

venus

for the queer woman

**Marriage
Equality**

**Kate &
Leisha**

You're So Gay

Pride

the couples behind the day

**25 Summer
trends**

SPRING 2025

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PHOTO BY MESUT CICEN



PHOTO BY ALEKSANDER ANDREEV



PHOTO BY MADELENA MONROY

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PHOTO BY HANS ISAACSON

Summer Sapphic Reads

Our editorial staff put together a collection of the best sapphic books for you, our readers, to check out this summer.

By Jane Doe

The 2000s marked a turning point in lesbian literature, with a surge of novels that centered queer female experiences in complex, authentic ways. Among the stand-out titles of the decade was The Miseducation of Cameron Post by Emily M. Danforth (2012), a coming-of-age novel exploring identity, religion, and resilience in rural Montana. Though published just outside

the 2000s, it gained early traction in queer literary circles before widespread acclaim. Sarah Waters emerged as a key literary figure, with Fingersmith (2002) and Affinity (1999, still widely read in the 2000s). Her historical thrillers featured lesbian protagonists with agency, desire, and richly drawn lives, challenging mainstream narratives.

Welcome to our VERY FIRST issue of Venus! We are overjoyed for you to be here and dive into the GLAMOROUS world of all things QUEER. We are here for the women but don't discriminate against the other genders of the world. We want to be the queer aunt to your baby gay, welcoming you to the world of rainbow.

This issue is an exciting one as it's our first issue and our pride issue. With that we decided to bring love to the pages showcasing sexy couples from pride and their beautiful love stories.

Next up we have a profile on "The L Word's" Kate Moennig and Leisha Hailey. They chat about all things their new book, "So Gay

For You," their podcast, "Pants Pod," and of course, "The L Word." They get into the nitty-gritty of navigating friendships, relationships, and colleagues.

We also dive into some more serious content like marriage equality under Trump's presidency and the future of queer rights. We also investigate the topics of lavender marriage and why it is trending right now. We are so excited for this new adventure, welcome to our Venus family.

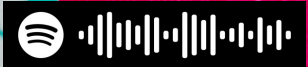
Xoxo,



Sadya Kherani



Gay Panic



for your listening pleasure

Your quarterly playlist curated by the editors of Venus. This month being pride month we created a playlist inspired by our gay panic that we and all of you have experienced. We're in it together and we're going to be rocking to these songs all month long.

I kissed a girl // Katy Perry

"I kissed a girl and I liked it, the taste of her cherry chap-stick."

I wish you liked girls // Abbey Glover

"Thought you were everything I could have every dreamed of"

Sofia // Clairo

"I think we could do it if we tried"

Woman // Doja Cat

"You need a woman's touch in your place."

The Louvre // Lorde

"To sit in hell with you"

Diet Mountain Dew // Lana Del Ray

"Do you think we'll be in love forever?"

Soldiers, Poet, King // The Oh Hellos

"There will come a poet whose weapon is his word He will slay you with his tongue oh-lei oh-lai oh Lord"

Touching Yourself // The Japanese House

"Now I'm picturing you touching yourself"





Wen (left) and Joe (right) celebrate pride with their funky makeup, unique haircuts and matching outfits. They've been together for two years and counting.

Prideful Love

We sent our photographers out to capture the couples of pride and their beautiful stories across America’s pride parades. They captured portraits of lesbian identifying couples and shared clips of their love stories and how they were celebrating pride this year.

BY JANE DOE

PHOTO BY NORBU GYACHUNG



Laci (left) and Bobbi (right) kiss celebrating their fourth pride parade together. Bobbi doesn't know it yet, but Laci just bought an engagement ring and is planning on proposing next week on their trip to Spain.

PHOTO BY BRIAN JIZ



Pride paraders turn to the streets of NYC. They bring with them their posters displaying freedom of speech and self expression. This poster inspired by the 70s, embodies the hippie movement.

PHOTO BY GAYATRI MALHOTRA



One of the many colorful and prideful posters representing the lesbian community seen at NYC pride.

Photo by Christian Lue



Sue (left) and Ryan (right) pose after face painting each other. The point of this exercise was to paint the other how they perceive them.

PHOTO BY SHKRABA



Joe (left) and Syd (right) celebrate their first pride as proud transwomen as well as their first pride as girlfriends.

PHOTO BY PALASH JAIN



Winter (left) and Sue (right) have been married for three years and coming to pride together is still one of their favorite things to do as a couple.

