Elizabeth I was Queen of England for 45 years during the late 1500s. Her nickname was the Virgin Queen. The Queen was highly-intelligent and fluent in six different languages. Despite countless marriage offers, Queen Elizabeth never took a husband. She was the equal of any King and claimed she was married to her kingdom. It has strangely been suggested that Queen Elizabeth was a man. Many people would dismiss such a theory as sexist twaddle. Not according to author Bram Stoker. The man who wrote Dracula in 1897 first stumbled across the theory in the village of Bisley, England. Every May Day, their village May Queen dresses as a boy in Elizabethan clothing. Stoker decided to investigate the curious tradition further. The villagers believe a young Elizabeth was sent to Bisley in 1543 to avoid the plague. One day Henry VIII planned to visit his child and then disaster struck. According to the theory, Elizabeth became sick and died. Fearing the King’s reaction, Elizabeth’s Governess took matters into her own hands. She looked high and low for a girl of Elizabeth’s age to replace her. She could find no girls, but there was a boy who strongly resembled Elizabeth. The boy was quickly dressed in Elizabeth’s clothes before King Henry’s arrival. To everyone’s surprise, the plan went off without a hitch. Perhaps because Elizabeth was notoriously shy around the king, he did not notice anything different about her. The few people who knew about the deception faced a problem. If the King ever found out, it would cost them their lives. They decided the truth was best buried. The real Elizabeth was hidden in a stone coffin and a small boy was condemned to live a terrible lie. Over 300 years later, the body of a young girl in Elizabethan dress was found in Bisley. It was accidentally discovered during building work. Stoker firmly believed that buried girl was Elizabeth and the later Queen Elizabeth was actually a man. His theory didn’t stop with the story he found in Bisley. Queen Elizabeth refused to conform to the expectations of what a woman should be. She was subservient to no man and ruled with an iron will. Her rousing speech to the troops at Tilbury before defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588 is a shining example. Elizabeth declared, “ I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king.” Elizabeth’s tutor Roger Ascham declared her too clever to be a woman. He wrote, “The constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness.” Was Queen Elizabeth a man? Or is it sexist hogwash? The age in which Elizabeth lived expected women to know their place. It also expected them to marry and bear children. Elizabeth did neither. Queen Elizabeth I continues to enjoy a cast iron reputation as a fair and popular ruler. Under her rule, the arts and science blossomed and England knew a longstanding peace. She became the most powerful woman in the country. Yet she was still subject to gender stereotypes.

Ryan Said fell in love at first sight with a beautiful woman named Jasmine Merino. But this was not your run of the mill love story. Ryan was born a female and Jasmine was born a male. Said and Merino met on Instagram, and their connection was instant. When they first met, he couldn’t keep his eyes off of her! While both were transgender, their experiences had been polar opposites. One transitioned to life as a woman, and the other transitioned as a man. Despite this difference, there was one big similarity. They each understood the difficulties that the other had been through. And when the going got tough, they were able to support each other. In fact, Merino says their relationship is perfect because they both know what it’s like to be male and female. It helps them to understand each other. We’ve all heard that opposites attract. But the truth isn’t quite so cut and dry. Studies show that people are more likely to be attracted to those with similar features, at least initially. People seek partners with similar education levels, religious ideals, and political orientations. But do these similarities actually make for happier relationships? Researchers Nathan Hudson and Chris Fraley found something interesting. The deciding factor isn’t actually whether the people are similar. What matters is whether they see themselves as similar. Those who thought their partners were similar tended to have more satisfying relationships. Perhaps that’s why Said and Merino work well together. At first glance, they may seem very different. But they see their similarities. Hudson and Fraley also found that a person’s attachment style can be a key factor. And that makes sense. We develop our attachment styles at a very young age, and they affect all of our future relationships. They found that people who avoid intimacy are more satisfied with partners who are somewhat similar. It helps them continue their avoidance. People who anxiously attach to others, however, either want a partner who is the exact opposite or one who will attach right back. So it’s a mixed bag. Differences between partners can create a “tension of opposites” which can stimulate relationships. But similarities can bring people together and keep them together. For Said and Merino, their differences (and similarities) seem to be working out. At the time of their interview a few years back, they had been together for two years. They hoped to marry soon and have children using his eggs and her sperm.