



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 28**  
**“Queer, Kinky, Funny: ‘In at the Deep End’ with Kate Davies”**  
**June 24, 2021**

**Author Kate Davies talks about “In at the Deep End,” her novel about a woman’s pivot from hetero monogamy to a queer relationship, and the resulting deep-dive into London’s kink and poly scenes. This wry, insightful, and sexy story is sure to liven up your summer reading list.**

**Host: Karen Yates**

**Guests: Kate Davies**

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Kate Davies

And then after I finished it, I read it back and thought, "Oh my god, I can't. This is stuff I'd never say out loud. I can't put this in my book." But actually, when I read it, I thought, "Those are the most powerful scenes in the book. I can't take them out." You know, the stuff that you're embarrassed to say, other people will read it and feel seen, or represented, or like someone has spoken their thoughts out loud.

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation, or relationship style, based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates.

Today I interview Kate Davies about her witty, prize-winning novel "In at the Deep End," which chronicles a young woman's coming out and immediate jump into the kink and poly scene of London. Keep listening.

If you're a Wild & Sublime fan and look forward to our episodes, keep the sexy ball rolling by joining The Afterglow, our Wild & Sublime community on Patreon. For as little as \$5 a month, you get a bonus Q&A session with experts every month where you get to ask the questions, my weekly audio creator notes, and more. Plus, you'll get the

tingly tickle in your tailbone in knowing you are part of the sex-positive zeitgeist rolling through the 21st century. Zeitgeist — that means big. If a monthly membership is not your thing, consider throwing some bucks in the tip jar in appreciation for our work. More info is in the show notes.

Hey folks, summer book month at Wild & Sublime continues, Pride-style. I was fortunate enough to have a friend recently tip me off to "In at the Deep End," the smart and wry coming-out tale penned by London author Kate Davies. And I was only about a quarter of the way through when I knew I had to reach out to her to get an interview, because I just loved this book. In the novel, we follow the character of Julia as she stumbles through life and hetero romance until she realizes she's gay, jumping headlong into a relationship with Sam, a charismatic, kinky, and poly top. Published by Borough Press. Reviewers have called "In at the Deep End" "laugh-out-loud funny," "poignant," "energetically explicit," among many raves. The New York Journal of books said, "Fabulous. Davies ushers in a new era of queer fiction, one in which queerness is just one part of a human story." I so agree. "In at the Deep End," a debut novel, also won the 2020 Polari Prize, the UK award for novels exploring LGBTQ+ themes. Kate Davies is a London-based novelist, screenwriter, and author of children's books, and I'm excited for you to learn more about her and her novel. Enjoy.

Kate Davies, welcome.

Kate Davies

Thank you very much.

Karen Yates

I'm so looking forward to our conversation about your book, "In at the Deep End." I noticed on your website, you wrote this little preamble to the book club questions that your US publisher had done. And you wrote, "Here are some book club questions for 'In at the Deep End' that my brilliant US publisher put together, but feel free to discuss fisting, broken penises, terrible MDMA experiences, et cetera, too."

Kate Davies

You don't want to limit people's options, do you?

Karen Yates

I know, you never should! And I'm sure there were book clubs all around the UK that went for it, right? So, one thing that I found so interesting were all the callouts for your book said, 'Oh, it's filthy.' And I'm reading it, and I don't know if I'm broken, but I just

thought it was a pretty candid and refreshing description of sex. And there's a lot of sex in the book.

Kate Davies

Yeah. Thank you! I know, I don't like the word "filthy," because that implies that sex is dirty, doesn't it? Or that different sex is dirty. And I didn't like that when I read those. I included them, because I suppose it means, like, "full of sex." But at the same time, I don't think it's a great word to use.

Karen Yates

Yeah, like, early on in the show, I banned the word "naughty." No one could use the word "naughty." Because I'm like, it's so toddlerlike, "Oh, it's so naughty!"

Kate Davies

Totally. Exactly, exactly. It's a judgment — you know, in that word is a judgment, isn't there?

Karen Yates

But the sex is candid. And it's also — what I loved about it, it's very unforced. So it felt — in reading it, it felt super natural. And I was wondering: As you were writing the book, was it just a natural roll-out for you? Or did it feel very intentional? What was your decision around the amount of sex and the candidness of the sex?

