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LGBT

Just Like a Woman
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Fluidwords
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A women's studies major interviews an elderly nursing home resident who shares her story about two elderly Jewish widows. Evie and Ruthie had fallen in love as teens. Ruthie's mom nicknamed them "The Babka Sisters" as they were inseparable and loved babka, a sweet dessert. When one of their mothers found them having sex, each was told that the other never wanted to see her again. They reunited years later after raising their families and burying their husbands. Ruthie and Evie shared their lives together for sixteen years, proving that the young aren't the only ones to enjoy being lesbians.

"The Babka Sisters" is one of eight selections read by the author on this audiotape. Newman, who has published thirty-five books, selected the pieces as favorites from her fifteen-year writing career. She is perhaps best known for her children's book, Heather Has Two Mommies, which has been a major target for library banning by members of the religious right. It remains a classic for gay and lesbian parents and their young children.

Newman's stories cover topics such as: a daughter being raised by two lesbian moms, a lesbian dealing with the AIDS death of a gay male friend, teen love, dating, old age, confronting breast cancer and its fears, facing menopause and growing older, family issues, and coming out.

The protagonist in one tale is an old Jewish man who takes a writing course from a lesbian. By observing her students, the teacher hopes to better understand her own parents, who disowned her when she came out. "A Letter to Harvey Milk," written in the voice of the elderly man typifies Newman's talent for bringing to life her New York, Jewish characterizations. "You had your camera shop, your own business. What's bad? You couldn't keep still about the boys? You wasn't satisfied until the whole world knew? Harvey Milk, with the big ears and the big ideas, had to go make himself something. A big politician!"

Hearing Newman read each narrative aloud in her vivid accent and varied tonality provides a sense of heritage and tradition for lesbians who grew up Jewish or in the Northeast.

Others may not identify quite as quickly with Newman's ethnicity. (One wonders how many of these stories are autobiographical.)

The author's passion, humor, and journey through self-examination should strike a chord with any listener. Her enthusiasm for the material draws listeners into each story.