

## Think Like a Freak

There were many men she wanted to talk to, some men more than others. They were the ones she wanted to have sex with, the men who went to the cafes and pubs that she did. It was easy because she knew that men loved to talk about themselves. When a man talked for a long time without a pause or an opening, she flicked her tongue around inside her mouth, from top to bottom, unseen.

She also wanted to talk to the men because she had read an article in *The Guardian* about how to 'Think Like a Freak' and wanted to discuss it. She had given some thought to the subject.

One day she managed to get a man from one of the cafés back to her flat, and they talked together about 'Freakonomics'. She told him she had also heard it referred to as 'Freakery', like it was a trick or some kind of witchcraft and she wanted to talk about that side of it too. "Think outside the box", the man said to her, and she frowned, her mouth tight.

From reading the article, she explained slowly, you were more likely to solve a problem if you approached it from an unexpected point of view. The article gave an example, she wiped her hand across her mouth, of a man who entered a hot dog eating contest.

There was a great deal of detail she wasn't interested in, about the man and his wife and his lack of money. Which was why he entered the competition. The important bit was - rather than focus on how to eat hotdogs faster, the man thought about a different way to eat the hotdogs; an approach that was more efficient. He ate the

sausage first, on its own, and then he dipped the bread roll in water (they were allowed water) and ate that last. He increased the competition record by 50%.

As the man in her flat changed the subject to talk about surgery he was due, she imagined how the hotdogs were stacked; the brown slippery sausage with a wiggly line of yellow mustard; the chewy, cloying bread.

She interrupted the man and told him that to think like a freak you take conventional wisdom and put it through the wringer. Could it be taught, like a counting trick? She stuck her fingers in and out. The man looked at her and she doubted herself. She decided she didn't want sex with him after all. It was bullshit.

It was also misleading. To her, a person who thought like a freak was someone who thought about torture or decapitation, rape, or blackness without sound. How to eat hotdogs faster, she decided, took it to a new level.

After a time of testing the argument at home, she ventured out to the bars and cafes and found men it was possible to have sex with. Many, she found, were happy to discuss alternative ways of thinking, and most men had no idea they already thought like a freak. She made notes, in pencil, on a cream pad and chewed the end, which split and peeled.

A week later, she was asked to leave the cafes and the bars after complaints from customers.

She thought about this, and considered how a freak would tackle the problem. Would he burn the place down? Would he shove shit under the door?

She sat for a while. A non-freak would do as she was told, too embarrassed and ashamed to think about anything else. A freak would tackle it from a different perspective.

The problem had to do with her desire to talk to men so she could have sex with them. She thought like a freak about it.

Some time later, when her synapses were less sparked, she went back to the cafes and the bars. The men wanted to talk to her, she could see it. So she sat in silence, to spite them.

After much waiting on the men, when it had grown dark outside and shadows were long and spidery; she could be found, face to the wall, sifting through their words she had trapped around her spinning tongue.

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