

Lesbian Voices

\$3.00



Lesbian Voices is published quarterly by Jonnik Enterprises, P.O. Box 2066, San Jose, CA 95109. Phone: (408) 289-1088. Editor: Rosalie Nichols. Poetry Editor: Johnie Staggs. Circulation Manager: Johnie Staggs.

Subscriptions are \$10.00 per year (four issues); \$20.00 institutions or outside U.S.A. Sample copies or back issues \$3.00 (limited supply). All copies are mailed in plain closet-envelopes.

Discount rates: 30% on 5 copies; 40% on 6-10 copies; 50% on more than 10 copies. Payment with order, please. No returns.

Advertising rates on request. We welcome paid advertising from business and professional people offering products and services of interest to lesbians. We are happy to exchange ads and subscriptions with most other lesbian and feminist publications.

Contributors: Please specify by-line you wish used and also include a short paragraph about yourself for publication. You will receive two complimentary copies of issue in which poetry appears, or five copies for articles, stories, reviews, etc. All rights revert to the individual contributor after publication. Please always keep a copy of what you send. Please do not hesitate to write to us if you have not heard from us regarding your work. If you have moved, let us know where you are!

All views expressed in this publication are the ideas and opinions of the individual contributor. Favorable treatment of any idea, ideology, product, etc. in **Lesbian Voices** does not constitute an endorsement by this magazine, its editors or publisher. We welcome differing points of view on controversial issues, but request that ideas be expressed clearly and rationally and in a tone and style compatible with **Lesbian Voices**. We attempt to present a dignified format and a positive, constructive sense of life, in keeping with our belief that lesbianism (and indeed life itself) can be and should be good, wholesome, fulfilling and joyful. We reject the view of lesbianism as material for psychiatric study, religious censure, or pornography — all of which treat lesbianism as sick, sinful, or salacious. We reject this view of lesbianism whether promulgated by straight society, voyeuristic men, or by lesbians themselves.

Lesbian Voices was founded in December 1974 in San Jose, California. With this issue, we begin our 4th Volume of publication.

Copyright ©1980 Jonnik Enterprises. Printed by Ms. Atlas Press, 973 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95126. All rights are reserved to the individual contributor, and no part of this magazine, except brief excerpts for critical analysis or review, may be reproduced without prior consent.



Table of Contents

Words (Poem) by Nikki	2
Editorial: <i>The Closet: Privacy or Secrecy</i> by Rosalie Nichols	3
Free (Story) by Lee Kinard	5
Her Blue Eyes (Story) by Diane Stein	8
Norton Sound (Cartoon) by Betsy Hill	12
The Radical Home Haircut (Story) by Lisa Fenton	13
Book Reviews:	
The Black and White Of It reviewed by Sharon T.	15
Comments on Revolutionary Thought: The Revolutionary	
Catechism, Bringing Down America, With the Weather-	
men reviewed by Barbara Stephens	16
Letters:	
On Rape by Barbara Stephens	22
Butch & Femme Indians? by Margaret Murphy	23
Poetry Section:	
Poems by Carolyn Shama, Lee Kinard, Leslie Powell,	
E.I. Louch, Phyllis Yarnold, Jan Sutherland, Penelope	
Ocha, Lisa Fenton, Winn Crannell, Jan Braumuller,	
and Laura Koplewitz	25
Warning (Story) by Dorothy Feola	41
Notes on Contributors	62
Ads (Very important!)	63

Layout & Design by Johnie Staggs.

Apologies to Penelope Ocha for losing her by-line from the poem "*The Afternoon of Our Affair*" on page 31 of Vol. III No. 4. "*The Afternoon of Our Affair*" is by Penelope Ocha, copyright ©1979.

Lesbian Voices is published quarterly by Jonnik Enterprises, P.O. Box 2066, San Jose, CA 95109. Phone: (408) 289-1088. Editor: Rosalie Nichols. Poetry Editor: Johnnie Staggs. Circulation Manager: Johnnie Staggs.