PHOTO BY BRIAN KYED



Kate & Leisha

The inside scoop on *The L Word* and their new book “You’re So Gay”

BY JANE DOE & ART BY LUCY STEIN & PHOTOS BY JOSEPH HALE

It had started, as many things between them did, as a half-serious joke. In between podcast episodes and coffee-fueled catch-ups, Leisha had thrown out the idea that they should write a book together. At first, Kate had laughed it off, assuming it would be one of those ideas that hung in the air for a few days

before dissolving into busyness. But this one lingered. It was Leisha who pulled together the outline first—scraps of memories, behind-the-scenes stories, photos from old press kits, and journal entries that had somehow survived the early 2000s. She brought it to Kate’s house one evening in a binder covered in rainbow stickers and

post-it notes. Soon, what began as a retrospective turned into something deeper. The book grew into a conversation between two women who had shared the screen and much of their adult lives. It wasn’t just about *The L Word*. It was about friendship, legacy, queerness, and the odd intimacy of playing soulmates without

ever being written as lovers. When *Chapters & Chemistry* was released, the response was immediate and overwhelming. Their publicist had expected a decent turnout at the signing, but no one had anticipated the line wrapping around the block, or the diversity of the crowd—young and old, queer and questioning, some with old boxsets tucked under their arms, others holding dog-eared fan zines or DVDs from the original run of the show.

The launch event was held in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, in a historic bookstore with creaky floors and worn couches that made everything feel more intimate than planned. Under soft lighting, Kate and Leisha sat behind a table piled with hardcovers, their names embossed side by side on the jacket. It felt surreal. Familiar in some ways, foreign in others.

Kate had never been one for spotlights unless she was in character. Still, she handled the attention with her usual quiet confidence. Leisha, always the more animated of the two, found herself balancing personal anecdotes with jokes, keeping the mood light but meaningful.

Their reading was carefully selected—sections that spoke to their time on set, the evolution of their characters, and the way fans had constantly asked if Alice and Shane were ever supposed to end up together. There was no easy answer, which was kind of the point. They wrote about the magnetism between the characters,

how it mirrored something in their real-life friendship: intense, constant, and never quite definable by traditional boundaries.

One of the more reflective chapters discussed a scene from season six—a brief moment when Alice and Shane were scripted to share a drunken kiss. It was originally played for laughs, but there was something about it, even in rehearsal, that stuck. Not romantic tension exactly, but emotional depth—an energy that made everyone on set pause.

Writing about that moment had opened a door neither of them expected. What they put on the page wasn’t a confession, but a meditation. They didn’t kiss in real life. They didn’t date. But what they shared—through the show, and beyond it—wasn’t easy to categorize. And maybe that was the most honest part of the story. During the reading, the room went still as Kate recited a few lines about that scene. Her voice was steady, but there was something unspoken lingering underneath. When she closed the book, the audience broke into applause, not just for the story, but for what it meant.

Afterward, the signing line

moved slowly. Fans came with tears in their eyes, some offering gifts or old photos, others sharing their coming-out stories or how they used to secretly watch *The L Word* late at night with the volume low. More than one person told them that Alice and Shane had given them hope—for friendship, for queer joy, for complexity.

One woman, in her sixties, clutched the book to her chest as she explained how she and her wife had watched every episode together during the show’s original run. She’d never seen queer characters so messy, so real, so unapologetic. Another fan, much younger, said that Alice’s

confidence and Shane’s softness helped her realize her own fluid identity. She called their connection a kind of queer blueprint. Kate had always found those interactions humbling. The show had meant something. And now, years later, the book had somehow reopened the dialogue. That night, they hosted a small afterparty in a low-key lounge, tucked into the corner of the venue. Old castmates floated in and out, raising glasses in celebration. Someone played a playlist of early



2000s indie hits—songs that had once been background music in scenes where their younger selves walked LA streets in slow motion.

As the party thinned out, Kate and Leisha found themselves tucked in a quiet booth, the noise distant and the candlelight warm. They talked about the book's release, the way their younger selves would've never believed they'd be sitting there, decades later, not only surviving in this industry but thriving—still side by side.

They reflected on how their characters had often mirrored them in strange ways. Shane, with her guarded heart and quiet loyalty. Alice, with her chaotic energy and fearless honesty. On-screen, their friendship had always felt electric. Off-screen, it had become something even more essential. Through the years, the changes, the grief, and the growth—they had remained a constant in each other's lives.