Kate Davies

To me, it was a major part of the story. I mean, the book is quite autobiographical. I started writing it quite soon after I came out. And like, as soon as I had sex with a woman, I was like, "This is amazing! I can't believe how good this can be. I've never really read about this. Let me, like, record it." So, part of it was wanting to record it, and express how great I thought it was. In the novel, Julia, the main character, gets into a kind of controlling relationship with Sam, the other main character, and sex plays such a major part in their relationship and in the power dynamic in their relationship. So to me, it was a way of expressing that power dynamic through the sex scenes. And I think — yeah, when I started writing it, the sex scenes just came quite naturally. I was reading a novel around the time I started writing it, called "Wetlands." Have you ever read that? By Charlotte Rush?

Karen Yates

No.

Kate Davies

It's a very graphic novel. It's by a German writer, but it was published in the States. And like, the UK cover had words like, "Disgusting! The most horrendous book I've ever read! Yuck, ugh!" Kind of like, revolted reviews were put on the cover, because that was how you felt reading. It wasn't just sexually graphic, it was just graphic in all kinds of ways, incredibly shocking. And I remember sitting on the underground in London reading it, and like, hoping no one was really it over my shoulders. Because it was really — it made me laugh out loud, it was so shocking. But I think it took away a layer of self-consciousness from me. That novel was so graphic that I became more graphic in my writing. Because I was reading it when I was writing this novel. And then after I'd finished it, I read it back and thought, "Oh, my God, I can't. This is stuff I'd never say out loud! I can't put this in my book." But actually, when I read it, I thought, "Those are the most powerful scenes in the book, I can't take them out." And I always feel like you should write stuff that you're embarrassed to say out loud. Because that's exciting. You know, the stuff that you're embarrassed to say, other people will read it and feel seen, or represented, or like someone has spoken their thoughts out loud. So yeah, I wanted to keep it in.

Karen Yates

Oh, yeah, I totally get what you're saying. Like, I cannot imagine the book without the sex. I mean, when you just said that, I'm like, "Yeah, I cannot do that." And the main character in her journey of coming out, and then really plunging into the queer world, the sex is such a part of it. It's her expressiveness. It's her learning about herself. And it becomes a type of language for her, right? And her way of processing her life is sexually, because, as you showed us in the earlier chapters, sex with men for her was very problematic, to say the least. And so suddenly, she has this whole new dimension of herself that she gets to explore. And it's very juicy, and it's fabulous. And the other thing I have to say is I related so much to the relationship she had with Sam, which was so sexual, because I think when you plunge into those kinds of relationships that are, well, a little problematic, where sex is the defining aspect of the relationship, you kind of throw aside all other concerns. [laughs] Suddenly, at a certain point, you're like, "Oh, dear, I am really in deep! I'm in at the deep end! Right? And how the fuck do I make sense of my life now?" So, you know, you talked a little bit about "Wetlands." But how do you — I mean, this is, again, the thing I loved about your book: the sex wasn't forced. Like, I never felt like, "Oh, Kate Davies is doing this just for effect." How do you see — not to call anyone out — but how do you see some of your other peers writing about sex?

Kate Davies

That's an interesting question. I suppose I don't read a lot of novels that are full of sex. I don't read erotica. And some people have described this novel as erotica, which it absolutely is not. And that also makes — just because it has sex in it doesn't mean it's erotica, right? It's an honest — it's a part of life. But I love, for instance, Sarah Waters, the way she writes about sex, I think is brilliant. And again, her — well, "Tipping the Velvet" is one long, sexy romp through Victorian London. But again, it feels — it's like, joyful, and expressive, and each of the sort of sexual encounters she has in that book is important for her journey, I suppose, the main character's journey. So I think she does it really well. Who else does it? I don't know. I haven't really been thinking about how other people write sex scenes. There's an award ceremony in London called the Bad Sex Awards, which is run by a magazine, a literary magazine, called the Literary Review. And I went to it once, again, while I was writing this novel. And basically, the people who run this magazine think that literary fiction shouldn't contain sex scenes, because they think it ruins good novels. But anyway, they do have this competition every year where they read out sex scenes from, like, good novels that have been ruined by this bad sex scene. And they are reeeally bad sex scenes. Like, comically bad, terrible. And I realized that what made them so bad was the terrible metaphors and terrible similes that were being used during sex scenes. There was one that was like, "He burrowed into her like a rat into wet sand," and you're thinking, "What, sorry?" And there was another one, you know, "He pinned her to the back bed like a lepidopterist pinning a butterfly." I mean, it's all kind of like, revolting, just revolting, you know? So I took from that. And from, you know, when I was at university, I studied "Fanny Hill." I don't know if it's, like, an 18th century novel.

