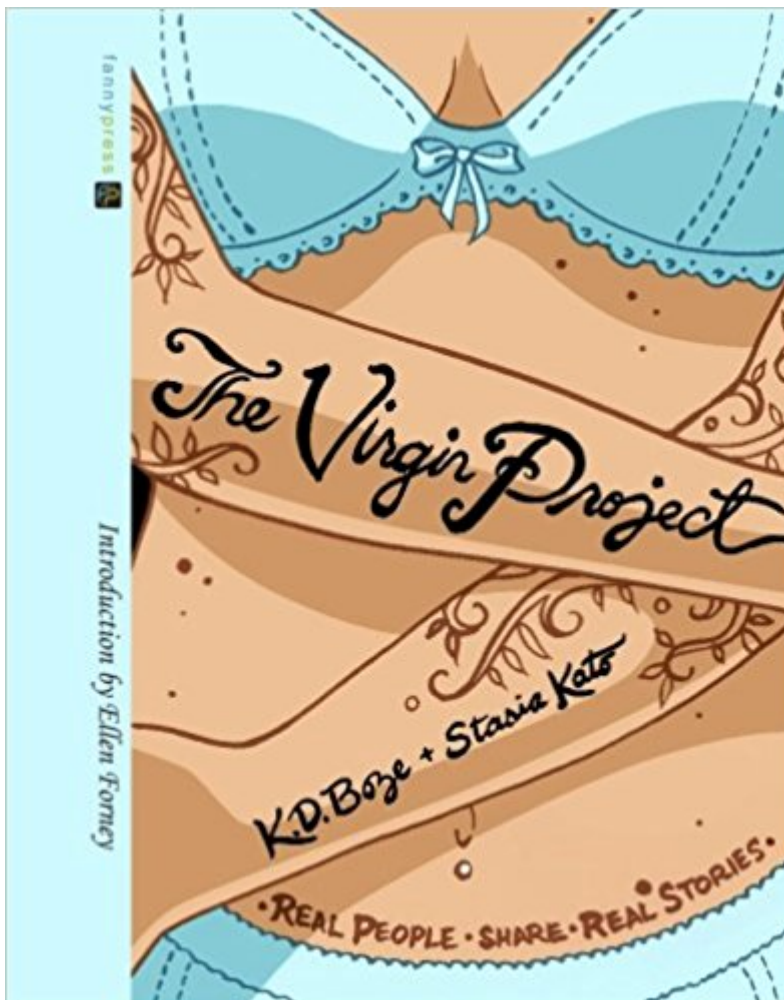


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# The Virgin Project



## Synopsis

Few human experiences are as universally shared, and yet as diverse, as the loss of virginity. The Virgin Project is a collection of first-time sexual encounters that illustrate a small sample of the breadth of human experience. Some people consider virginity as a prize to be given away. Some consider it a burden to be disposed of. For some, it was stolen and can never be restored. A few place little value on it at all. As one remarked, "I didn't lose my virginity any more than I 'lost' my pacifier. I outgrew it." The very moment of losing virginity among same sex couples can be a gray area and a topic of debate. Some focus instead on gaining their sexuality, and the opening of a new world of human experience. In one sense, losing one's virginity is an antiquated concept, because society no longer regards sex outside of marriage as shameful. Yet it still marks a passage from adolescence to adulthood for every generation. Most everyone remembers the "first time," some with regret, but many with fondness. According to Dr. Alex Comfort, writing in "More Joy of Sex," "Sex is the only social skill we do not learn by watching," which may account for the great variety in the stories. This first volume of The Virgin Project is the product of a collaboration between two artist-storytellers. They collected stories at various times and locations, including the Seattle Erotic Art Festival and the Victoria Erotic Art and Film Festival. All of the stories in this book are true. The names have been changed to protect privacy, and fictitious names were supplied by the people telling the stories, resulting in a few duplicate names. The variety of stories includes everything from teenage experimentation to wedding night nerves, including the humorous and tragic, gay and straight - all of them different. The introduction is by Ellen Forney, a professional cartoonist/illustrator/author and college instructor. In retelling these stories, artistic license has been used.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Illustrators K. D. Boze and Stasia Kato interviewed all sorts of people--gay, straight, bi; young, old, ancient--about their loss-of-virginity experiences. The illustrated stories in *The Virgin Project* are moving, hilarious, and heartbreaking in turn--sometimes all three at once--and knowing that everyone's first time is awkward, and that some folks' first times are unpleasant, and that most of us survive them, might be good for your virgin, FIRST. It couldn't hurt you to be reminded of those things, either." Dan Savage, *The Stranger* "One of the most interesting books to cross my desk in recent months ... filled with fascinating narratives of an experience common to most people, yet infinitely varied in its details. Some of the stories are joyful, some are hilarious, some are sad, and a few are downright horrific. Though the stories deal with human sexuality, the depictions of 'the deed' are circumspect and tasteful." Tony Isabella, *WorldFamousComics.com* "The writing is the drawn book at its most poetic, in the classic sense of poetry of saying the most with the fewest words .... The authors pay close attention to the true voices of their subjects. The only thing that colors the stories is an accepting humanity. No sort of tale of the First Time is ignored in *The Virgin Project* .... I don't keep a lot of the books that are given me to read or review; I've even stuck the ones I didn't want to keep in the back of airplane seats. *The Virgin Project* is going on the book shelf by the bed. Talk about sexy." Donna Barr, *AssociatedContent.com* "Kato and Boze are kind to their subjects, and kindness is important. This project could easily devolve into nasty frat-boy humor, but their respectful tone is both inspiring and sexy." Paul Constant, *The Stranger* "True-to-life tales of innocence lost ... by turns hilarious and horrifying, incredibly moving and chilling." --Bill Baker, *WorldFamousComics.com*

