

Eli: Hi everyone! Before we start the episode proper we have a correction I guess of sorts to make.

[laughter]

Irene: So when we recorded this we were very angry and bitter and suspicious about the whole same-sex marriage situation. And...

Alice: We have same-sex marriage now!

I: it's super good!

E: We were promised same-sex marriage by Christmas. We did not believe this – we've been promised it many a time before, but we have it now, finally, in this country, so the podcast you're about to listen to is also a piece of queer history.

[laughter]

I: Indeed.

E: With that in mind, back to our regularly scheduled programming. Enjoy the episode.

I: Hello, and welcome to Queer as Fact! I'm Irene.

E: I'm Eli.

A: I'm Alice.

I: We're a queer history podcast coming out on the 1st and 15th of every month, covering people, events, and objects from queer history around the world and throughout time. Today we're going to be talking about Lesbia Harford, a queer woman poet from early 20th-century Australia.

[intro music plays]

Some content warnings for this episode: this episode contains mentions of alcoholism, PTSD, and chronic illness. If you don't want to hear any of those things then feel free to leave us and go and have a look at some of our other episodes.

I want to start by telling you about the inception of this episode, because I went to my local library, and there was this collection of her poems on the like, new books display shelf and it sort of caught my eye because it said "Lesbia" and I was like "Lesbia? Could it be... a queer book?"

E: [laughs]

I: Then I was like, "Nah, it's just her name."

E: [laughs]

I: "It's just her name. They don't know that she's queer when she's an infant." And then I looked, and she *was* queer!

[laughter]

A: I love that like, a parent was like, "Let's name the baby... Lesbia," and nobody was like, "Ahhhh..."

I: Apparently it was her mother. Apparently her mother was quite set on this name.

E: Was her mother very into poetry?

I: I don't really know.

A: Yeah, was it like, her mother really liked Sappho? Or...

E: Or Catullus?

A: Or she was conceived in Greece?

E: [laughs]

I: Yeah, I don't really know. I just remember reading that yeah, it was her mother's choice of name.

A: 'Kay.

I: So, she was born Lesbia Venner Keogh of April 9th, 1891 in Brighton, so like, quite close to here.

A: Oh! Cool!

E: Good. We can do that for our next holiday together.

[laughter]

I: Her...

E: We can go to Brighton.

A: We can get the tram.

[laughter]

I: Actually her house she grew up in is still here. It still exists.

A: Oh!

E: Good.

A: Where is it?

E: In Brighton.

I: No, she was born in Brighton; she grew up in Armadale in a house called Wangrabel.

A: Nice.

E: Good.

I: I can tell you the address!

A: Let's go there.

I: 6 Horsburgh Grove Armadale, and yeah, it's still there. I looked at it on Google Street View. Her gravestone is in Kew as well. We could look at that.

A: Oh! Let's visit her!

E: We should! Because we've failed to go to the first significant gravestone of the series, which was from the first episode.

I: Ah yes.

A: Yeah. We haven't got to Captain Moonlite, but we can very easily go to Kew.

I: Yes.

E: Mm. We're definitely slowing triangulating our location.

[laughter]

I: Yeah. Look, in a little while her mother's going to open a boardinghouse in Elsternwick; we're getting closer.

E: Oh my God!

A: Please don't come for us. [laughs]

I: Yep. [laughs] So she was one of four siblings – Esmond, Estelle, and the fourth sibling is called Jelly, but I can't figure out what his actual birthname was.

A: So he's a boy?

I: He's a boy. There's two sisters and two brothers. She's quite close with Esmond and you don't really hear a lot about Estelle and Jelly.

E: Is Jelly with a J?

I: Yeah.

E: I love Jelly.

[laughter]

A: I also love Jelly.

E: Mm.

A: Gellibrand. Magellan.

E: Jellicoe.

A: So when are we?

I: We're like, late 19th century. She's born in 1891.

A: Yeah, so it's probably one of those weird Victorian nicknames that has no association with their actual name.

I: Yeah. So Lesbia had delicate health her whole life. Early books sort of described her as having a serious attack of rheumatism in babyhood which damaged her heart.

E: Mm.

I: Other biographies called it like, a congenital heart defect.

A: Mmhm.

I: It's not really clear. One thing I read said – in the introduction in her collection of poems it said, “She suffered from a debilitating heart condition which made her lips appear blue.”

A: Oooh!

E: Okay.

A: That's quite a heart condition.

I: So like, I don't know what's going on there, but her health was quite fragile.

So I don't have many details about her childhood. Her father, Edmund Keogh, ran a real estate business, which went bankrupt in 1900, at which point Edmund abandoned the family and went to Western Australia apparently to work on the rabbit-proof fence.

E: Oh, what? [laughs]

I: I don't know!

E: That sounds like a myth.

I: It sounds like a myth.

E: Yeah.

I: Other things just sort of suggested he went there to try and make money.

E: Yeah. Do you want to explain the rabbit-proof fence.

I: [laughing] Okay. I don't know...

E: The rabbit-proof fence is not a like, world-wide reference.

I: The rabbit-proof fence was a massive fence across Australia, which was ostensibly supposed to keep rabbits out.

E: [laughs] Yeah.

I: I don't really know if it worked or not, but it...

E: I doubt it.

I: Anyway, her father leaves and goes to Western Australia where he ends up in farming and he just stays out there; he never comes back.

A: Okay.

I: And she sees this as having a great impact on, like, how she turns out, generally, but she doesn't seem to think of it as a negative thing, so she generally saw the absence of her father as giving her sort of increased opportunities for independence and like self-reliance...

E: Okay.

I: ...as a woman. She writes this poem in her 20s – it's called *Fatherless*, and she goes:

*I've had no man
To guard and shelter me,
Guide and instruct me
From mine infancy.*

*No lord of earth
To show me day by day
What things a girl should do
And what she should say.*

*I have gone free
Of manly excellence
And hold their wisdom
More than half pretence*

[laughter]

*For since no male
Has ruled me or has fed,
I think my own thoughts
In my woman's head*

A: That was a nice poem.

E: Good. I like it. I will cross-stitch it.

I: Good.

A: Yes, cross-stitch Lesbia quotes.

E: Okay.

I: I hadn't thought of this. This is a great idea!

A: Yes.

E: If you'd buy a Lesbia quote cross-stitched, email us.

[laughter]

E: I'll do it. I'm not kidding.

[laughter]

E: How's the family doing for money now that the father's gone?

I: I am... Yeah, so her father leaves, ostensibly to make money for the family to send home. I don't know how much of it actually goes home or how much money he actually manages to make.

A: Mm.

I: But her mother obviously decides she has to do something about this herself and after the father leaves she opens a boardinghouse in Elsternwick in order to support her children while she puts them through school.

A: Where's the boardinghouse?

I: I don't have the address of the boardinghouse.

E: Mmkay.

I: But I know it's in Elsternwick.

E: Which is very far away from us.

A: Miles.

