grows, she realizes that they connect in a way she never did with Rachel. But can Freyja be in love with Sanjay if she identifies as a lesbian? When Freyja is accused of "going straight," she has to choose between accepting her old idea of herself — and taking a chance on love.

METTE BACH lives in Vancouver where she works at a drop-in resource centre for homeless and at-risk youth running a nightly meal program. She is the author of the teen novels *Femme* and *Killer Drop*, and the Real Love title *Love is Love*.



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*For Tony, who taught me that  
we have to believe we are magic.*

*“Nothing is absolute. Everything changes, everything moves,  
everything revolves, everything flies and goes away.”*

*Frida Kahlo*



## PROLOGUE

# Freyja and Rachel

IT WAS THURSDAY AFTERNOON. Freyja and Rachel were in the closet shooting their weekly video blog, *Out of the Closet*. The video camera was strapped to the back of Freyja's desk chair and pointed at them. So when Rachel surprised Freyja with a kiss on the cheek and laughed, Freyja tensed up. She wasn't used to going off script.

"The list, the list," Rachel said, giggling. That's how they always ended.

“Yes. Let’s get serious. Okay, today’s list is called . . .” Freyja’s eyes got big. Her brow furrowed. “What’s the list today?”

Rachel, still giggling, shook her head at how easy it was to rattle Freyja. She said, “Reasons to Love Yourself, silly.”

“Oh yeah,” Freyja said. “Number one. No one else is like you.”

“Number two.” Rachel took over. “You outswam a lot of sperm to become the human being you are right now. You deserve to be here. So be here.”

“Outswam sperm?” Freyja repeated. She made a face. “Gross.”

“It’s true. We all did.” Rachel’s certainty was one of the reasons Freyja fell in love with her. She could speak with authority on the weirdest stuff.

But outswimming sperm was not an image Freyja wanted in her head. She frowned. Time to interrupt. “Number three. You have a whole community of people. We love you and care about you and want to see you succeed.”

“Okay, enough queer love for today,” Rachel said to the camera. “And now . . . the moment you’ve all been waiting for. Two lesbians making out.”

Rachel pulled Freyja to her and kissed her. Freyja was just about to lose herself in Rachel’s warm mouth when she remembered the camera was on. She pulled back.

“You know,” she said to Rachel. She pushed her blonde dreadlocks away from her face. “I really don’t know about playing into some straight guy’s fantasy of girls kissing.”

Rachel looked at the camera and shook her head. “She overthinks everything.” Then she looked at Freyja and said, “Stop thinking so much. Shut up and kiss me.”

So Freyja did.

They both waved goodbye to the camera. After five seconds of waving and kissing, Freyja jumped up to turn the camera off. “I think we’ve got it. That’s a wrap!”

Rachel followed Freyja into the bedroom. She put her arms around Freyja’s waist and rested her cheek against the back of Freyja’s neck.

“We should edit and upload,” Freyja said. She

didn't want to get distracted. Getting the video post out was important.

“Really?” Rachel asked. “I was sort of hoping we could make out some more. Maybe do more than make out.”

Rachel always started something after Out of the Closet. Knowing they had an audience got Rachel hot. She kissed the back of Freyja's neck, her trick for making Freyja forget everything. All Freyja wanted to do was give in to the desire. She wanted to throw Rachel on the bed and climb on top of her. Never mind that they had done it hundreds of times before. No matter how many times they had sex it was never enough.

Despite the tingle on her skin and the desire centred deep in her body, Freyja said, “We have to get this uploaded.”

Rachel rolled her eyes. “You're no fun.” She crossed her arms.

“Think of our viewers,” Freyja said.

Rachel sighed. “I know, I know. But when do I get to think of us?”

# 01 Dumped

“THIS IS GOING TO BE HUGE,” Freyja said to Rachel. They walked hand in hand toward the crowd that had already gathered for the Pride parade.

Freyja sounded confident, but her eyes darted around, hoping not to see certain familiar faces. Here in Abbotsford, Freyja had dealt with the worst bullies of her life. They had made life so awful she’d had constant stomach aches and nosebleeds. After moving with her dad to East Vancouver, Freyja had never looked back.

Then Freyja had met Rachel. After that, she realized she wanted to support other kids in finding love on their own terms, the way she had. That's why she and Rachel started Out of the Closet.

“Freyja!”

There was Cass. Together, Cass and Freyja had organized the first ever Pride parade in Abbotsford. Today it would snake through the heart of the Bible Belt town.

“Hey!” They ran to each other. It was strange for Freyja to see Cass in real life, not as a face on a screen. They'd come so far together. Cass still ran the GSA — Gay-Straight Alliance — that Freyja had started. Cass still had to face that horrible group of people every day.

Rachel stood off to the side while Freyja hugged Cass.

“Looks like a good turnout,” Cass said. “Media's here.”