Karen Yates

Oh, yeah.

Kate Davies

But it's all sort of like, throbbing members, and marble machines, and wounds. And these like, euphemisms for parts of the body that just make the whole thing seem ridiculous. So I decided, from all of this, the way to write about sex was to be extremely direct, and to use the proper words for body parts, and to not use any similes or metaphors, really, just to say what's happening, because then it's not embarrassing. Then it's correct. And it's kind of sexy — it can be sexy, or it's just, like, honest. What makes a sex scene bad is when it you feel like it's trying to be sexy, but it's revolting.

Karen Yates

So let me have you read the excerpt now.

Kate Davies

Sure. Okay. This comes from fairly late in the novel, when Julia and her girlfriend Sam go to visit Sam's other partner who lives in Lyon, in France. And they've just been to a sex party the night before, and they've had a threesome that Julia didn't entirely want to have.

[reading] "I didn't say much at breakfast. The others chatted about the sex party—about how they shouldn't have drunk so much, and how much fun they'd had with the 24/7 sub/Dom couple who were experts in Japanese rope bondage, and about their friend Sylvie, who burned all her arm hair off during fire play. I focused on the coffee and croissants and cheese and ham and jam — raspberry — all of which were extremely restorative and delicious.

"And Julia," Virginie said, "You were so hot."

"Thank you," I said, looking down. I'd spilled jam on the table.

"That reminds me," Virginie said, standing up and walking to her overcrowded bookshelves. She pulled out a worn paperback and handed it to me. Sam leaned over to see what it was, and nodded approvingly. I looked at the cover and almost laughed—it featured hyper-real illustrations of naked, mulleted people holding hands, apparently all orgasming in unison. There was a cat on there too, for some reason. The title, "Polyamory for Beginners: Infinite Pleasure, Minimal Pain," was in a font that looked worryingly like Comic Sans.

"Someone should reissue it," Sam said, correctly interpreting my reaction.

"This book changed my life," Virginie said. "It freed me from the pressure of being monogamous."

"Right," I said. "Thank you."

"You will love it," Charlotte said, smiling at me. "I used to be a very jealous person. But this book, it totally cured me of all that!"

"It's pretty much the nonmonogamy Bible," Sam said.

"Well, I'm looking forward to reading it," I said. And I was. I wanted to be cured."

Karen Yates

If I haven't mentioned already, this book is really funny. And there were many points when I just laughed out loud. And it occurred to me — because as we were setting up this interview, I think I had like, a couple of chapters left, so I was kind of cramming the book. And I was like, I need to go back and really read this book slowly, because even in preparing for the interview and going back, there were things that I had totally missed that just dropped in. It's so wry, and I think you even mentioned that the character of Julia, the main character, is different from you in the fact that she is dry. She is so understated. Do you find, yourself, that you are a naturally funny person? I think you are, just based on your book club question preamble. [laughs]

I think I've always been interested in comedy. From a young age, I loved stand-up. I was obsessed with Eddie Izzard, like absolutely obsessed with him, completely in love. And when I first started writing, writing serious fiction felt kind of embarrassing. I felt too self-conscious doing it. So the first sort of stuff I wrote were sitcom scripts, because I could write dialogue, and you know, writing funny stuff felt less somehow embarrassing. I felt like if I was trying to write serious fiction, I was sort of saying that I thought that this was good and literary writing, or if I was being funny, it felt lighter, it felt less like I was trying too hard, somehow. So yeah, so I've always written — I think there's going to be comedy and everything I do, I think,

Oh, good. Good. You know, based on your excerpt, we see that polyamory does play a fairly large role, at least in the second half of the book. So the main character's partner, Sam, is polyamorous, and this leads to a whole host of issues. And I think your novel is a great illustration of how not to do polyamory. I certainly could relate a lot to Julia's, like, first comprehension of what was being asked of her. I was like, I remember when I became poly, it was like, "Whaaaaat? You got to be fucking kidding me!" And then we have, you know, of course, Sam — and I love how Sam's girlfriend in Lyon is, like, this fabulous French babe. I mean, the worst nightmare anyone could possibly have. So you made this decision to bring in poly as a major plot point. Why did you decide to do that, and have you had poly experiences in your life?