E: Miles.

A: Mm.

I: So Lesbia finishes high-school, and that's about all I really know about her childhood.

A: Okay.

I: There's one comment that somebody makes later on about her being a quite girl – you could often see her sort of sitting at the edge of parties or things like that, watching the other children play.

A: Mmhm.

I: Which possibly had more to do with her ill health than it did...

E: Mm.

A: Oh that's true.

I: ...her personality.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah.

I: But there's really not a lot of other detail. But anyway, in 1912 she goes to Melbourne University.

A: Aha!

E: I've heard of that institution.

A: I've never been there!

I: Nah. Not once.

E: What does she study?

I: She studied Law.

E: Oh wow.

A: Fancy!

I: She was one of the first women to graduate from Law at Melbourne Uni.

A: Oh, cool!

E: Mm!

I: So it was during this time she sort of started having relationships, exploring her sexuality. I'm going to tell you about like, three of the significant relationships in her life, but she's generally an advocate of what at the time they called free love, but we would call polyamory.

E: Okay.

I: And so when I start telling you about one person, don't assume that the others have gone.

E: Mmkay.

A: So what era are we in right now, while she's at university?

I: So she enters in 1912 and she graduates in 1916.

A: Okay.

E: Okay.

A: And they called it free love even then?

I: Yes.

E: Yeah.

I: It was quite a common sort of thing among left-wing people.

A: Mmhm.

I: Like, it was common in sort of socialist and anarchist circles.

E: Mmhm.

A: Okay! Huh!

I: But yeah, it was quite kind of connected almost with women's liberation for people often.

E: Mmhm.

A: Oh yeah! No, that makes sense, especially when you are at that point where women can't like marry and keep their job and stuff.

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Like women's relationships is pretty tied up with women's liberation.

I: But anyway, I'm going to read you her poem now that she writes to one of her lovers about how it's okay if they date other people.

A: Oh good.

I:

*You may have other loves,
Red mouths to kiss.
Why should you lose
That loveliness for this?*

*No loveliness of mine
That comes and goes
Wild-fuchsia-like,
Need blind you to the rose.*

*So I, who bless
Your hot and passionate ways
Still need the starry loves
Of virgin days.*

So basically what she's saying there is like: "You can date other people. And I'm still going to date those people I was going out with before I met you."

A: Yep!

E: I like the flower metaphor. That was very Sapphic.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah, she's quite Sapphic. So the first of these relationships I'm going to talk about – she started a relationship with a philosophy tutor at Ormond College, Kate Lush.

[laughter]

I: I don't know whether it was her philosophy tutor.

A: Was she at college, or don't you know?

I: It was never said. I don't know.

E: Mm. Kate Lush is quite a name.

I: Yes. I did tell this to my mum, and she was like, "Lesbia and Lush. They should be some kind of crime-fighting team."

E: Mm. This feeds into my desire to make radio plays about queer...

A: Yeah.

E: ...figures.

I: Yeah. So I can't actually tell you a lot about Kate Lush. Unfortunately the letters between them have been lost.

A: Lost?

E: Mm.

I: Yeah, I don't know where they are. They're in an archive somewhere presumably, or in somebody's personal papers.

E: So they're track-down-able.

I: They are track-down-able. That's the impression I get – that a lot of her papers are out there, somewhere, and we don't know who has them.

E: Oh man.

A: Lost, but could be found, and probably could be found in Melbourne.

I: Yes, that's quite possible, although after she died some of her papers wound up with her father in Western Australia, and then his house burnt down.

A: Ohh, no!

E: Awww...

I: But other things of hers keep turning up, so we just don't know where things are.

A: Okay!

I: Her stuff really got scattered after she died.

A: Is there no definitive biography of Lesbia?

I: No.

A: Well good, we're writing one.

E: Mmhm.

A: Continue.

I: Yes.

E: Mmhm, let's.

I: But yes, I can't actually tell you a lot about Kate or her actual life or...

E: Mm.

I: ...herself. Most of what I can give you is Lesbia feelings about her, because she writes a lot of poetry about her, and she refers to her like, directly by name in her poetry all the time.

E: Yep.

A: That's so convenient.

E: Is it definitely her real name?

I: I would suggest it was her real name because the first collection of her poetry that was published...

E: Mmhm.

I: ...which was just a little after her death, they took out all the poems the mentioned her by name.

E: Ahh, okay. Yep. We should go poke around in the Ormond College archives.

A and I: Mm!

A: 'Coz at least there'd be a picture of Kate if she was there.

E: There would.

I: If she was in staff, yeah.

E and A: Yeah.

I: Yeah, we should do that.

E: Okay.

I: There's also like an honours thesis from the '70s about Lesbia in like, Baillieu's rare books stuff somewhere.

E: Yep.

A: Oh! Well let's go read that.

I: I did not get a chance to read.

E: Fair.

I: But we should go and read that too. Anyway, I'm going to read you some poetry that Lesbia wrote about Kate.

*Why does she put me to many indignities,
Shifts to prevent myself thinking upon her,
My golden Katie, who loveth not kisses?*

E: Awww...

A: Oh no!

I:

*I wear my new dresses and put on silk stockings,
All to prevent myself thinking upon her,
Who is more lovely than fair river-lilies.*

A and E: Aww....

E: That was also very Sapphic.

I: Yes. And then she writes another one, after she's kissed her one time.

A: So was that first one written pre kissing her, or during some kind of...

E: Tiff.

I: I'm un...

A: [laughs]

I: I'm unclear about this. A lot of her poetry – because it's all comes from basically notebooks that she left after her death...

A: Ah, okay.

E: Mmhm.

I: ...the dates aren't clear...

E: Ah, that's a shame.

I: ...necessarily. Sometimes she dates them; sometimes I don't know.

A: Mmkay.

E: Okay.

I: So another time, after Katie had kissed her once:

*I can't feel the sunshine
Or see the stars aright
For thinking of her beauty
And her kisses bright.*

*She would let me kiss her
Once and not again.*

E: [laughs]

I:

*Deeming soul essential,
Sense doth she disdain.*

*If I should once kiss her,
I would never rest
Till I had lain hour long
Pillowed on her breast.*

*Lying so, I'd tell her
Many a secret thing
God has whisper to me
When my soul took wing.*

*Would that I were Sappho,
Greece my land, not this!
There the noblest women,
When they loved, would kiss.*

E: Aww... I like this poem.

A: Is that 'coz it has Sappho in it?

E: So she meets her at university...

I: Yes.

E: So this is like, in the nineteen-teens-ish she writes this.

I: Yes.

E: I'm wondering what of Sappho was available at that time in Australia, and how much in translation.

A: Mm!

I: I don't know, yeah.

A: I wonder if Lesbia knew Greek or if she only read it in translation.

E: Do you know if she had any Greek?

I: No, I only know that she went to study Law.

A and E: Mm.

A: I mean, it's not something you would traditionally learn while studying Law, but you never know.

E: Wouldn't it be?