Freyja saw that a couple of TV and radio stations had come to report on the event. She had hoped that the parade would be big enough, important enough.

But you couldn't predict things like that. It was the Fraser Valley, so the weather kept people in a lot of the time. Sometimes a big news story broke and took up all the media coverage.

But not today. Today was full of rainbows and triumph.

"I can't believe we pulled it off, Cass," Freyja said.

Cass smiled. "I know, right? The mayor's coming. You'll have to shake his hand after you go to the podium. Then say something inspiring. Something amazing."

Freyja had waited her whole life for this. From the time she was a kid, she'd watched heroes at podiums rousing the crowds. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harvey Milk, Gloria Steinem. Freyja had dressed as Nellie McClung for Halloween when she was twelve. She had read Simone de Beauvoir. She listened to Nina Simone and Buffy St. Marie. She was ready.

In the midst of the bustle, Freyja turned to Rachel. She noticed that Rachel looked sad. She was wearing her "This is what a lesbian looks like" T-shirt. She had

rainbows painted on her cheeks. But she didn't look like someone who was about to lead a victory march through a conservative town.

Freyja tried to hug her. Rachel backed off.

“What's wrong?” Freyja asked.

“Ugh,” said Rachel. “Everything.” She looked Freyja in the eyes and said, “I can't do this anymore.”

“What? The parade?”

“No,” Rachel said. “Us. You. This.”

It took Freyja a moment to realize what Rachel was saying. “Wait, you're breaking up with me?”

“You don't need me, Freyja. You've got hundreds of adoring fans. Even a bunch of journalists want a piece of you. Go be in the spotlight. Go be you.”

Freyja couldn't believe what she was hearing. Today of all days! “Rachel, your timing is shit. Can you wait, like, fifteen minutes? I'll be off the stage and we can talk.”

“I'm sick of being your sidekick. Your arm candy.” She was in tears.

“You're none of those things. You're everything



to me. Come here.” Freyja went for a hug again. But Rachel turned and bolted.

Freyja stood there, frozen. She wanted to run after Rachel. She called out, “Rachel! Don’t leave me! Don’t! No!”

For some reason, Freyja’s feet wouldn’t move. Maybe it was because she knew she was supposed to march — but the other direction from where Rachel had gone. She crouched over, feeling like she was going to vomit. Freyja was supposed to lead the flock, be an example. She watched Rachel disappear into the crowd. Two years of her life disappeared with her.

Freyja whipped out her phone. She texted, “Don’t leave. I have to do this. But then we’ll talk.”

*Send.*

“You can’t leave me. I don’t know who I am without you.”

*Send.*

“You’re everything to me.”

*Send.*

“I can’t live without you.”

*Send.*

“I’ll come find you as soon as I’m done. It won’t be long. We can fix this.”

*Send.*

Freyja could not find anywhere to be alone. There were people everywhere. From the corner of her eye, she saw Cass pointing one of the media people in her direction. Freyja had no choice but to keep it together. Stuff the feelings down. Swallow them. No time to cry.

She looked down at her hands. She was shaking. The crowd would think it was nerves. Everyone gets nervous before they give a speech. She could hide that way, out in the open. No one would know the real reason she felt scared and alone.

“And now the moment we’ve all waited for,” the MC said from the stage. “One of the youngest Pride parade organizers in history.”

The crowd was made up of people of all ages. They laughed in a friendly way. *It’s like they think I’m*

*cute or something*, Freyja thought. Her dad and Gram waved at her. She couldn't see Rachel anywhere. She felt utterly alone.

But then Freyja thought of the kids in the crowd. They needed her to appear strong. She would do this for them even if she was falling apart inside. She knew what she had to do. She had to make sure students like her would feel safer in this community. They wouldn't have to move away like she did.

*Breathe*, Freyja told herself. She knew they expected good stuff, the stuff she'd practised in front of the mirror. They deserved it. She took the mic and looked out at the crowd.

"Hello out there," she began. There was feedback from the mic. It threw Freyja off. What was she supposed to say?

A technician came out and adjusted the mic. He passed it back to her and gave her an encouraging smile. That was all she needed.

She swallowed. She knew the words by heart.

"I couldn't be happier to be here today . . ."



When the parade was over, it was time for hugs. Gram, who didn't have much upper arm strength, gave Freyja the hardest hug ever. Her dad was so proud that he lifted her right off the ground.

"You were incredible up there," he said.

"Thanks."

"Where's Rachel?"

"She left me."

"What?"

"She dumped me. Right before I went up there."

"Oh, honey. I'm sure she didn't mean it," Gram said.

Her dad put his arm around her. He got it. He'd been left by a bunch of women.

"Should we look for her?" asked Gram.

"I think she must have taken the bus back," Freyja said.

Her dad patted her on the back. "Let's go home."