



Love Matters

A Book of Lesbian Romance and Relationships

Linda Sutton

Linda Sutton, MA

Love Matters *A Book of Lesbian Romance and Relationships*



*Pre-publication
REVIEWS,
COMMENTARIES,
EVALUATIONS . . .*

I love this book! It's practical, fun to read, and stuffed with great advice to lesbians (and lots of other people, too). The best part is how it reflects the real-life love, fun, and struggles of lesbian love, sex, relationships, and other interests. I think it's a wonderful way to see what other lesbians are interested in so you know you aren't alone."

JoAnn Loulan

psychotherapist, mother, author
of *Lesbian Sex*; *Lesbian Passion:
Loving Ourselves and Each Other*;
and *The Lesbian Erotic Dance*

A gem of a book—wise, helpful, and full of heart."

Harriet Lerner, PhD

Author of *The Dance of Anger*



In *Love Matters*, Linda Sutton has given us all a funny, personal, loving collection of down-to-earth wisdom—chicken soup for the soul—from which lesbian women (and all other sensible beings) will profit. So: buy, share, read—and laugh, cry, love, recognize, and celebrate the humanity in these pages."

Robin Morgan



More pre-publication

REVIEWS, COMMENTARIES, EVALUATIONS . . .

Linda Sutton's newspaper column *Love Matters* was an important political statement during the turmoil of Colorado's Proposition 2, the anti-gay amendment. And now her book, a collection of these columns, gives readers outside of Colorado an opportunity to enjoy Sutton's wit, good sense, and tenderness about things relational. She may call herself a 'relationship fanatic' but that only means she cares about those things that are crucial to the survival and stability of lesbian relationships. Whether she is writing about dating, the death of a partner, or learning how to play and fight, Sutton is intelligent, compassionate, and nonjudgmental. And she's funny. That's a hard combination to beat."

Judith McDaniel

Author of The Lesbian Couples Guide

There is for many a certain gift that makes relationships different—boundaries dissolve then reassert themselves after another is already within—the heart becomes confused and calls for exactly that blessing which Linda Sutton offers when only love makes any sense at all."

Stephen and Ondrea Levine

Authors of Who Dies? and Embracing the Beloved



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Love Matters
A Book of Lesbian
Romance and Relationships

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A Book of Lesbian Romance and Relationships

Linda Sutton, MA

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FOR MAUREEN
without whom there would be no book
truly, madly, deeply

Oh, I could drink a case of you, darling
And I would still be on my feet.

Joni Mitchell
“A Case of You”
Blue

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Sutton, MA, is a feminist psychotherapist in private practice, educator, and consultant in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Throughout her career, she has lectured, written, lobbied, and advocated for issues of concern to women, children, and families. Ms. Sutton is the author and founder of the “Love Matters” column in the Colorado Springs lesbian newspaper *New Phazes*, and, with her partner, conducts “Love Matters” workshops on lesbian relationships.

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- The Haworth Press for giving a novice with some unconventional ideas and an unusual format her first opportunity to publish a book.
- and last, but not least, to the Goddess herself for making my very life possible.



But when we look on our lives and the world with a little keener awareness and deeper compassion, we see that amidst the suffering and confusion, the conflicts and attempts at escape, even a millisecond of love is a miracle.

Stephen Levine
Healing into Life and Death

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The Beginning

Hello. My name is Linda, and I'm a relationship fanatic. I eat, drink, and sleep relationships—on the job, in the home, in much of my spare time. In fact, *lesbian love*—thinking about it, talking about it, living it (as I do daily with my beloved partner, Maureen)—is perhaps my greatest passion in life. So now I even get to *write* about it, in a monthly question-and-answer column, *lesbian Love Matters*. Sort of like having your cake and eating it too.