A: You'd do Latin, maybe, but I don't think you'd do Greek.

E: But I think it might have been the sort of thing – and I'm just speculating now, and we can find out...

A: Okay.

E: ...where it would have been like, more accessible and more normal to then do some Greek as well.

A: Mm.

E: And especially like, people who are queer know that Greek is their key to the queer literature.

I: Yeah that's true.

E: So it might have been like, quite easy for her to get into that class, and she could have done.

A: Yeah.

I: I mean, she definitely knows that Greece is the key to...

A: The gay.

E Yeah. Yes.

I: When asked after Lesbia's death about the relationship between Lesbia and Katie, her brother Esmond who was quite close with Lesbia says, "Was it a homosexual relationship? Not overt, I'm sure, but very intense."

E: Mhm.

I: But given all the talk about kissing...

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

I: I'm suggesting overt.

A: I mean, maybe "not overt" as in, not public.

I: Yes, that's true.

A: But overt as in, if you read her poems after her death...

E: I mean, if you're taking poems out of her collections that have this woman's name in them...

I: Yeah.

E: Then like, that suggests a certain level of intimacy.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah, I'd say so. That's really about all I can tell you about her and Katie's relationship at university and what she was doing at university in general. She graduates in, I think, 1916 and she doesn't go into law. Instead she goes to work in a clothing factory. A lot of the texts that I read suggested that she did this to understand the life of the working class or things like that, because she'd got quite interested in radical politics.

E: Mhm.

I: But given that throughout uni, she always had to support herself by doing tutoring...

A: Oh yeah.

I: ...or teaching on the side or that kind of thing, I would almost suggest that she just needed a job.

A: I'd also say, as one of the first women to graduate from law, it's probably very hard to get a job that was in law.

I: Yes, and she starts studying to pass her Bar exam like ten years later.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah.

I: So it might just be that she gets the qualification and she thinks, well there's not really anywhere to go from here.

A: Yeah.

E: Know that feeling.

[laughter]

I: Yeah, I know. So she goes to work in a clothing factory, which she generally seems to quite enjoy. She writes a lot of poetry sort of about her friendships with the other women that she works with and that kind of thing. She seems like, relatively happy there.

E: What exactly is she doing, do you know?

I: She's sewing skirts together. I don't know exactly the structure of this factory but she seems to like, sit at a bench with a sewing machine and a bunch of other women.

E: Okay.

I: And they talk about sex.

A: Yep.

E: That sounds relatively pleasant. My understanding of women's clothing factories comes from Les Mis so.

[laughter]

A: I mean, they also sit around and talk about sex.

E: They do.

A: But it's not friendly.

E: No.

I: Yeah no, it's relatively friendly, I think. While she's there, she gets very involved in like, workers' rights and union activism sort of stuff. She starts campaigning for the clothing workers' union to have a women's representative.

A: Ah!

I: Which seems like a significant thing to have given that all these people seem to have been women.

A and E: Mhm, yep.

I: And once she achieves that, she starts campaigning for equal pay.

E: Good.

A: Good on her.

I: Eventually she becomes the state vice president of the clothing workers' union.

A: Ah!

I: Through that, she gets involved in the anti-war movement.

A: So this is during World War I?

I: This is during World War I, this is like...

E: Yeah.

I: End of 1916 and 1917. You know at that time we had those two conscription plebiscites?

A: Yes.

I: So basically there was a...

A: Conscription movement and anti-conscription movement.

I: Yes. And she was very much involved in campaigning against conscription leading up to both of those plebiscites. At one point during this, she gets hospitalised for exhaustion.

E: Mm.

A: Well, she does have a not-working heart that leaves her lips blue.

I: Yes. And in the hospital, she bribes a maid to bring her some, like, outdoor clothing and then sneaks out of the hospital...

A and E: [laughter]

I: ...and goes back to work basically.

E: Oh God.

A: Oh wow.

I: Goes back to campaigning.

A: Aw, Lesbia.

E: I hope you're okay, Lesbia.

I: She's quite committed.

A: She is. I'm impressed, but also I'm quite worried about her.

I: I copied a poem that she wrote about her involvement in, like, socialist movements and things like that in general. It's quite like, sad and sweet.

*I was sad
Having signed up in a rebel band,
Having signed up to rid the land
Of a plague it had.*

*For I knew
That I would suffer, I would be lost,
Be bitter and foolish and tempest tost
And a failure too.*

*I was sad;
Though far in the future our light would shine*

*For the present darkness was ours, was mine,
I couldn't be glad.*

A and E: Ohhhh.

I: It's just a very like, sad, sweet poem.

E: That's very poignant, especially given that that was like, a hundred years ago pretty much...

A: That's true, yeah, yeah.

E: ...exactly.

I: Yeah.

A: Well, it's better than it was in 1916.

I: True, we're not in a world war, for example.

E: Yeah.

A: We're not in a world war.

E: Not yet.

A: Yeah.

E: I like how she's in, like... '17, worrying about plebiscites.

A: [laughter]

I: Yeah.

A: [laughter]

I: I did think that when I was reading about the conscription plebiscite. I was like, yes, here's an issue that affects all Australians that we should maybe ask them directly about.

E: Hmm.

A and I: Hmm.

A: I'm sorry, listeners, we're just very bitter.

E: This was so far in the past when this comes out.

A and I: [laughter]

E: I mean, not really far in the past, given the podcast scale not really at all, but...

I: Look, if Malcolm didn't lie to us, maybe we'll have equal marriage by then.

E: Yeah.

A: That's true, maybe by this time, we will.

E: Maybe... when is this episode going out? December 15th. So it'll be ten days away from being able to call Malcolm Turnbull a liar.

[laughter]

I: Get ready, Malcolm.

A: We're coming for you.

E: [laughter] I really don't want this podcast to get down because we kind of threatened the Prime Minister.

[laughter]

I: We could just, like, change the name and it would be good controversy and we'd get famous.

[laughter]

I: And then we would have to do it from our secret headquarters on the run.

[laughter]

A: I love it.

I: Anyway, so it was through her anti-conscription campaigning that she met Guido Baracchi, who would become her lover.

A: Guido?

I: Guido, yes. He was half-Italian, his father was Italian, his mother was Australian-born.

E: Mhm.

I: And I think English by background.

A: Okay.

I: I can tell you a little bit more about Guido than about Katie because he went on to become a prominent left-wing activist himself. He joined the Australian Communist Party, got expelled from the Australian Communist Party, rejoined it, took some secret papers to the Soviet Union for them...

[laughter]

I: ...quit again, joined the ALP..

[laughter]

A: Oh my God.

I: ...in the hope of guiding them towards Trotskyism...

E: Oh man!

A: Guido!

E: And how's the ALP doing at Trotskyism today, guys?

[laughter]

I: So, I spent, like, a while reading about the stuff Guido did after he knew Lesbia...

E: Mhm.

I: ...but so far as I know, he's not queer, and I couldn't give him his own episode.