Leisha admitted that writing the book had scared her more than she expected. Not because of the stories, but because of how close it brought them back to the past. Revisiting moments with a new perspective had made her realize how rare their connection really was. Not many people got to say they'd built something that changed culture, that outlived

trends and reboots, that resonated in ways no one could've predicted.

Kate, in her typical thoughtful way, didn't say much at first. But

before the night ended, she quietly told Leisha that she was proud of them—for what they'd created, and for how they told their story honestly, without needing to make it neat or easily defined.

In the days that followed, the book hit indie bestseller lists and got a

write-up in Rolling Stone. Their publisher pushed for a podcast spin-off or a book tour, but both of them needed a beat to process. It wasn't about the press. It was about what they'd said, what they'd finally shared after years of side-eyes, speculation, and subtle moments that had never been fully named.

What the book made clear—without needing to declare it outright—was that what they shared wasn't a love story in the traditional sense. It was something more layered. A devotion built on shared history, vulnerability, and a kind of intimacy that refused to be packaged.

Kate and Leisha had never been a couple. But their story had still been one of the greatest relationships to come out of the show. And maybe that was the most powerful kind of representation—

showing that queer friendships can be just as profound, just as life-shaping, as romance.

They didn't need to rewrite history to satisfy what fans had always hoped for. They simply told the truth of who they were, who they are, and who they've become—together.

And that, in the end, was more than enough. The days following the book launch blurred in a whirlwind of emails, press appearances, and texts from old friends and former co-stars. Every queer podcast wanted an interview. Outlets from *Au-tostraddle* to *The New Yorker* wanted think pieces or excerpts. A literary festival in Brooklyn invited them to do a live reading. Their publisher pushed for a full book tour, but neither Kate nor Leisha was in a rush to turn their story into a product.

Instead, they decided to keep it small. Just one trip, for now—New York. One event. One chance to step into a room of strangers and trust that what they'd written still resonated miles away from the LA bubble that had shaped them.

The venue was a small, brick-walled theater in the East Village. It seated maybe two hundred, but the energy felt like thousands. There was something about the New York crowd—unfiltered, intellectual, deeply queer—that made everything feel more raw.

Backstage, as they waited to be introduced, Leisha was pacing. She always got a burst of anxious

Backstage, as they waited to be introduced, Leisha was pacing. She always got a burst of anxious energy before live shows. Kate, calm as ever, sat with her hands clasped between her knees, watching the curtain shift in the stage lights.

Leisha finally broke the silence. "It still freaks me out that people care this much. About us. About the characters. About everything."

Kate tilted her head. "Because it's personal?"

Leisha nodded. "Yeah. We weren't hiding behind fiction this time."

Kate understood. On the show, no matter how close the characters came to their real selves, there had always been a script. A take. A cut. This was different. The book had exposed the reality beneath the performance—the friendship they built, the nearly-missed moments, the emotional gravity of spending decades orbiting someone without ever truly defining what it all meant.

The reading went better than either of them expected. The audience laughed where they hoped, fell quiet where they feared. One person asked if they'd ever considered writing a second volume—maybe one that picked up where the reboot left off. Another asked a question neither had quite prepared for.

"Do you ever wish Shane and Alice had ended up together?"

There was a brief pause onstage. Kate looked at Leisha. Leisha looked back.

Then Kate answered—not with a joke or deflection, but with sincerity.

"No. Because what they had was already complete. Not in a romantic way, but in a soul-deep, permanent kind of way. We wanted to show that friendship like that is just as powerful. Maybe more."

The applause was instant. But in that moment, the only thing either of them noticed was each other.

After the event, they wandered through the Village in coats and scarves, the cold air wrapping around them like a welcome contrast to the intensity of the night.

They didn't say much. They didn't need to.

Eventually, they ended up in Washington Square Park, leaning on a bench, watching a busker play a cello near the fountain. A dog barked in the distance. Somewhere behind them, two students debated the ethics of polyamory too loudly. It felt like a postcard of their twenties—New York as it had always been: loud, alive, unapologetic.

Leisha pulled her scarf up tighter. "You know what I kept thinking during that last question?"

Kate looked at her, one eyebrow raised in curiosity.

"I kept thinking—what if we had gone there? Back then. Us, I mean. Not just Alice and Shane."