Kate Davies

Yeah, so it's based on a few relationships. The relationship in the novel is based on a few relationships that I've had with various people. And one of the relationships was poly, and it didn't go great. And that isn't entirely my ex-girlfriend's fault. It was a mismatch between — I, like Julia in the novel, was like, "Why not? You know, I'm a lesbian now! Ooh, I'm a lesbian, so maybe I, you know, maybe I just like to have sex

with everyone at the same time! I don't know." Like, I kind of felt like I'd thrown all of the rules out the window. So like, "Let's give it a go!" And I don't think she had ever been with anyone who hadn't been poly before. So like, there was just a big mismatch of like, me not knowing what I was getting myself into and then freaking out completely, and her not knowing how to deal with someone not taking it slowly enough, probably. So, she is not Sam. But like, that was just a really interesting experience in my life. And I kind of wanted to explore that. And I wanted to explore that, along with the idea about the controlling dynamic in a same-sex relationship. I thought it was an interesting combination of things. So yes, I have had one experience in it. I wish I could have done it. But I just couldn't. And maybe if it had been a different relationship, I could have done, if it had been taken more slowly. Or if — I don't know. Maybe if I'd been older, or something like that. But at that time in my life, I couldn't beat the jealousy. I just couldn't do it.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I think you bring up a great point, because this idea of just taking it scattershot — because I think when you're in — at least I could say for myself — when you're in a very open spot in your life, where you're very open sexually, you're like, "Hey, let's explore! Let's try all the things!" You know? And you learn over time your own guidelines, what works for you and what doesn't. And I think I see this in polyamorous situations, that it is a long trajectory before you really understand what works for you. And it's so — there's so many ways to do it. And it's just not always like, what one partner says, or what they're kind of laying down. You have to figure it out for yourself.

Kate Davies

Yeah, exactly. I was very young when I was in this relationship, and Julia, definitely, is young and completely in love. So the power imbalance is off anyway — like, she'll do anything that her girlfriend is asking of her. She can't stand up for her — and I couldn't, I've never been very good at it, to be honest, standing up for myself or my own wants and desires. I'm too eager to please, to be honest. And I think that does not work, when you're trying to be in a polyamorous relationship. You need to be honest. And you need to be aware of your own boundaries, and to be able to express them. And that's the problem that Julia has in the book, is not being able to do that, I think.

Karen Yates

I'll return to my interview with Kate Davies in a moment. Did you know the Wild & Sublime website provides a resource listing for sexual seekers? Whether you're looking for a sexological body worker or sexologist to work with, or simply to connect to a greater sex positive community, check out our show notes for the link.

Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at [fullcolorlifetherapy.com](http://fullcolorlifetherapy.com). If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter, showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at [info@wildandsublime.com](mailto:info@wildandsublime.com). I now continue with my interview with author Kate Davies. In the second half, we talk about her novel's kink scenes, the nature of controlling relationships, and more.

And let's talk about the kink scenes for a moment too, because that goes hand in hand with what you're saying. You know, Sam, Julia's lover, is kinky, and we see various scenes in sex clubs where there's a BDSM component. That's sort of the background scene in a lot of things. But then we've got this really nonconsensual kink scene later in the book. And it's so funny, because I was going back and I saw one of Sam's first comments to Julia is, "Yeah, I'm into kink. It's all about consent." And I'm like, "Oh, yeah, right!" So I love that you included kink, again, in a very unforced way. I mean, we watched Julia walk through this, like, "Oh my god, she's got an enema bag," or, "Oh my god, I'm being fisted," or whatever. Well, that isn't like, super kinky. But you know what I mean? Like, walk through these situations. And by the way, I just realized that sentence, it just came out of my mouth. Well, fisting, that's not super kinky. I'm aware that some listeners are like, "Whaaat?" Anyway, yeah, talk about the kink! Talk about was this also a decision to sort of work with this idea of controlling relationships? And especially if you throw kink in, what that looks like?