E: Aw, that's a shame. Do you know, just quickly, why he was thrown out of the Communist Party?

I: Yes. So he joined the Communist Party and then he decided that there was insufficient support for it to be worth running a Communist Party.

E: Okay.

I: So he started, like, trying to campaign for them to just, like, shut down the Communist Party and wait for revolution to happen overseas and then jump on the train then.

A: Okay.

I: The Communist Party was like, that's not really on, if you don't want to fight for communism, why are you here?

A: Reasonable.

E: Fair.

I: At which point, he left and some, like, eight years later he was like, wait, I've made a mistake, communism is the way, guys!

A: I mean, by that time there'd been some overseas revolutions, right?

I: Yeah, true.

E: That we hadn't like, jumped on the bandwagon of.

I: True.

E: Socialist revolution hadn't just rolled through Australia by itself.

A: 'Cause the ALP wasn't Trotskyist enough.

E: It wasn't, no.

[laughter]

A: No.

I: And so yeah, he goes back and he's like, I want to join the Communist Party, I'm sorry about what I said, I think it's really important, I'll help you traffic secret papers to the Soviet Union.

E: Did they haze him back in?

I: [laughter] Yes.

A: Wait, what year was this, when he got back in?

I: I don't know, I don't have it written down.

A: I just know that our grandfather was in the Communist Party in Melbourne.

E: Do *you* have papers?

A: [laughter] Maybe it's us! They used to meet at our, like, family's home.

E: [laughter] God, our, like, chain of separation from Lesbia Harford is so much smaller than normal. Let's try and figure out our chain of separation from, like, Gad Beck. No, that's a bad example, he's Jewish, I could do this.

[laughter]

I: Anyway, more fun facts about Guido. He was born in 1887 so that makes him like, four years older than Lesbia.

A: Mhm.

I: He studied at Melbourne Uni some years before Lesbia and did two years of a Classics degree but never finished it.

E: I wonder if doing a Classics degree at Melbourne then was as brutal as like, all the British ones we've heard about from the same time.

I: I don't know.

A: Mm.

I: He hasn't ruined his eyesight so far as I can tell.

[laughter]

A: That was going to be my next question, did Guido wear glasses?

E: It was like, medium brutal this year.

[laughter]

I: Yeah, yours was quite brutal. Anyway, so he doesn't finish his Classics degree. In 1913, he went to Europe and got involved in socialism.

A: Mhm.

I: Then when World War I broke out, he comes back to Australia and he seems to have returned to university, but it's not very clear what he was doing there at this point.

E: He was drinking goon on South Lawn.

I: Yeah, probably.

[laughter]

I: But um, he began to get involved in the anti-war movement, which was generally not well-received, it was seen as quite unpatriotic.

E: Mm. That's unsurprising.

A: Well, this was the era when they were, like, handing out the white feathers on the street to any man who was the age that should be at war.

I: Mm.

A: Yeah. They were pretty intense about it.

I: Yeah. The um, Australian Dictionary of Biography, which has this short biography of him which is quite hilarious...

A: I love the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

I: ...describes some other students being angered by his opinions and says they dunked him in the university lake. Which I have questions about because we don't have a lake so -

A: We had a lake.

E: And now we know communists got put in it.

A: Yeah.

I: So Guido basically credits Lesbia with inspiring his commitment to left-wing politics.

E: Oh my God.

I: Their relationship is fairly like, good.

A: This would be such a good book.

E: We're writing this book.

A: We are writing this book.

E: Yeah.

I: On one occasion, he gets arrested for making an anti-conscription speech on the banks of the Yarra and he was charged a 50 pound fine for this but Lesbia convinces him that it's better for him to refuse the fine and take a prison sentence and that will look better for the movement.

A: Okay.

E: Oh my God.

I: And so he does, he goes to prison.

E: For how long?

I: Not very long.

E: I wouldn't think so.

I: Yeah, like, a couple of months or something.

E: I -

A: That's still a long time.

E: I know this is like, tiny and you won't know, but do you know where on the banks of the Yarra?

I: No, I did like, try and look. There's a painting which her husband does later of like, the meetings they used to have on the banks of the Yarra but he's like, a sort of modernist, Cubist sort of artist so it's not immediately recognisable.

[laughter]

A: We can do this, we're going to look at this painting and we're going to figure it out.

I: [laughter] I'll find it for you.

A: I mean, presumably you could just find out where, like, meetings were traditionally held.

I: Yeah.

A: 'Cause there's probably a spot.

E: There's so much, like, doable and fun research here, oh my God, oh my God.

I: Yeah, there is just like, so much to do on this thing and it kept kind of getting out of hand when I was doing things and being like, I could do this thing, and being like, no, just make the episode.

A: Did you do any of your own independent research? Like that would be above and beyond what is expected of you, but did you look in newspapers or anything of the time?

I: Not really, to be honest.

A: Mmkay.

E: That's fair.

A: Yeah, like that's perfectly reasonable, I was just wondering

I: Yeah. There's definitely like, a lot of stuff that could be done here but it would definitely be original research.

A: Yeah, like there's original research and a biography waiting to be written.

I: Yeah, like if you wait another year, we can have another episode.

A: Put out the first Queer as Fact book.

E: The first of many.

A: Yeah.

E: We are not funded in any way.

[laughter]

A: Please post us some cash.

E: [laughter] Yes, or like, some flour.

A: Commission us some cross stitch.

E: Yeah.

I: [laughter] Yes. I'll do cross stitch. I like cross stitch.

A: To fund our Lesbia Harford book.

I: Alright. Anyway. Another fun fact about their relationship. The way he described it, their relationship involved exchanging and discussion anti-capitalist books. He said, occasionally she would ask me to read her passages from Kapital.

E: [snorts]

A: That's very sexy.

I: As though this is like, a romantic thing.

A: Yeah.

I: So, that was...

A: A beautiful relationship.

I: A beautiful relationship, which also lasted for her whole life.

A: Oh, that's nice.

I: They were still like, close at the end of her life.

E: Does she stay in romantic relationships with these various partners or is it like, they're all on and off or...?

I: It's not really clear...

E: Mmkay.

I: ...because she's married for some time and so she has to sort of have some of these relationships fairly under the radar.

E: Mhm.

I: So it's not clear at what times she's...

E: Yep.

I: ...romantically involved with people and what times she's just friends with him, but it's apparent that she remains like, emotionally close to them.

E: When historical figures have those like, friends who are like, blur the category of friends and lovers, I

enjoy it.

I: Through the anti-conscription movement, she gets involved with the Industrial Workers of the World, who are really involved in the anti-war movement in Australia, which is quite weird because their overseas branches are not.

A and E: Okay.

I: But she gets involved anyway and becomes sort of, increasingly active in workers' rights and unionist stuff and the idea of proletarian revolution overall.

E: Mmhm.

I: The Industrial Workers of the World was banned during the First World War...

A: Mmhm.

