

READY, SET, FISH

we're not sure if it's just us or if the boat's actually rocking a little—languid sinking and rising floor. Am I drunk, or is this a storm?

We're walking past the casino and the piano bar, and walking isn't working. Walking is a lot like falling. "It's like the tsunami," I exclaim as we push the heavy doors out to the deck, where waves shoot triumphantly over the railings onto the shuffleboard courts. The wind tries to kill us. Laurie, our friend and one of Ro's production assistants, takes us to her suite—so we can stand on the balcony and get drenched by ambitious waves. "This is so cool," Haviland says. I'm hoping this means she won't throw up later, but she does. We both do.

The next morning it feels like we've all been through trauma together and we're bonded by the experience of those waves—the earth's failed embraces lumbering back at us, and failing again to hold on. As Elvira Kurt pointed out in her closing-night act, although many passengers were literally throwing up in the hallways, Kelli was together and with it, cheerful as if magnetized, which is why, like Rosie, we're all in love with her.

So much happens every single day: Your skin changes color; you randomly converse with someone brilliant and interesting from far, far away; you dress up like a girl without worrying you'll be mistaken for straight. It's summer camp for kids who got beat up at summer camp. It's magic. Everything that makes me scowl in the real world is better here because we're all different, and therefore we're all the same.

To be honest, I'd take an R Family Cruise to Somalia; destination is an afterthought. The crowd is mixed, though there are more people our age in 2007—mid-20s to mid-30s. You find each other quickly.

On the Bahamas and Florida cruise, optional excursions include Universal Studios, historic Cocoa Beach or, while in the Bahamas, snorkeling and parasailing. We hit Key West at mid-afternoon, my skin feels like microwaved butter. A drag queen snatches our crowd from the street into a half-empty bar and cajoles Haviland into singing "Like a Prayer" karaoke, while patrons color of orange rinds and coffee stare, languid and awe-struck. We film and cheer.

The 2007 talent includes Erasure, Sandra Bernhard, Judy Gold and a revival of *Annie* starring Broadway's Annie, Andrea McArdle. The Family Pride coalition hosts a panel and Sharon Gless participates in full Debbie Novonty costume (as her "proud gay mom" character from *Queer as Folk*). I practically hyperventilate. It's cool here that I have a gay mom, too; it's almost assumed. It's Gay Opposite Day all the time.

Heather and I hit happy hour always—we dash across the deck in our bathing suits to make it before 6 p.m. It's *The Amazing Race* with babies as obstacles; we're running down to the icy-cool bar, we're picking up friends on the way and we're all around the bar like bees to nectar if nectar was two-for-\$9.

Mid-trip, Heather and I get the idea to put on a staged reading of a sitcom I've been writing with a buddy, and McArdle reads the lead. It's a writer's dream—so much accessible talent. Later that night (but there is no time, really), I'm IM-ing my co-writer from the overpriced Internet cafe while Ross the Intern awaits the upload of his Rosie vlog. It takes so long it's hard to believe that someone had the patience to leak Rosie's anti-Hasselback shtick from the first night's performance onto YouTube.

In Grand Stirrup Cay, the water's the same color that water is in dreams—clean aqua. Our limbs echo and ripple underwater as we paddle out and lie in the sun all afternoon, just drifting, miles from home. At night there's a luau, drunken dancing and glowsticks. We hear two women having sex in the ocean. We'd thought one of them was straight. Well, she has her fun. We all have our fun.

There's drama, because we're lesbians, and that's how these things go. Ambiguous couplings, fights in public, tales of morning-after walks-of-shame, like Jen's, in a mini-skirt and boots, to the front desk to replace a demagnetized key card.

They spin pop hits all night in the Spinnaker Lounge. This is where you can find people, or else on the pool deck or the Market Café. I feel like we're always wearing exactly what we want to wear, always a little tanner, less hungry and more relaxed. There's always something to do—too many things to do, sometimes. However, there is plenty included in the ticket price—we only spend extra on alcohol and Internet access.

I never expected to love something that sold plush toys of its logo, photographed you every 10 minutes or hosted Pirate Night. But I get it, why everyone cried at the end of "All Aboard," like they'd died and gone to heaven, only to be thrust mercilessly back into the rest of the world. It's hard, re-adjusting to the world. I often think, "Wow, I didn't realize there were so many hot gay girls in the city," and then I remember that not everyone's probably gay anymore.

Kelli says this: "Mostly, I believe that the magic onboard our ship is truly hard to define in words. It's an experience that'll transform you for a week into a place that feels free, open, wrapped in love and acceptance." See that? I totally buy it, every word. ■



Dreaming of tossing a line into a steady stream? More women than ever are taking quick fly-fishing trips on their weekend getaways. These easy, surefire tips will get you into waders in no time. — Lindsey J. Taylor

WHERE TO GO Elysia Resort & Lodge, Quesnal Lake, British

Columbia: Located in the Cariboo region of BC, this resort offers romantic getaways and water excursions. The women-only fly-fishing classes will help perfect your craft. (elysiaresort.com)

Amangani Resort, Jackson, Wyo.: This resort has it all. They cater to women fly fishers, and your urban girlfriend can stay inside and never know she's in the wilderness. (amanresorts.com)

Cedar Pines RV Resort, Dunsmuir, Calif.: This beautifully women-friendly resort lets you pull in a rig or pitch a tent and fish. Perfect for DIY dykes. (cedarpinesrvresort.com)

The Old Post and Village, Lake St. Joseph, Ontario: This quaint Canadian fishing village in northwest Ontario covers fishing from A to Z. Real, rural and fisherwomen-friendly. (oldpost.com)

WHO TO GO WITH

There are dozens of women's fishing clubs. Here's just a starter, but you can find more at womensflyfishing.net/clubs.

- Dame Juliana Anglers, Tempe, Ariz. (damejulianaanglers.com)
- Delaware Valley Women's Fly Fishing Association, Bryn Mawr, Penn. (dvwffa.org)
- Georgia Women Flyfishers, Loganville, Ga. (georgiaflyfishing.com)
- Women Flyfishers of Idaho, Boise, Idaho (wffid.com)
- Flygirls of Michigan, Royal Oak, Mich. (flygirls.ws)

WHEN TO GO

Depending on the type of fish you're trying to catch and the area you are in, different times of the year bring different bites to your line. January through May brings steelhead, and June through November is perfect for salmon. (neffguide.com)

WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU

There are accessories that you need and then there are those that you want. You will need a fly rod, a fly reel, waders, wading boots, fly lines and backing, flies and fly tying. Things that are nice to have: sunglasses, binoculars, a camera, a hat, a vest and a fanny pack. Online stores that specialize in women's fly-fishing accessories include Patagonia, Cabelas and Orvis. (orvis.com, cabelas.com, and patagonia.com)