Kate Davies

Exactly. Again, it was something that I was exploring. And that was kind of amazing. I mean, I thought it was so much fun. And I didn't know you could have this much fun. So I kind of wanted to write about it anyway. But then when I was thinking about writing about a controlling relationship, I thought it was really, really interesting to bring in kink. It's a really complicated dynamic in kink in general, because you're consenting to give away your power, I suppose. You're consenting to enter a world where there are rules, but you're consenting to kind of do things, or explore things that might, to some outside people, look like abuse. But you're in on it, you're playing a role. But I thought it was really interesting to think about what happens when you are in on it, and you are agreeing to it, but you don't really want to agree to it. And what about when the balance of your relationship is already slightly off? So, can you actually consent to it? And I just thought it was an interesting thing to bring into that discussion about controlling relationships and abuse, I suppose.

Karen Yates

Yeah, I thought you really etched out what a controlling relationship looks like very well, because — not that Julia is the suspect narrator, but we're with her, walking through this relationship with this fabulous woman. I mean, Sam is fabulous. And who wouldn't want to be in a relationship with Sam, right? And so then you're having the sex, and it's like, oh, wow, awesome. And then you're — I mean, there's little red flags, right? And there's a couple more red flags. And then you're kind of realizing — at least I didn't, like, oh, wow, she's totally plunged into this relationship. And then you have the alienating the friends and the parents, and alienating what's important to Julia in her life. And I thought it was just really well done. Talk a little bit about that. The decision to go with this — let's look at controlling relationships. I mean, has that been part of your experience? Or your background?

Kate Davies

Unfortunately, yes. Repeatedly in my life, that is a pattern I have played out over and over again, with my first boyfriend, with a girlfriend, in work — like, I've had controlling relationships with my bosses. Like, maybe three or four of them, and they were all women. And I thought that was really interesting. It was just a pattern that I seem to get into, and didn't know why I was repeating it. But I had to kind of replay that pattern about — you know, I don't know, numerous times, before I realized how unhealthy it was, and how to look out for the signals. And now I'm sort of hyper-vigilant to anything that remotely seems like it might be at all controlling. But it is hard to recognize it when you're in it, really hard to realize what's happening, especially when there's, like, some gaslighting going on, and people are telling you that you've said things that you are sure you haven't said, but you're very trusting person, so maybe they're right. Maybe they're right, maybe you did say it. You know, that thing of questioning yourself is really, really difficult to see what's happening in the moment. And so, from a distance, I wanted to write about that, and I wanted to record it. And I wanted to show the steps. It's not like a nonfiction, like, 'how to spot a controlling relationship' guide. But I just thought it was something that I hadn't seen in a novel about two women before. Though, I know that there's now that memoir, isn't it, "In the Dream House," which I haven't read yet. But I know that's also about a lesbian controlling relationship. Yeah. So, I just thought it was really interesting, because like Julia, when I first came out, I was like, Oh, I'm going to move — you know, I'd had dodgy dynamics with men. And I was like, Oh, this is amazing. I'm going to be with a woman! I've like, opted out the patriarchy, the sex I have is going to be so feminist. Even if I get married, it won't be a patriarchal thing. It's going to be great. Everything will be so equal and lovely! And you know, the first sexual experience I had with a woman was so equal and lovely. And I was like, Oh, this is amazing. And then it turned out that wasn't true, which I should

have known, because of the bosses who had been manipulative and slightly abusive, were female. But I didn't. It just didn't occur to me it could happen in a relationship with two women. And so that's why I wanted to write about it as well.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Yeah. What I really liked was, again, this sense of sort of waking up with Julia. Like, that's how I felt — I was waking up with her. Like, oh, oh, my God, this is fucked up. This is really fucked up! Just as she's realizing, this is — or we're watching her friends being like, "This is fucked up, Julia, stop it!" You know? And then some of the dramatic things that happen near the end of the book, it's like, yeah, this stuff happens. This is real. You know, that kind of like, over the top emotion, and situations, and like, you know, walking in the dark and, like, trying to find a cab and all that stuff. I wanted to ask you a bit about the butch-femme dynamic. And I was talking with a Wild & Sublime Patreon member, and we were talking about butches and femmes. And she was like, Yeah, I'd like to see more of that discussed on the show. So here's the golden moment. Within the book — well, first off, let's go back a little bit. You identify as queer.

Kate Davies

And lesbian. Both.

Karen Yates

So do you see them interchangeable? This is what I wanted to ask you: like, is queer for you — what calls you too queer, versus the word lesbian? Do they have two separate kind of meanings?