Kate looked away for a moment. The cello player shifted to a softer song. It sounded like something from an old film—some-



We had no idea that the show was going to become this big. And we were especially thrilled because it was a show all about lesbians with explicit lesbian sex scenes airing in the early 2000s. It was very ahead of its time and for that I'm very grateful I got to be apart of it and play a role in changing





Leisha Hailey, Kate Moennig and Erin Daniels, all friends from *The L Word*, posing together after a long day of shooting.

hing fragile and unfinished.

“You mean, what if we’d crossed the line?” Kate asked.

Leisha nodded. “I don’t think we would’ve ruined anything. But I wonder sometimes if we missed out on something.”

Kate stayed quiet for a beat. Then she said, softly, “I think we chose something better. This.” She gestured between them. “It’s survived everything. We’ve seen each other at our worst. We’ve watched relationships fall apart, watched ourselves grow into entirely new people, and we’re still... here. I don’t know if that would’ve happened if we’d been anything else.”

Leisha smiled, slow and thoughtful. “You always say the exact thing I didn’t know I needed to hear.”

Kate smirked. “It’s a gift.”

Back in their hotel later that night, Leisha made tea while Kate flipped through a copy of

the book they’d left on the desk.

It still felt surreal to see their names printed like that. On equal footing. A shared story.

Leisha sat cross-legged at the end of Kate’s bed, mug in hand, eyes tired but content. “Do you think the show changed us?”

Kate didn’t hesitate. “Completely. But also... maybe it just revealed us.”

They both thought about that.

There had been a time when neither of them had the language for what they were—two queer women navigating fame, friendships, and their own evolving identities in a world that hadn’t always been welcoming. The show had been a lifeline and a magnifying glass. It brought them close and pulled them apart and brought them back again.

But the book had given them a chance to reclaim it all—to tell the truth beneath the scripts, to honor the characters and the

“
Our new book talks about everything from *the L word* to life after to our friendships now. The entire cast was extremely close and although we all haven’t remained as close as we once were, Leisha and I have and it’s just been so beyond fun to continue working with Leisha everyday.

and the chaos, and to give their friendship the space it deserved in the spotlight.

Before they turned out the lights, Leisha stood by the window, looking out over the skyline. She turned to Kate, voice soft.

“You ever wonder what comes next?”

Kate, already under the covers, looked up at her.

“Something good. I don’t know what. But I think we’ve earned that.”

A month later, they received a letter—handwritten, from a reader in a small town in Ohio. The woman wrote about feeling completely alone for most of her life. About how *The L Word* had cracked open something she didn’t even know was closed. But it wasn’t the romance or the sex scenes that stayed with her.

It was Shane and Alice.

Their banter. Their loyalty. The way they showed up for each other when no one else did.

The reader ended the letter with a line that stayed with them both:

“You reminded me that the people who love you the most aren’t always the ones who break your heart—but the ones who help you carry it.”

Kate taped that letter above her desk. Leisha read it aloud on their podcast a few weeks later.

They didn’t need another reboot. They didn’t need to manufacture a romance. The story was already perfect. Still unfolding. Still unfinished.

Still theirs.

Back in Los Angeles, weeks after the book launch, Leisha sent Kate a short text: “Walk?”

They met at the bottom of North Beachwood Drive, no need to say where they were headed. This hill had been their reset button during the early seasons of *The L Word*. Now, older and quieter, the path felt almost sacred.

They climbed slowly, not for exercise but memory. The Hollywood sign loomed ahead, shrouded in fog, as the city buzzed faintly below.

Midway up, they stopped at an old bench overlooking the sprawl—unchanged, like it had been waiting for them.

Kate mentioned she’d driven past their old soundstage. It was a music studio now. The trailers were gone, replaced with a mural. They both sat with the weight of that—for everything that had changed, and what had lasted.

Leisha wondered aloud what their younger selves would think of the women they’d become. Kate said they’d be proud. They were telling the story they never knew they’d get to.

Neither of them said the word “legacy,” but it hung between them anyway.

On the walk back down, the sky began to clear. Sunlight hit the hills in soft patches, and the sign finally came into view—faded, but strong.

Kind of like them.

They didn’t talk about what was next. The book was a milestone, not an ending.

Top 10 Safest Destinations

The best place for your next vacation based on its safety

BY JANE DOE

These are the safest places for queer people to travel to according to research done by *CNT*. The places are each ranked on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the best and also includes details about the country's politics revealing why it is among the safest places to visit.

Asia, Australia and Antarctica are not on the map as there are no places within those continents that were listed as top 10 safest places to visit. Although it does not mean there are no safe places to travel within those continents they are just not within the top 10.