I: Because it had to do with their agitating against conscription.

A: Yep.

I: So it was banned at this point. People kept telling her, "Okay Lesbia, you have to stop being involved in this. Your delicate health means a prison sentence could kill you!"

E: Mm.

I: And she was like, "No."

E: Mm.

I: "I will not." So she continued doing that.

A: She's such a hard-core lady.

I: She's a very hard-core lady.

E: I'm very concerned about this like...

A: ...blue lips situation?

E: No, about this like, backfiring on her, going forward.

I: Mm. It was through the International Workers of the World that she met the third significant partner I'm about to tell you about, Pat Harford.

E: Well then.

I: Yes, that's...

E: Mr Harford. [laughs]

I: Mr Harford. That's where her name comes from. So compared to her quite long relationships with Katie and Guido, her relationship with Pat Harford was shorter. Both Guido and Esmond, her brother, generally after her death seem quite dismissive of Pat. I'm not sure how they felt about him during her life.

E: Mm.

A: Mmhm.

I: But they were both also quite involved in the sort of mythmaking activity around her after her death so I think they sort of dismiss things that don't really fit for them.

E: Mmkay.

A: Oh yeah.

E: Yep.

I: But they generally sort of consider that he was a lapse of judgement on her part, and talk about him as a drunkard and a man of no worth.

E: Mm.

A: Okay.

I: But this doesn't really seem to hold up entirely; he did have problems with alcohol...

A: Mmhm.

E: Yeah.

I: He was a returned soldier...

E: Okay.

A: Okay.

I: ...and they say when he came back he had a chronic injury so he always walked with a limp...

E: Mm.

I: ...and he had what they called shell-shock at the time.

A: Yep.

E: Alcoholism seems a natural development of that situation, unfortunately.

I: Yeah. Unfortunately. But he does also seem to have had generally quite a lot in common with Lesbia. They collaboratively write quite a lot of poetry.

A: Oh! Cool!

I: So there are things in her notebooks which are labelled "Pat's poems" that they've obviously worked on together. When he was in the army he once gets accused of making statements deriding the war and capitalism.

A: [laughs]

I: And when they asked for his details 'coz they've heard this, he gives the name of a different Private Harford...

E: Ohhh....

A: Oooohh...

E: Oh nooo.

I: [laughs]

E: What happened to that Private Harford?

I: They eventually come back to him, so presumably they tracked down that Private Harford and they're like, "This isn't the guy who was saying Bolshevik stuff at dinner." They go back to him when they finally get hold of him he says, "Look, I was.... drunk."

[laughter]

I: But then like, a year later he gets accused of being at IWW meetings...

E: Mmhm.

I: ...and those gatherings on the banks of the Yarra...

A: Mmhm.

E: Yeah.

I: ...that Guido was at throughout 1917 and 1918, and once he gets accused of being an orator at one of these meetings...

A: [laughs]

E: Yeah.

I: ...which, no evidence is found for this, but presumably he did it, because he's quite...

A: I mean, I don't know what evidence they'd hope to find; like, nobody else at the meeting is going to do him in.

I: Yeah, no, presumably everyone else at the meeting was just like, "Pat Harford? Nah."

A: "Never heard of him."

I: "Nah, whose that?"

E: "Oh yeah! He's this other private. Let me give you his address!"

I: Yes.

[laughter]

I: It's unclear at what point he and Lesbia met, but they share an interest in art and in sort of aesthetics generally as well as the radical politics. Pat was an artist himself. He painted privately – professionally he worked at a stained-glass studio in Elizabeth Street.

A: Cool!

E: Mm!

I: Which is like, quite cool.

E: It is.

A: Huh, nice.

E: Elizabeth Street.

I: Yeah.

A: I've never been there!

[laughter]

A: I wonder if there's any stained-glass in the city made by Pat Harford.

E: Mm.

I: Probably.

E: There's just so many leads!

A: Yes.

I: [laughs] So this is another example of Lesbia's brother Esmond being quite dismissive of Pat. He described

Pat as having an “amateurish talent” at art and suggested that any worthwhile ideas he had about Modernist art had come either from Lesbia or from Esmond.

[laughter]

I: However, other artists Pat worked with or knew – like his sort of contemporaries – considered him a primary innovator in Australian Modernism and actually, like, thought he was genuinely quite significant.

A: Interesting.

I: So, I don't really know what's going on between Esmond and Pat there, but he's not keen on him.

E: Mm.

A: I mean he might just, you know, be worried about his sister having a husband who is suffering from shell-shock and has alcohol problems.

I: Yeah.

A: So he doesn't like him.

E: Mm.

A: So was Esmond an artist? Or don't you know?

I: No. Esmond goes into medicine eventually, and is involved in like, cancer research.

A: Oh!

E: Sure.

I: But like, much later. He and Lesbia are both quite interested in art, but neither of them do it themselves.

A: Okay. So he feels like he's knowledgeable about art that that's not stupid statement for him to say, “Oh, Pat just knows everything he knows from me and Lesbia.”

I: Yeah, but it's a stupid statement because Pat apparently, like I've seen his paintings; he's doing paintings.

E: I mean, if one of these three people is doing paintings then probably they're the one who knows things about paintings.

I: Yeah. I think so. Anyway, in 1919, Pat and Lesbia go to Sydney together to campaign for the freedom of a group of men who are called the Sydney Twelve, who get sentence to hard labour for treason on account of their activities with the International Workers of the World.

A: Ah!

E: Mm.

I: Some of what they've done is like, genuine crime; some of these people have done arson and things like that.

A: Mmhm.

E: Okay.

I: Which, maybe you support their goals, but you can see why they're getting arrested for that.

A: Yep. The state is supposed to prosecute people who do arson.

I: Yeah. While they're up there, first Lesbia stays with the wives of these men...

E: Mmhm.

I: ...'coz they're in prison.

A: Yep.

I: And then soon she and Pat move in together. She writes this like, very cute little poem...

A: Mm.

I: ...about their house together. They obviously have like, a very small apartment together, and they seem to have been quite happy in it, and I'm going to read you this adorable poem:

*We've a room
That we call home,
With a bed in it,
And a table
And some chairs,
A to Z in it.
There's a mirror,
And a safe,
And a lamp in it.
Were there more,
Our mighty love
Might get cramp in it.*

[laughter]

E: Aww!

A: Aww...

E: That is cute.

A: That was cute.

I: It's a very cute little poem. It was...

A: I like that a lot. I feel like it would suit a cross-stitch.

E: Mm.

I: Mm.

E: I like how it forces you to say "zed".

I: Yeah it does.

[laughter]

I: It does. You have to or it doesn't rhyme.

A: Yeah.

I: Take that, America.

A: [laughs]

I: Hi guys. So they get married in 1920.

A: Mmhm.

I: And she writes this telegram to one of her friends and literally the only information it contains in it goes, "Married Pat today."

[laughter]

E: Good.

A: That's the key fact there. [laughs]

I: [laughs] Yes.

