

# 83 and proud of it, feisty, funny S.F. author is back with another book

BOOKS | LIZ HARRIS | CORRESPONDENT

Barbara Rose Brooker doesn't mince words. Whether in conversation or in writing, she expresses what she feels.

"I'm 83 — and I am not age appropriate — and I love my age," says the San Francisco resident. "I think it's sexy and full of hope, and I'm sick to death of all the people in their 50s and 60s who are crying about their age."

Oh, that's not all. She's especially ticked off at Hollywood — at the networks and their superficial agents, at the pervasive culture of ageism.

That is the subject of her latest book, "Love, Sometimes: A Novel About Risk, Hollywood, and Controversial Love," scheduled for release Jan. 28. Brooker will hold a book launch event Feb. 1 at Book Passage in Corte Madera.

Yup, Brooker's angry, all right. But she has retained her sense of humor.

"I think it's important," she says. "We're all going to have disappointments and pain



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Barbara Rose Brooker

and depression and all kinds of things. But there's also so much joy. And I think when

you can have some humor about what's going on, that makes it bearable and brings you to a whole new place."

A former columnist for J., Brooker's "Boomer in the City" column regularly poked fun at the trials and tribulations of dating among the silver-haired set. And her string of novels — often semi-autobiographical — spared no one from her witty barbs.

"Love, Sometimes" follows Bette Roseman, a 68-year-old author fighting ageism in Hollywood but also finding "controversial true love along the way," according to the blurb by publisher Post Hill Press.

The romance in the book is fiction — "he came to me in a dream," Brooker says — but the rest of the plot primarily reflects her own experiences over the course of several years, when her 2009 book "The Viagra Diaries," about a 65-year-old divorcee who must navigate the dating scene, seemed on the verge of becoming a TV series, at one point set to star Goldie Hawn on HBO, only to pass from one network to another and fall through in the end. The final insult was "when it was about to go into pilot and they turned [the protagonist] into a 32-year-old avatar."

Now, however, things are looking up for Brooker and "The Viagra Diaries."

A prominent production company will make the series, she attests. "It will be filmed in New York." Brooker isn't at liberty to name the actress who will play Anny Applebaum (nearly all of the characters in her books are Jewish), but Brooker is stoked. "It's definitely happening," she says.

Brooker began writing "Love, Sometimes" in 2018, while suffering through a series of health setbacks and hospitalizations. "It's what I do," she says of writing. When she put all the pieces together — "never thinking" that the book would find a receptive, reputable publisher — Brooker says she was "stunned" when that actually happened.

She is already at work on a nonfiction book "about how age has become a product and not a gift." It will be called "Age is the New Designer Drug," she says, and that's also the title of talks she will give Feb. 10 at the S.F. Institute on Aging and Feb. 19 at the Commonwealth Club.

Brooker plans to speak not only about our "anti-aging" culture but also about how to promote a culture that redefines age in a positive way.

"Ageism is a disease in our country," she contends, "and I feel we have to obliterate



the word 'anti' in front of age ... People are losing who they are, they're becoming invisible."

Lest she seem completely hard-edged, fear not. Brooker promises that "Designer Drug" will be "irreverent and funny" as well as personal.

A poet, painter, dog lover and mother of two daughters with whom she is close (though she makes fun of them, too, in her books), Brooker does have a soft side.

She volunteers at Shanti Project, helping people "dealing with ageism and cancer. We're writing letters to cancer; we're going to put the stories into a book." Brooker hopes to get it published and donate proceeds to cancer-related programs.

She also finds fulfillment as a writing teacher at San Francisco State University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. "My students are between 60 and 97, and every single one comes into class and says, 'I've always been interested in writing a book but I guess it's too late and the party's over.'"

That's not the case, Brooker insists. "I just see miracles and it gives them hope and a new way of expressing themselves in their life."

And she founded the Age March — an upbeat affair, akin to the Pride Parade, which has taken place in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Brooker aims to continue writing, teaching and doing. "I don't believe in retirement," she says. "And I hate the words 'senior,' 'elder,' 'gay,' 'straight' ... I hate labels." But don't get her started ... ■

**"Love, Sometimes: A Novel About Risk, Hollywood, and Controversial Love" by Barbara Rose Brooker (288 pages, Post Hill Press)**

**Launch party, 1 p.m. Feb. 1 at Book Passage, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera. Free. Other events/talks at [barbararosebrooker.com/eve](http://barbararosebrooker.com/eve)**

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