The places within this list are dominated within Europe and contain extremely liberal politics about queer people and queer marriages.

The push pins correlate with the color of the tape being used.

Without further ado, check out the locations you should consider for your next vacation.



We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us.



CANADA
9.85
Legalized same-sex marriage shortly after Europe. Also made the top 10 places to live in 2022.

ICELAND
9.97
The safest place to travel!
Iceland has a vibrant LGBTQ+ community.

NORWAY
9.91
One of the first LGBTQ friendly places in the world. Has a 10-day event for pride every summer.

SWEDEN
9.88
Advocates for LGBTQ rights and safety with education and awareness programs

UK
9.75
Pact of 2010 which implemented policies to protect the LGBTQ community.

DENMARK
9.80
In 1989 Denmark was the first country to legalize same sex partnership. They also have resources for LGBTQ youth.

THE NETHERLANDS
9.92
Legalized same sex marriage in 2001. Also hosts multiple events throughout the year supporting the community.

SPAIN
9.82
This is one of Europe's most culturally liberal destinations.

BELGIUM
9.69
One of the first countries to legalize same sex marriage and has strict anti-discrimination laws.

MALTA
9.70
Often considered the leader in LGBTQ rights in Europe and was also the first country in Europe to ban conversion therapy.



Two older lesbian partners enjoying a well-deserved vacation, highlighting the importance of dating at every age.

The Importance of Dates

Whether you’ve been dating for two months or 20 years, going on dates keeps the spark alive. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn why dates are so important and ways to keep the love going.

BY JANE DOE & PHOTO BY PETER

In the whirlwind of daily responsibilities—bills, children, work deadlines, and household chores—romance can easily slide down the priority list for married couples. But relationship experts and psychologists agree on one thing: making time for regular dates after marriage isn’t just a quaint idea—it’s a critical ingredient in long-term marital satisfaction.

Marriage Is a Verb, Not a Noun. “Couples often assume that

once you’re married, the work is over,” says Dr. Elaine Marcus, a relationship therapist with over 20 years of experience. “But marriage is a continuous action. You have to keep choosing each other, and dating is one way to do that.” Dating after marriage, she explains, doesn’t mean lavish dinners or weekend getaways—though those are nice. “It can be a walk around the block, a coffee run, or simply putting away your phones and having dinner

face-to-face. What matters is the intentionality.”

The Research Backs It Up A 2022 study from the National Marriage Project found that married couples who engaged in regular date nights at least twice a month reported higher levels of communication, sexual satisfaction, and overall happiness. These couples were also significantly less likely to consider divorce.

“Date nights allow couples to break out of the routine and

Read more on page 30

a dose of advice



The First 5 Minutes

How the way you start a conversation sets the tone for connection.

BY STEPH & PHOTO BY AIONY HAUST

We talk all the time—at work, at home, over texts and coffee and errands. But how often do we think about how we begin those conversations?

The first five minutes of any exchange, especially with someone we care about, hold quiet but powerful weight. Those early moments can either open a door to connection or quietly close it. They set the emotional tone: Will this be a safe space or a defensive one? Will we feel heard or rushed?

Think about it: A partner walks through the door after a long day. You can say, “Did you pick up the milk?”—or you can say, “Hey, I’m so glad you’re home.” One is efficient. The other is connective. The milk still matters, but so does the moment. In friendships, too, it’s easy to fall into logistical talk—making plans, swapping updates. But opening with genuine presence can change everything. “How are you really?” “I was thinking about you this morning.” These small shifts invite people in rather than keep them at arm’s length.

Even at work, starting a meeting with a kind check-in—“How’s your week going?”—can soften ten-

Pride Parades

the biggest pride parades across the U.S. that you can’t miss

LOS ANGELES, CA PRIDE
Sunday, June 8

BOSTON, MA PRIDE
Saturday, June 14

INDIANAPOLIS, IN PRIDE
Saturday, June 14, at 10 a.m.

PORTLAND, ME PRIDE
Saturday, June 21

NEW YORK CITY PRIDE
Sunday, June 29, at 12 p.m.

CHICAGO, IL PRIDE
Sunday, June 29, at 11 a.m.

SEATTLE, WA PRIDE
Sunday, June 29, at 11 a.m.

AUSTIN, TX PRIDE
Saturday, August 23

PHOENIX, AZ PRIDE
Sunday, October 19, at 10 a.m.

