

## 11. Straight love

I was in Berghain.  
Dancing.  
He was dancing too.  
We were dancing.  
I looked.  
We looked.  
He said hi.  
We danced.  
He danced closer to me.  
We danced together.  
"Can I kiss you?"  
He said ...  
"I am not gay."  
I spoke.  
"I am not gay either."  
He asked if I was sure.  
I said yes.  
And we kissed.

## **22. "How to go to Albert Heijn as an immigrant:**

1. Make sure to get a bag.
2. Don't forget your wallet, keys, and *Bonuskaart*.
3. Wear something clean, not too fancy.
4. Go by bike and park it in the right spot.
5. Make sure to fasten it with a double lock, to avoid looking suspicious.
6. Ensure everyone sees that it's your bike.
7. If someone stares, say "*Hoi goedemiddag*" without an accent, and smile.
8. Make sure they don't think you are aggressive; try to blend in.
9. When you walk into Albert Heijn, don't cover your face; put a smile on your face.
10. Ensure that people see you put every item directly into your basket.
11. Project the image that you are one of the good ones.
12. If you ask something, make sure they understand you are gay; being gay makes you appear less dangerous, and people like you more.
13. If a Karen talks to you and tells you that you are doing something wrong, make a joke and try to make her laugh; being funny makes you look less dangerous.
14. Make sure you speak with your perfect Dutch accent, even if they still speak English to you.
15. In the self-service checkout act cool, don't be suspicious and act like a well-integrated immigrant.
16. Don't act scared when they check your bag.

17. Say "*Bedankt en fijne avond*" or "*Tot ziens*" when you walk out.
18. Put your basket in the right place when leaving.
19. When trying to find your bike, make sure you don't look as if you are trying to steal one.
20. Know where your bike is and walk directly to it.
21. Ensure everyone notices you used YOUR key for YOUR bike.
22. When you arrive home, you can breathe and take a little nap."

(Every day, I harbor the fear that racism will become normalized. When I now pick up on subtle signals of racism, I fear that these expressions will later manifest openly, and it will become socially acceptable to make racist remarks, even at the governmental level. Every day, my concern grows that my sense of connection to the country in which I was raised will gradually diminish.

It is my deep desire that people become aware of our experience of us, as immigrants. I experience daily anxiety that my sense of belonging in the country where I was brought up is increasingly disrupted. In the Armenian community, I no longer feel welcome due to my sexual orientation, and the country where I once felt so free and safe now seems to have changed.

I am uncertain about where I truly belong. Sharing my struggle is my wish, in the hope that people can relate to it or perhaps gain insight into the feelings of others.)