E: Mm.

I: And they stay in Sydney for a couple of years, but they move back to Melbourne in 1922. I should have looked up what happened to those twelve men.

E: Do you want me to look it up now...

I: Yeah, find out.

E: ...for the episode?

A: Yeah.

E: Like, they all go to prison.

I: Yeah. Several of them are sentenced to like, 10 or 15 years hard labour, but...

E: Yeah.

I: They seem to get out before that, because there's one of them that she's quite close with, and everyone's expected the two of them will get married when he gets out, but then instead she marries Pat.

E: Do you know which one?

I: His name is Besant. B-E-S-A-N-T.

E: Yeah, found him. He gets 10 years.

I: Yeah.

E: They mostly get 15 or 10 years, only...

I: Yeah.

E: ...King gets five. 10 of them were released in August of 1920.

I: Yeah, alright.

E: Including Besant.

I: Yeah. Pat and Lesbia move back to Melbourne in 1922. They continue to be...

E: ...married?

I: They continued to be married, yes, but they continue to be quite close, and this is sort of worth mentioning because a lot of the people writing about her seem to have bought into Guido and Esmond's line that it was a brief and failed relationship.

E: Mm.

A: Mmhm.

I: But throughout this time she's still writing poetry about the times when he makes her happy and these sorts of things, and they still work on things together...

E: Mmhm.

A: Okay.

I: ...and that kind of thing, but he's struggling more and more with alcoholism and by 1925 the relationship is having problems, and they separate.

E: Mmkay.

I: So she moves back to stay at the boardinghouse that her mother runs in Elsternwick. By this time her health is in decline. She starts working towards her bar exam, but she never actually sits the exam. She continues to write poetry and it sort of is apparent in her poetry by this point that I think she's aware that she might not live for much longer.

E: Mmhm.

A: Mmhm.

I: She sort of thinks a lot about like, God and the afterlife and that kind of thing.

A: Oh yeah.

E: Mm.

I: And she died in July 1927 of what some of my sources said was tuberculosis – the hospital records it as lung and heart failure.

E: Mmkay.

A: Okay.

E: I mean, lung and heart failure can result from tuberculosis.

I: Yeah.

A: Mmhm.

I: So that's what seems to have happened.

E: Mm.

I: Katie apparently maintained a vigil over her bed in the last days before her death.

A: Oh Katie.

E: Aww.

I: Guido says of Katie after Lesbia died, "Katie was knocked rotten when Lesbia died. I think life for her without Lesbia would not be nearly so good."

E: Mm.

A: Mm.

I: So that was very sad.

E: Yeah.

I: So she died at 36. When she died she hadn't published a lot of her poetry; it was mostly a private affair; sometimes people asked her about publishing more, and she would sort of say, "Look, I'm in no hurry to get published."

E: Mmhm.

A: Okay.

I: She published things occasionally...

E: Yes.

I: ...through a friend of hers, Nettie Palmer, who was involved in the publishing industry.

A: That's a super familiar-sounding name. Do you know anything else about Nettie Palmer?

I: Yeah, she's quite well known as a like, literary critic.

A: Okay, maybe that's why I've heard of her.

I: She... Yeah. She lives for quite a long time and is quite prominent in the industry.

A: Okay.

I: Somebody did posit that she and Lesbia's friendship was more than friendship.

A: Okay.

I: They were very close. There was a lot of talk about friendship, romantic friendship...

E: Yeah.

I: ...lovers.

E and A: Yeah.

E: That's always difficult to find the line, and I think maybe especially in this case.

I: Yeah.

E: Mm.

I: But by the end of her life she's apparently thinking of publishing a volume of her poetry, because a lot of her notebooks have little notes in the margins about which things she might include and which things she might not.

E: Mm.

A: Okay.

I: And so after she dies, her brother decides he wants to publish an anthology and a critic who had seen one of her earlier poems, H.M. Green, writes to the editor of the anthology it was published in saying that Lesbia "has written some of the best lyrics among today's, and certainly I would say the best love lyrics written out here." So, the best love poetry written in Australia basically.

A: That's pretty good.

I: And he wants to get in touch with her brother because he doesn't think that her brother's taking this seriously enough and he wants to kind of push him to get this project going.

E: Mm.

A: Uh-huh.

I: So it takes them 10 years before they start sort of getting this project seriously on the road. He was right to be concerned about Esmond – Esmond is just a bit of a procrastinator.

[laughter]

E: I find Esmond relatable.

[laughter]

I: Yeah.

A: I mean that's all we know about them is he's a procrastinator who doesn't do art. Those are our like two Esmond facts, and...

I: He's involved in like, radical politics; he doesn't do art; he does medicine...

A: Oh yeah, he did medicine. That's right.

I: ...he is a procrastinator. Yep.

A and E: Good.

I: So Mr Green, the critic who complimented her so strongly, is still writing to people to try and get this to happen, like 10 years later.

A: Ah, good on Mr Green's perseverance.

E: Mm.

I: But finally between Esmond and Helen Keogh, Lesbia's mother, and Nettie, and a woman named Miss Clark - who none of the things I could read could tell me the connection between her and Lesbia and Lesbia's family - start getting the project together, and Miss Clark has a whole lot of Lesbia's notebooks.

A and E: Mmkay.

I: And I'm not sure why she was given these, or who she is. Presumably she was a friend or a lover or...

A: So you don't even know her first name?

E: Yeah.

I: No, she was just called Miss Clark.

E: Wow.

A: Weird.

I: So anyway, they managed to get it together. It was published in 1941 by Melbourne University Press.

A: Thanks Unimelb.

I: While it didn't contain any of the poems which mentioned her lovers by name it did contain overt references to her same-sex desire.

E: Mm.

A: So I wonder why they made that decision then.

I: I think it was more these people were still alive basically.

A: I guess that's true. It's okay to say Lesbia had same-sex relationships, but it may not be something that like, Kate wants out there in public I guess.

I: Yeah. And like, Lesbia's family and friends seem to know about this and not find it particularly controversial.

E and A: Okay.

A: That's good then.

I: Like they generally keep it quite quiet, but there's no suggestion that they think it's odd. So Nettie says, about how they managed to get Melbourne University Press to publish this book full of lesbian poetry - sorry, not really lesbian poetry; it's really hard not to say that when her name is Lesbia though...

E: Mm.

I: ...like full of poetry about same-sex desire, is that this only happened because publishers were too lazy to read the manuscript properly.

E: Oh my God!

I: She describes them...

E: [laughs]

Irene: She describes them as “Three old gentlemen of the censor type. They have no time to read, which sometimes prevents them from fulfilling their natural function, which is to obstruct. Professor Osbourne now says that if he had read Lesbia’s poems beforehand, he never would have consented to their publication.”

Alice: I can imagine them like, sneaking the gay ones into the back of the book, like, “They’ll read the first like, five.”

I: [laughs]

A: “Maybe the last one. Put a conventional one on the back page.”

