

## Misery Loves Comedy in Lesbian's Tale of Pregnancy

Memoir chronicles Miami woman's road to motherhood

By Tina Koenig

There's nothing like a one-liner to take the "un" out of an unhappy tale.

Miami writer and activist, Andrea Askowitz, makes the most of a wretched pregnancy in her funny debut memoir *My Miserable, Lonely, Lesbian Pregnancy*.

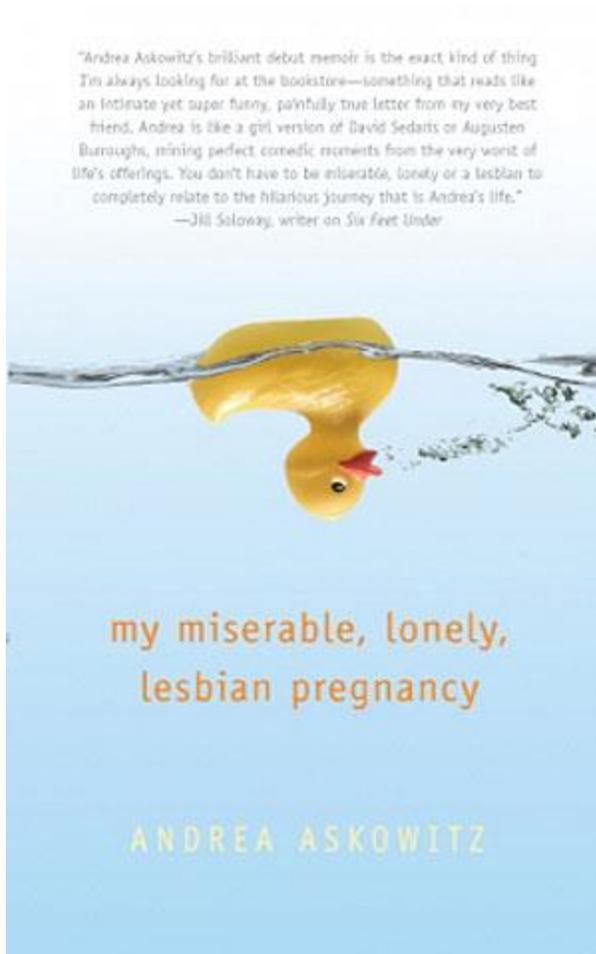
It doesn't take a lesbian to tell you that pregnancy, for some women, can be a time of dread. And that goes for the mother-to-be's friends and family too. Factor in only hormonal changes, and it's a miracle that more pregnant women don't end up on the evening news charged with first-degree murder.

Rosy glow notwithstanding, there aren't a lot of good side effects of pregnancy—unless you consider 24-7 nausea, depression, and constipation cool. Yet somehow, between regular calls to the porcelain throne, a bad breakup, and starting a bicycle advocacy organization, Askowitz managed to keep a pre-natal diary, which formed the bones of this, her first book.



Author Andrea Askowitz

*My Miserable, Lonely, Lesbian Pregnancy* briefly explores Andrea's early and high school years. (The author was raised in Miami and attended Palmetto High school.) Childhood and high school girlfriends imprint the story at various points: one childhood friend's death informs some of the author's pregnancy anxiety; and another represents the suburban nuclear family counterbalance to the writer's alternative lifestyle. Mostly though, the narrative picks up after Askowitz has moved to Los Angeles. She has reached her 30s, and is feeling pressured with the awareness that her biological clock is ticking.



Andrea Askowitz's mommy memoir

seems natural when contrasted to the nakedness and vulnerability women experience during childbirth.

Toward the end of the book, as the author reaches full-term in her pregnancy, she also comes to terms with the fact that she will never parent with longtime lover, Kate—a figure who advances and retreats into Askowitz's life like a coastal tide. In the end, it is childbirth that liberates Andrea from her depression. Her daughter, Tashi, becomes the center of her universe; she re-prioritizes her relationship issues and moves back to Miami.

In her book, Askowitz writes that she always wanted to be a mother. "I want to connect myself to generations before and after me. I want to belong to the society of mothers.... I'm almost 35; time is running out." Despite being single, she decides she can't wait any longer to have a child.

Lesbians have an obvious challenge where pregnancy is concerned: They have the will, but not the willy. The ticking clock operates erratically for lesbians as she noted at a reading: "It's not as if you can go out to a bar and find a man willing to sleep with a lesbian."

Like hetero couples with fertility problems, lesbians who want to have children need to find a donor—either someone they know or through a bank. Both options have advantages depending on how much information the couple wants to know about the donor. If the couple chooses a donor they know, they must take into account extended family, ex-spouses, and other children. Hint: If the grandparent count tips the double digits, find another donor. If the couple opts for a bank withdrawal, they may experience a loss of connection.

Askowitz's confessional take on turkey-baster wisdom is both educated and entertaining. The story is emotionally revealing, but not gritty. No part of the anatomy is left unmentioned, which

These days Askowitz's role is that of full-time mom and co-producer of the literary event, Lip Service, a spoken word performance held quarterly at Books and Books in Coral Gables. She's no longer lonely, sharing a meaningful relationship "with the love of my life, Victoria."

Askowitz may have written the bible on miserable pregnancies, but she's careful not to say anything else negative on the subject. Instead, she encourages others to give it a try. She even went back for seconds herself—a son, Sebastian, was born two weeks ago on January 14. This time the pregnancy wasn't so miserable because Askowitz was "the daddy" and her partner was the birth mother.



Participants of Lip Service, a spoken word event Askowitz co-produces

"My mother was very funny," said Askowitz. "She kept asking me to stop telling people that I was going to be a daddy. She said it made me sound like I had a mustache."

*My Miserable, Lonely, Lesbian Pregnancy* is an honest account of how one lesbian's desire for an alternative, self-made family drove nearly everyone around her a little mad. But as the author discovered, and reader will too, all families end up being conventional in the ways they live, love and laugh.

"My father always told me that it's your family that's most important. He's right. My parents are my heroes," she said. "We're different. We each have our own stories. That's what I want to write about next."

#### **What Andrea is Reading:**

*Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen  
*Name All the Animals* by Alison Smith  
*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

#### **Andrea's Favorite Authors**

Sylvia Plath  
Charlotte Brontë  
John Krakower

Have a comment about what you've read? E-mail [letters@miamiartzine.com](mailto:letters@miamiartzine.com).