Kate Davies

Yeah, they do. I feel like lesbian is about being attracted to women, and queer feels slightly broader. So I suppose — but also, it feels like a safer word, which I know it might not for everyone. But for me, when I was younger, like at school, lesbian was an insult. Lesbian was a dirty word. It felt like an ugly word. And when I came out, it felt really important to claim that word, and it was a hard word to use to describe myself, because it had been used as a sort of shameful word when I was growing up. Whereas queer, I was never — I mean, I know a lot of people find queer a very, like — that was a term of abuse in their childhoods, which it wasn't when I was growing up. So, that feels like a safer word almost. But I like queer, because it's part of a broader community. It's also less exclusive, like it includes sort of nonbinary identities and trans iden— I feel like, yeah, it's a broader, more inclusive term, and I do class myself as queer, but I'm also a lesbian. I don't know - I kind of like both.

Karen Yates

Yeah. I see "queer," for myself, personally, I see "queer" as a worldview — you know, which is maybe an older context of the word, maybe coming out of the '80s. It's like, how do you look at the world? I look at the world with a queer ethos, I suppose. So within the book, characters describe each other as butch and femme, or having butch-femme characteristics. And I suppose where I want to go with this is, do you think the butch-femme dynamic is still alive and well?

Kate Davies

I don't know if it is. When I first came out, it wasn't really something — I never really identified as femme. But I was always attracted to masculine-presenting women, androgynous people. But again, when I was growing up, butch was a term of abuse. So I would never have — I never heard anyone, proudly claimed the word butch. And then I met a group of sort of older — not that much older than me, but sort of maybe 10 years older than me — this group of lesbians who had come out in their teens, so in the '90s, and they were very much involved in like, a butch-femme scene. It was interesting, because they defined me as femme, whereas I would never have put that label on myself. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed being a femme. I enjoyed feeling feminine, and I enjoyed going out with butches who identified as butch. But I don't know. And I remember — again, this is a long time ago now, like maybe 2010 — I went to a club night call "Save the Butch," because people felt like butches were under threat. Yeah, I don't have that many friends who identify as butch. I do have some, but I don't have that many. I think perhaps people are less keen on labels. And also, I know that people — I was researching, there was a lesbian club in London in the — it was open in the 50s, called the Gateways Club. It was very famous, lots of amazing people went there. Dusty Springfield used to go there, for instance. That was a very famous butch-femme club, and it was extremely old-fashioned. The femmes gave the butches their money. It was, like, based on straight relationships. And that was so interesting, reading about the history of this club, because in the '70s, a group of feminists raided the club, like, to free the femmes from the tyranny of the butch! Like, you know, and I kind of hadn't thought about — I didn't really know any of that history when I was exploring these dynamics. And it was really, really interesting to read about that later. Because I did — I'm really excited about people identifying however they want to identify. But I didn't like to be made to feel feminine in a way that was sexist. I don't want that. And I think that's like an old-school, from the '50s dynamic that I think has pretty much gone away. I like to think. I don't know. Obviously, not entirely.

Karen Yates

Yeah, it's interesting, because, you know, now we — I was talking with a friend the other day who runs a gender studies department at a university, and she was really talking about, you know, now gender is so much more performative. And so playing at, you know, allowing creativity in gender expression, without really locking into an identity. And that transmasculine, terms like transmasculine, are really overtaking the ideas of butchness. But it's a very interesting, fluid time we're in now. And the butch-femme has come and gone — just like you said, like, the '50s, there was this more like, boom, patriarchal butch-femme, then destroyed, then resurrected in the '90s, now again in a serious flux. But there's still the expressiveness of the masculine in some regard, right? That's pretty neat. What's the queer scene like in London specifically?

Kate Davies

It's great. I mean, currently, it's resting, I would say. Coming out of hibernation. No, it's really, really exciting. You know, I'm married, and I'm getting on in years, so I haven't been out as much as I used to go out. But there's like, so many brilliant parties, especially around East London. What's sad is that when I was first out, there were like a couple of like, women-only bars, lesbian bars, and they don't exist anymore. So that's a shame. But I think that's happening everywhere, isn't it? As people are meeting online, like, bricks and mortar places to meet are shrinking. But again, I think it's becoming more fluid. So again, when I first came out, there were, like, spaces for men and spaces for women, whereas now it feels like it's more a bit more of a free for all. And I think things are getting queerer in general, if that makes sense. And things are getting queerer in terms of gender identity as well, which I don't think was the case when I first came out. There weren't as many people identifying as nonbinary. Like, I went to a queer football club for a bit last year, and of course, everyone said their pronouns at the beginning of the session. But like, when I went to the lesbian football club, when I first came out, that was not a thing. I think things have really moved on and become, I hope, more embracing of different identities than they were, even 10 years ago.