I: So, the book does get published, and I want to talk a little bit now about the sort of project that her family and her friends embarked on to kind of build this image of her after her death. They had this sort of tendency to romanticise her and kind of make this image of her as like, a revolutionary martyr, basically. Someone quite serious who devoted their life to the revolution, and was not, I dunno how to say it, was not...

E: At the expense of her health.

I: Mm...They sort of talk about her as fighting for this world that she knows she’s never going to see, but, we also have this one anecdote, which I think is worth saying, because I don’t want to sort of lose Lesbia’s personality in that image building thing. And it’s from her brother. He takes his two sisters to this late night party during the war, where “There was much dancing and gaiety. Lesbie wore her golden shoes, and acted as she thought one should act in those surroundings. I can remember her suggesting that one of the boys should drink champagne out of one of her golden shoes.”

A: [laughs] Did he just call her “Lesbie” for short or did I mishear that?

I: No, it’s Lesbie. L-E-S-B-I-E.

A: Lesbie!

E: That’s quite cute.

I: It’s quite cute.

A: I like that he said she acted as she thought she should in that situation. Like, what do people do at parties? They get drunk out of their shoes, right?

I: [laughs]

A: It’s nice to know that there’s a long history of drinking alcohol from shoes.

I: Yeah.

A: Very classy... I mean, I think the story you’ve presented us of her does fit in with kind of with that martyr image. When she bribed a maid to get out of hospital to go back to work...

I: Mm...

A: Despite having like a serious heart condition...

I: Yeah... And that's sort of why I wanted to put that story in, because everything else you read kind of...

E: Yeah.

I: I mean, a lot of it does come from Guido, basically.

A: Mm-hm.

I: It comes from Guido and Esmond. And they have this particular image of her that they want to present.

A: Yep, yep. That makes sense.

E: It's certainly easy to just forget that historical figures were people.

I: Yeah.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah. And also to sort of take them to extremes and say, "Oh, so she did that, so she probably never went to a party and had fun, because she was too busy fighting for the revolution and being sickly her whole life."

E: When in reality those people only exist in Victor Hugo novels.

I: [laughs]

A: And real people who fight for the revolution and are very sick and write poems also have time to get drunk out of shoes.

I: To be clear, she did not drink from the shoe. Somebody else drunk from her shoe.

A: Presumably, she offered her shoe for the purpose.

I: Yes.

A: Or maybe she'd just taken off her shoes at some point in the party...

I: No, she did! She offered her shoe. That's what he said. "I can remember her suggesting that one of the boys should drink champagne out of one of her shoes."

A: Wait, what year is this? During the war?

I: It's during the war. Yes.

A: I'm trying to picture what a 1915 shoe looks like so I have a picture in my mind.

I: She writes, and I don't have it here, but she writes this little poem about her golden shoes which allow her to run away from too-ardent lovers.

E: [laughs]

A: So she really likes these shoes.

I: Yes!

E: I wonder if she liked them less after champagne had been in one.

A: That's what I was wondering. Like, how do you clean your shoe? Do you have to pour champagne into the other and then be like, "I guess this is how life is now?"

I: [laughs]

A: What do you do??

I: At least they're equally sticky?

A: I'd rather have two sticky shoes than one sticky shoe.

E: Strong disagree.

A: [laughs] I'll keep that in mind if anyone ever drinks champagne out of your shoe.

E: No-one's doing this.

I: [laughs]

A: I don't think anyone wants to do this.

E: I only wear boots.

I: A lot of champagne can fit in a boot.

E: Oh, Jesus Christ.

A: [laughing] You could fit a whole bottle.

I: After she died, her papers seem generally to get sort of scattered. Some of them wind up with her father, whose hut in WA burns down.

A: So those ones are gone?

I: Those ones are gone.

A: Okay, we'll write off a trip to WA.

E: Definitely gone?

A: Can we do an archaeological excavation?

E: Not – no, like...

I: I mean, we don't know what was there, is the thing. We know some of her things, but we don't know what he had. Esmond had a case of notebooks of some kind.

A: Have those notebooks been made available, or have they been lost in Esmond's family somehow?

I: Some of them were made available. Some of them I don't think Esmond ever got round to passing on.

A: Okay...

E: Esmond!

I: Because as we know, Esmond...

A: Esmond...I wanna write a book, Esmond.

E: This wasn't too long ago, though. Like...

I: No...

E: Are they just in someone's attic, maybe?

A & I: Probably.

I: A lot of the people in this didn't sort of die until the 1960s or 70s.

E: Yeah.... So it's only like, a generation or two back.

A: She died in the 30s?

I: No, she died in the 20s. She died in 1927.

A: Ah, okay.

I: At the age of 36.

E: Is that the youngest death we've had so far?

A: I think so.

I: Really?

A: I think it is.

E: 'Cause I remember thinking that Anne was pretty young, but Anne was in her fifties.

I: Yeah...

A: I think all the ones I've done have lived quite long, from memory.

E: Oh, I don't know how old George was.

A: Oh, George might've been pretty young.

E: Poor old George. Yeah, I think she might be the youngest death we've had so far. Which is...

I: So a lot of her papers got lost when Katie died.

A: Mmkay.

I: Which, they're presumably still in Katie's family somewhere.

A: Okay.

I: There were some mentions in her sort of letters that still remained, of a novel she had written. In the early 1980s, this turned up!

A: Oh!

E: Oh my god.

I: So the novel exists, and it was published in 1987, and she wrote it in the early 20s. It was called *The Invaluable Mystery*. And basically the plot of it was, the protagonist is this working class woman named Sally, who lives with her father and her brother during the war. But her father and her brother were born in Germany, and when the war breaks out, they get imprisoned.

A: Ah.

I: And the whole plotline sort of follows Sally as she kind of comes out of her shell and learns to sort of become independent, and she gets involved in radical politics, and meets a lot of Bolshevik women and like, Jewish Russian women, and talks about oppression and things. Nobody would publish this at the time.

E: No...

A: [laughs] That's fair enough. It sounds like a good book though.

I: Yeah, and so it felt to me when I was reading about it...it had sort of a similar sentiment in it to that poem I read to you at the start, about Lesbia's feelings on the absence of her father.

A: Mmhm, yeah.

I: Where she sort of...she presented this like, Sally's being suddenly alone, as like a difficult thing and a bad thing, but an opportunity.

A: Yeah.

E: Mm.

I: And it kind of gave Sally this chance to become herself.

A: Okay.

I: So I didn't really know how to finish this, but I have this little collection of poems that she's written that I quite liked, and some of them are poems where she's sort of explicit about same-sex relationships – I say explicit as in she's overtly talking about them, not explicit as in she describes sex.

A and E: Mmhm.

I: And some of them are just things that are incredibly relatable.

E: Okay.