K. D. Boze is an award-winning cartoonist and the author of the daily comic strip 'Cpl Kev' which appeared in the European Edition of *Stars and Stripes* in the 1980s. He is also the creator of the online comics 'Camille' and 'Role Call'. Stasia Burrington (nee Kato) was born into an artistic family and was raised on the cartoon classics 'Tintin' and 'Elfquest', and never tired of the art form. She attended Seattle's Cornish College of the Arts, with a focus in painting and print-making and there took comic classes under the tutelage of cartoonist Ellen Forney. On May 1, 2010 two weeks after the book's release Boze and Kato were named Cartoonists of the Year by Cartoonists Northwest,

which also awarded The Virgin Project 2 the Golden Toonie Award in the Comic Books/Graphic Novels Category.

The Virgin Project is a stunning collection of true stories about losing one's virginity, all of which the artists captured via interviewed and "transcribing" the stories of men and women they met at two erotic art festivals. The results feature people of varying ages recounting experiences good, bad and ugly. Many, though not all, were in their teens, and there's lots of sneaking around, and a few parents being surprised. The artists work with what they're given wonderfully, both in disguising their subjects (the book opens with a woman with a paper bag over her head), as well as offering "The World's Fastest Virgin Story" in which a woman approaches and says, "He was a jock. He was a jerk. And...um...I still hate him," then takes off, not giving her (fake) name or age. There's Linda, the 46-year-old missionary who was, along with her soon-to-be-husband, a 33-year-old virgin, whose story ends with "And I'll bet you a million bucks you won't print this story." It's the unexpected--and often very dark and violent stories--here that stays with you, though there is plenty of humor, as well as coming out (and come-ons from cousins). The whole question of what their "first time" was is revealed and sometimes retracted; several interviewees told of a rape, followed by their real first time. This is powerful testimony and it's clear that these people wanted to be heard and share these stories that so often get buried by all of us. This is a wonderful collection that I could see giving to someone on the verge of "losing it," or someone who's well past that stage.

Very adult, but very good copy of a collection of the most personable of coming of age tales. Drawn in a comic book style, these one or two page recollections will convince you that no two people experience sex the same way, the first time. Some are funny, sad, bittersweet and all are memorable. You might even discover the one tale of the author's first time if you read between the line. From the Star Trek convention hook-up to the committed couple's happily ever after, this book is a compelling read. Once you start, you won't be able to put it down. Highly recommended, but only for mature adults.

Tender and real.

Slick.

wonderful book love it - hope they do another one soon

The Virgin Project is a frank and direct, yet sensitive treatment of real peoples' first sexual experiences. The different stories, told by a team of professional cartoonists, are all moving and powerful. Some stories are beautiful and touching. Others are funny. Some are tragic. There is nothing pornographic or explicit about this book, and yet, each story portrays graphically the loss of virginity: the artists successfully convey not just the physical but the also emotional aspects of the stories by using the characters' own words. It's a pretty amazing book. I agree with the authors on their blog ([virginproject.fannypress.com](http://virginproject.fannypress.com)): if I had a teenager at home, I'd accidentally leave this book on the coffee table for them to find. For young people, this is a matter not just of entertainment but of life and death. It would also make a great gift, as it will make you laugh, cry, and remember your own story.

In 2008, writer K.D. Boze and artist Stasia Kato published their first collection of "Virgin Project" stories, at long last reclaiming the "loss of virginity rite of passage" anecdote from the realms of the frat house and summer camp bunkhouse. As Dr. Pepper Schwartz explains in her introduction to this second volume, this collection is "a small sample of the breadth of this human experience. Although loss of virginity may no longer hold the significance that it did when society regarded sex outside of marriage as shameful, it still marks an elemental passage and change in self-conception for every generation." Some of these stories are basically "It happened--so what?" A few were preludes to long-term relationships. There are stories of adolescents gleefully plunging into a newfound world of eros. "Alice" recounts the uncomfortable, messier side of the experience as though it were the gorier side of heroic fantasy. Stories like those of "Danny" and "Benny" would have been fodder for Chaucer and Boccaccio in earlier days. And there are those stories, including those of "Clinton," "Devorah," and "Russ," that made me put the book down for awhile while I tried to come to grips with the pain in those memoirs. Since each story is different, the art and storytelling technique varies as well. One of the funnier examples is the one "ringer" in the book, contributed by a goof who was trying to impress with a threadbare and hoary male threesome fantasy, which Kato illustrates in a wicked parody of X-rated Manga, complete with empty-eyed expressions on the characters' faces. Some of the stories are told as quickly as one panel in one page; others extend to three pages. But the storytelling is never flabby; the authors employ effective graphic shorthand that recalls similar technique employed by Will Eisner in his most taut "Spirit" stories. Overall, this collection is a tour de force of writing and graphic work that recalls the chameleonesque performances of Peter Sellers and Sir Alec Guinness in their classic comedies. This book is

designated "For Mature Readers" due to the subject matter and the explicit nature of some of the stories, but it is not a collection of porn. It would indeed be wonderful if someday it might be possible for some of these stories to reach teenagers on the cusp of sexual experience. As Dr. Schwartz reminds us, "...romance and the beginning of great love affairs are the exception, not the rule." This book approaches first sex with blunt honesty, and for that reason alone it is one of the most important graphic novels/collections published this year.

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