

Talk to Me

Zoe Amos

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*In the sensitive contemporary romance novel *Talk to Me*, a woman decides what she wants out of her second act.*

In Zoe Amos's LGBTQ+ romance novel *Talk to Me*, a woman who's separated from her husband forms a romantic attraction to her boss.

After having an affair with a woman, Claire realizes that she is more attracted to women than to men. She leaves her husband and looks for work after her long stint as a stay-at-home mom. She winds up at a local radio station, where she's hired by Marly, the charismatic host of *Gayline*, San Diego's main show for the LGBTQ+ community. While learning how to be Marly's assistant, Claire navigates her new feelings of attraction to women, as well as her husband's attempts to win her back.

The story progresses over the few months it takes for Claire to acclimate to her new job and her new apartment in sunny San Diego. She comes to terms with her newfound lesbian identity, and addresses the fact that her teenage daughter is horrified that she works with an out and outrageous lesbian. Still, Claire's self-determination inspires her daughter's friend to come out later in the book, showing that actions have consequences—sometimes positive ones!

To complement its rootedness in radio, the book is full of lively verbal exchanges: between Marly and Claire, between Marly and her listeners, and between Claire and the listeners whose calls she screens. Loaded with bold imagery, the writing is clean and accessible. Marly's voice is snappy and clever, which intimidates Claire at first. But Claire finds her own voice on the show and begins to discover what she wants out of life. The personalities and voices of recurring callers are consistent; one frequent caller issues bomb threats, leading to an official FBI investigation and a tense atmosphere.

Claire takes months to come to terms with the fact that she is unhappy in her marriage, and that she wants to act on her attraction to Marly. Her development is relatable, and her moments of vulnerability and bravery contrast well with times where she overthinks things and retraces old habits. Further, the slow build of Claire and Marly's romance takes on a life of its own, leading to a satisfying finale.

In the sensitive contemporary romance novel *Talk to Me*, a woman decides what she wants out of her second act.

JEANA JORGENSEN (June 15, 2021)

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