

# Who's Fat Anyway? The Other Side of Fat

by Oso

We were in seventh grade when my best friend Mindy started calling me skinny. It wasn't necessarily a malicious thing, but considering I was the fattest kid in my class, it definitely felt strange. Everyone got a good laugh out of hearing her calling, "Skinny" out across the playground. Her rationale for doing this was that if you tell someone something long enough, it usually happens, or they at least start to believe it. I think she had read a book about the power of positive persuasion.

I was pretty much always the biggest back then, biggest at a party, the biggest in class. In my family I was not always the biggest, but that was on account of my age. "Give it time," they would say. So now, some years later, sitting around with the collective of *Fat Girl*, I realize I am not the biggest. Flipping through *Fat Girl*, I wonder, am I fat enough? Do I belong here? It's not that I think other people feel like I don't belong at *Fat Girl*; this is an internal dialogue that I have with myself periodically during meetings and whatnot. It's strange to walk this thin line (so to speak), going back and forth between being the biggest and then... I wouldn't say being the smallest, but definitely smaller.

At my work, the window display was so small that I wouldn't go in it for fear I would get stuck. I always sent the little clerks in for me. Yet, at *Fat Girl* meetings and roundtable discussions, I find myself waiting till others have chosen their chairs, making sure not to take a space that I don't need as much as someone else might.

Depending on the size of the woman in my bed, I find myself feeling different; not necessarily ever smaller, for no matter their size, I tend to have a large presence in the bed. But usually I notice the size difference when holding them in my arms. Although my fiancée is not a small woman, there's definitely a size difference between us. Late at night, I lie in bed next to her. I run my hand up her leg, to her fleshy thigh, and then over my thigh, which to my mind, in comparison, seems huge. And I think, God, my leg is big.

The size of me, in relation to different lovers, lucky for me, has always been a pretty positive thing. It makes the big ones feel not so big, the small ones feel safe, and the ones in the middle almost always feel smaller. So, with everyone feeling satisfied, along with that comes what has felt like to me, great appreciation for my size. I suppose it's a backwards way to compliment me, appreciating my fatness because it makes them feel skinnier. I get lots of comments, or shall I say, words of encouragement, not to change a bit. They love me just the way I am. I suppose for me to change would make them change too, in terms of their size in comparison to mine: the smaller I got, the "bigger" they'd get.

I remember sitting around one afternoon with some other fat dykes. We had just had a *Fat Girl* photo shoot, and someone turned the conversation to the idea of dressing up as Tweedle Dee, and they needed a Tweedle Dum. Someone else suggested me, and the fat dyke with the idea said, "She's too small!" I thought, "Wow, no one has ever really said that about me." But looking around that room, clearly, I was too small. Never before in my life, until *Fat Girl*, had I ever thought, am I big enough to fill this space?

I respect these fat dykes who I am working with: the ones much bigger, the ones somewhat smaller, and the ones pretty much my size. We have different issues, clearly, and at times, especially for those dykes bigger than me, that must be hard. I'm sure they look at me sometimes and think things like, "She could not possibly know how I feel." That is the same way I feel looking at skinny girls, and we are both right. ★

# Fat

## Tristan and

**DANA:** Tristan, how do you resolve your desire for a "small girl" with the issue of "internalized fat-phobia"?

**TRISTAN:** In general, I find myself drooling and swooning over big, luscious girls. That desire gets comprised, in part, out of identification and knowing the strength it takes to be a gorgeous fat dyke. I wanted to affirm that courage in my relationships. I wanted to date a fat girl to both encourage and mirror the love of my own body and to make a political statement about fat dykes loving fat dykes. What happened instead was that I fell head over heels in love with a thin girl. And so while I know that my total love of and desire for your body isn't about a rejection or hatred of my own, I do worry that other fat dykes will read it that way, as a kind of political slap in the face. I guess that at this point in my life I feel pretty solid in knowing that I do think fat women are hot and beautiful. The problem, of course, happened when I tried not to be attracted to you because you are a small girl. So in my relationship with you I had to work out two things: the first was allowing myself to be attracted to you, to find you really sexy while not feeling like I was buying into the stereotypes about what beautiful and sexy are and I also had to risk being rejected by you because I'm fat.

**D:** I often experience you as more comfortable in your body than I am (in bed and in the world) and I wonder how much of that ease comes from years of digesting pro-fat rhetoric. Were you always so confident, or did that grow out of your fat-activism?

**T:** No, that confidence was most definitely not always there. I had to work on it, and work and learn and relearn. It never really ends.

**D:** I don't think we'd talked about the big girl/little girl thing before we had sex for the first time—not directly at least. So we'd probably been together three or four more times before I consciously applied that information to my experience of our physical intimacy. Now, with that knowledge, I'm really fascinated by what that first time was like for you.