I: So one of the things I like was she writes this series of poems and they're *Periodicity [I], [II] and [III]*. And in one and two she sort of writes these poems about giving a kind of metaphorical significance to her period and the suffering it causes her, and in the third poem she sort of tries this for two verses and then by the end of the poem she's just kind of like, "No. You know what? I don't think there's anything in this" and the last two verses of the poem go:

*Meaning must lie
Some beauty surely dwell
In the fierce depths and uttermost pits of hell.*

*Yet still I seek
Month after month in vain
Meaning and beauty in recurrent pain.*

[laughter]

I: And I just really enjoyed like, you read these three in a row and it's just sort of this arc where she's like, "I swear there must be a metaphor in this somewhere... Nup. Got nothing. Got cramps and I hate it."

E: Mmhm.

A: I feel like just every month she sits down and pens another poem in this series.

I: [laughs] Yeah, I think so.

[laughter]

I: Now I will read you some nice gay poems. This one is called *Lie-a-Aed*.

*My darling lies down in her soft white bed,
And she laughs at me.*

[laughter]

*Her laughter has flushed her pale cheeks with red.
Her eyes dance with glee.*

*My darling lies close in her warm white bed,
And she will not rise.
I will shower kisses down on her sleepyhead
Till she close her eyes.*

Gioja's no happier fresh from the South.

*But my kisses free
Will straiten the curves of this teasing mouth,
If it laughs at me.*

[laughter]

A: That was a good poem.

I: I find her poetry just like, very readable.

A: I like how they're all very like, short and like the language is very simple.

I and E: Yeah.

I: And now there's one where she writes about how she's on the tram going to see her friend or her lover.

A: [laughs]

E: Which tram?

A: [laughs]

I: *The Electric Tram to Kew.*

E: Oh God.

A: That would be this tram line! This tram goes to Kew!

I: Yeah, you do! This is your tram!

E: Oh my God!

[delighted laughter]

I: I will read it to you. It's also quite cute.

*Through the swift night
I go to my love.
Tram bells are joy bells,
Bidding us move
On a golden path
Beneath balls of fire
Up hill and down dale,
To o'ertake desire.*

*Past the old shops
That my childhood knew,
Past hidden houses
And fields of dew
Lovely and secret
As thou, my friend,
Who art all heaven
At journey's end.*

E: Oh my God. Ah, that is just like, a perfectly Tolkien-esque poem, but then you add in that she's on my tram line and it's so wonderful.

[laughter]

I: I know, I loved it so much.

[laughter]

E: I love her.

A: That was beautiful.

I: Yeah. I just really like her poetry.

A: Do you have any more?

I: I can read you the entire book. It's open in a tab somewhere.

[laughter]

E: Mmhm.

A: I love Lesbia.

I: Yeah, I just kind of loved her because she was very relatable...

E: Mm.

I: ...and queer and...

E: Yeah.

I: ...I was just so happy when I saw the book and I was like, "Her name is Lesbia. Maybe I will like her." And I liked her so much.

E: Mmhm.

A: I feel like if she had been a hundred years later like I probably would have met and hung out with Lesbia.

E: Yeah.

I: I mean you would have just like seen her in the shops.

A: Just like statistically, I would have been like, "Oh hey! It's Lesbia at Coles!"

I: Yeah.

E: Lesbia at Coles!

I: She was probably like...

A: Coles existed then, right?

I: Yes.

[laughter]

I: You probably would have like, been in the Classics Students Society with her or something.

A: Yeah!

I: She probably went there to talk about Sappho.

A: Maybe we would have met like, through Guido.

E: I want to know more about what she knew about Sappho and like, how she felt about her name in relation to Sappho.

I: I don't know, yeah.

A: Mm.

E: Yeah.

I: I want to know also. Like, she obviously thought about Sappho. She wrote a poem where she was like, "I wish I was Sappho."

E: That doesn't even necessarily confirm that she read Sappho though...

I: No, but it...

E: ...and I need to know more.

I: Yeah.

E: 'Coz there are elements of her poetry that are reminiscent of Sappho, but like, not necessarily enough that it's definitely like, deliberately emulating her.

I: Yeah.

A: And I also think that same-sex women's love poetry has been emulating Sappho...

I: ...for so long that it's indistinguishable whether you did it on purpose...

E: Yeah.

I: ...or whether it's just part of the genre.

A: Yeah, yeah.

E: That's true.

A: Exactly, exactly.

I and A: Yeah.

A: So she may have been emulating somebody who emulated Sappho.

I: I thought about this when I was reading about her, that the sort of language she uses is quite similar to the sort of language that Nobuko used.

E: Oh my God!

I: Like, I thought about that; they talk about like the flowers and that really kind of like, dreamy... Yeah.

A: Mm.

I: It's a long history.

E and A: Mm.

A: I wonder if she died in the '20s, if there's anyone still alive who knew her.

I: I'm not sure.

A: They'd have to be in their 90s and have known her as a child.

I: Yeah.

E: Hm. Did any of her siblings her children.

I: I couldn't really find anything more...

E: Okay.

I: ...on Estelle or Jelly.

A: Jelly.

E: Oh Jelly, I forgot you.

[laughter]

I: Esmond I didn't find much about his personal life...

E: Okay.

I: After that he went into like, medical research...

E: Yeah.

I: ...and that was sort of his thing, but I don't know about his children. Katie had a child later on.

A: Okay.

I: So Katie's daughter Aileen still exists and appeared with some of Lesbia's papers at one point.

A: Ah! That's nice.

I: But Katie had that child after Lesbia was dead.

A: Okay, so...

I: So they never met.

A: Yep. But she probably would have heard her mother sort of have stories about Lesbia.

I: Yeah. She definitely did that, and she had sort of some of her mother's papers about like, Lesbia. Not the correspondence, unfortunately.

A: Mmkay.

I: Alas.

A: We will find it.

E: We'll find something.

A: Yeah.

I: Mm.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean, if no-one's ever tried to write a biography of her...

I: Yeah, no-one's...

A: ...there will be stuff waiting to be found.

I: No-one seems to have written a full-scale biography really. People have done archival research and there was that one thesis.

A: Yeah.

E: Yeah.

I: But...

A: Okay.

I: Anyway, a PhD!

E: Or just a book...

A: I think a book.

E: Next year.

A: Just a book.

I: [laughs] Okay. This has been Queer as Fact. Thanks for listening. I'm Irene.

E: I'm Eli.

A: I'm Alice.

I: You can find us on Tumblr as Queer as Fact, on Twitter as Queer as Fact, on Facebook as Queer as Fact. If you want to email us directly you can email us at queerasfact@gmail.com. You can find all our episodes on Podbean and on iTunes, and wherever else you listen to podcasts. If you do listen on iTunes and you want to leave us a review or a rating, that would be super great. It's really helpful to us – it makes iTunes think we're good.

E: Eight of you have done, and we know there's more of you!

I: [laughs] None of you are going to recess till you do it!

[laughter]

I: We'll be back on the 1st of January, with Eli presenting an episode on Edward II, a 14th-century king of England. See you then!

[music plays]