My perspective may be slightly different from some of my lesbian sisters (whose lesbianism was determined at birth) because, as a radical feminist from the 1970s, I chose lesbianism after a young adulthood spent living the alternative. Yes, I've *chosen* lesbianism (over and over again, I might add). We former heterosexuals may be a well-kept secret in some circles (and some might prefer we stay that way), but I'm having *way* too much fun in my thirteen-year relationship with Maureen not to share this secret with others. In lesbianism I have found my spiritual, emotional, and sexual center, and that compels me to write about the truth of my lesbian experience.

Women are relational by nature—highly concerned, if not consumed, with those they love. It's therefore no surprise that relationship questions are a hot topic of conversation among all lesbians I know. "Why are so many lesbian relationships so short-lived?" "What always happens to the *sex* in lesbian sexuality?" "What impact does homophobia have on intimacy?" "Can you sleep with a man and still call yourself a lesbian?" "What makes relationships so damn hard, anyway?" These are the kinds of issues being raised day in and day out in my psychotherapy practice, in bed at night with Maureen, on the phone for hours with my girlfriends. So, given my obsession and everyone else's interest, I thought a lesbian relationship column might attract a following.

I also wanted to help level the political playing field here in Colorado Springs where homosexuals have been under siege by

Amendment 2, Colorado's anti-gay amendment. Since, in Colorado Springs, it seems that everything in print these days is anti-gay, I think homosexuality deserves some good press for a change.

Lesbians are in the closet in more ways than one. Despite the close friendships many of us seem to have, the self-help books we read, the therapy dollars we've spent, much of the *real truth* about our intimate relationships—the sorrow *and* the joy—remains hidden. Hidden even from our partners and ourselves, at times. The degree of isolation in much of the lesbian community, the “lies, secrets and silences” (to borrow a phrase from Adrienne Rich) makes me terribly sad. So one of the purposes of this column is to bring our relationship issues out of the closet so that we can normalize them. Another purpose for this column is to provide a forum in which to celebrate the miracle that is lesbian love.

All love is hard. Lesbian love is *harder*—given the toxic effects of discrimination, the ways in which our love is devalued, dismissed, and degraded, the rejection and harm we risk if we're honest about our love *or* the self-hatred and depression we risk if we conceal our love. Long-term lesbian relationships are not for the fainthearted. Many couples are out there struggling to make their relationships work under the worst of odds. They need acknowledgment, encouragement, and visibility. They also need *support*. I hope this column can offer support.

This column is also for me. Relationship fanatics need forums too. I want to be able to share the passion I feel for all of us who dare to love and be loved, and I especially want to share the passion I feel in my relationship with Maureen. So this column will be a further step in my own coming-out process as a lesbian *and* as a lover. This past September, I turned fifty. I think this column has something to do with that passage as well. I'm now beyond the reproductive years and, although I birthed the only child I ever wanted, I feel a profound sadness upon losing the reproductive option. I want to move through my menopausal years with consciousness and stay awake to the promise and possibilities of mid-life. This column feels like part of that promise—a way of transforming my reproductive energy, a way of becoming an elder, a way of sharing my life stories. I'm also becoming a crone. From what

I've been told, crones get to say whatever we think, whenever we want, without ever being held liable!

A few disclaimers: although I am a seasoned psychotherapist, I want this column to speak more from my personal point of view, rather than from my clinical experience. I am not pretending to be a relationship expert. Frankly, I don't believe in such beings. I approach my own relationship with an incredible amount of humility, a "beginner's mind." Any suggestions I might venture to make are not necessarily what I'm practicing at home. This column, therefore, cannot be a replacement for your own good sense and/or professional help. And, you are hereby cautioned against using any of my words as ammunition in the next fight with your girlfriend.

So, start sending in your questions. I'll be composing my own until I hear from you.

In the meantime, don't ever forget, your love matters.

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Being in the closet takes a terrible toll on your spirit. Every time you change pronouns or stifle a comment about your home life, you cause another micro-injury to your soul.

Susan Love
quoted in *The Lesbian News*