Karen Yates

So, your book, "In at the Deep End," won the Polari Prize, which is each year awarded to a writer exploring LGBTQ+ issues. I'm interested in finding out — after you were bestowed that prize, did life change for you? Were people looking at you as "the lesbian voice"? Or the queer voice? Like, did you feel the heaviness of that? Or was it totally like, wheee?

Kate Davies

It was more wheee. I think— [laughter] Me saying, like, "What is happening in the queer scene in London?" I don't know, because I haven't been out for a year. The prize came last year, in September 2020, so not that much has happened since then, really. You know, I did one live event in person, and it was the most fun. It was at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, which is a really old, famous gay club in London. And we did a reading, and it was literally like, the best thing I'd ever done. It was a massive party. It was brilliant. And then we had another lockdown. So, nothing has really changed. So I've done a few kind of podcasts, and things like that. But I don't think it's massively changed. Now, I don't think I am seen as the lesbian voice. Which is good! Because I am just one of them.

Karen Yates

Talk a little bit about the work you're doing now. I saw that you're working on a novel.

Kate Davies

Yeah, I'm working on a new novel. It's taking me a long time. I find novels very hard to write. I'm writing a novel about donor conception. So I'm donor conceived myself, and I'm queer. And I'm hopefully going to have kids. So I wanted to write about that from various different angles. My first novel, "In at the Deep End," is a first-person novel. So it's very much from one person's point of view. And so this one, I wanted to write from a few different points of views. It follows a woman called Lena, who discovers on Christmas Day through a DNA test, as many people do, that she's donor-conceived, and sets out to find her biological father, the donor. And it also looks at her father, who is her dad, but not her biological father, and how he deals with that situation. And it also looks at Lena's sister, Alison, who is a lesbian, and who is trying to have children with her wife, and how she deals with knowing that she's donor-conceived when her sister thinks donor conception is completely unacceptable and unethical. And she doesn't feel like that, and feels like it's the only way she can have children. So I kind of wanted to look at that, because I feel like I'm both of those. I don't think it's unethical, but I think there are unethical things about the fertility industry. So I try to look at both sides of that. And also, because I love to write about Greek things, Lena finds out one of her half siblings, her half brother, and doesn't tell him that she's his half sister, and gets kind of obsessed with him. So that happens as well.

Karen Yates

A little Greek tragedy thrown in on the side, right?

Kate Davies  
A hint, yeah.

Karen Yates

Well, I really look forward to reading your next novel, because I just have to say to the listener, "In at the Deep End," highly recommend. Go out and read this book! It is marvelous. Kate Davies, thank you so much.

Kate Davies

Thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

Karen Yates

To learn more about Kate Davies go to the show notes. "In at the Deep End" is on our Bookshop site, a Wild & Sublime affiliate program. Buy the book on Bookshop and help independent booksellers and Wild & Sublime.

Kate Davies

The work I do in biofield tuning, an energy modality that uses sound waves to help repattern your bioelectric field, can support you in getting out of stuck behaviors and become more aware of different choices. If you're interested in working with me, or learning more about my weekly group biofield tuning sessions on Zoom on a variety of topics, including increasing intuition, expanding consciousness, balancing your energy centers and more, go to [karen-yates.com](http://karen-yates.com). That link is in the show notes.

Karen Yates

Well, that's it, folks. Have a delightfully pleasurable week. Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. Do you like what you heard? Then give us a nice review on your podcast app. You can follow us on social media @wildandsublime and sign up for newsletters at [wildandsublime.com](http://wildandsublime.com). I'd like to thank associate producer Julia Williams and design guru Jean-Francois Gervais. Theme Music by David Ben-Porat. This episode was edited by The Creative Imposter studios. Our media sponsor is Rebellious Magazine, feminist media, at [rebelliousmagazine.com](http://rebelliousmagazine.com).