Subscriptions are \$10.00 per year (four issues); \$20.00 institutions or outside U.S.A. Sample copies or back issues \$3.00 (limited supply). All copies are mailed in plain closet-envelopes.

Discount rates: 30% on 5 copies; 40% on 6-10 copies; 50% on more than 10 copies. Payment with order, please. No returns.

Advertising rates on request. We welcome paid advertising from business and professional people offering products and services of interest to lesbians. We are happy to exchange ads and subscriptions with most other lesbian and feminist publications.

Contributors: Please specify by-line you wish used and also include a short paragraph about yourself for publication. You will receive two complimentary copies of issue in which poetry appears, or five copies for articles, stories, reviews, etc. All rights revert to the individual contributor after publication. Please always keep a copy of what you send. Please do not hesitate to write to us if you have not heard from us regarding your work. If you have moved, let us know where you are!

All views expressed in this publication are the ideas and opinions of the individual contributor. Favorable treatment of any idea, ideology, product, etc. in *Lesbian Voices* does not constitute an endorsement by this magazine, its editors or publisher. We welcome differing points of view on controversial issues, but request that ideas be expressed clearly and rationally and in a tone and style compatible with *Lesbian Voices*. We attempt to present a dignified format and a positive, constructive sense of life, in keeping with our belief that lesbianism (and indeed life itself) can be and should be good, wholesome, fulfilling and joyful. We reject the view of lesbianism as material for psychiatric study, religious censure, or pornography — all of which treat lesbianism as sick, sinful, or salacious. We reject this view of lesbianism whether promulgated by straight society, voyeuristic men, or by lesbians themselves.

Lesbian Voices was founded in December 1974 in San Jose, California. With this issue, we begin our 4th Volume of publication.

Copyright ©1980 Jonnik Enterprises. Printed by Ms. Atlas Press, 973 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95126. All rights are reserved to the individual contributor, and no part of this magazine, except brief excerpts for critical analysis or review, may be reproduced without prior consent.



Table of Contents

Words (Poem) by Nikki	2
Editorial: <i>The Closet: Privacy or Secrecy</i> by Rosalie Nichols.....	3
Free (Story) by Lee Kinard	5
Her Blue Eyes (Story) by Diane Stein	8
Norton Sound (Cartoon) by Betsy Hill	12
The Radical Home Haircut (Story) by Lisa Fenton	13
Book Reviews:	
The Black and White Of It reviewed by Sharon T.....	15
Comments on Revolutionary Thought: The Revolutionary Catechism, Bringing Down America, With the Weather- men reviewed by Barbara Stephens	16
Letters:	
On Rape by Barbara Stephens	22
Butch & Femme Indians? by Margaret Murphy.....	23
Poetry Section:	
Poems by Carolyn Shama, Lee Kinard, Leslie Powell, E.I. Louch, Phyllis Yarnold, Jan Sutherland, Penelope Ocha, Lisa Fenton, Winn Crannell, Jan Braumuller, and Laura Koplewitz	25
Warning (Story) by Dorothy Feola	41
Notes on Contributors.....	62
Ads (Very important!).....	63
Layout & Design by Johnnie Staggs.	
Apologies to Penelope Ocha for losing her by-line from the poem " <i>The Afternoon of Our Affair</i> " on page 31 of Vol. III No. 4. " <i>The Afternoon of Our Affair</i> " is by Penelope Ocha, copyright ©1979.	

The Closet: Privacy or Secrecy?

"I've always felt it's very important that people have their privacy, and unfortunately someone in my life doesn't think it's very sacred. I did have an affair with Marilyn Barnett..."

The above statement prefaced Billie Jean King's "confession" of her lesbian love affair with a woman described as her "secretary."

The confession followed shortly after her initial denial, in which Mrs. King termed Ms. Barnett's allegations contained in a palimony lawsuit "untrue and unfounded." In her admission, Mrs. King termed her affair with Ms. Barnett "a mistake" -- for which she apologized and threw herself on the mercy of her fans and the general public.

No doubt owing in part to their experience in dealing with media and public relations, Mr. & Mrs. King's handling of the unwanted publicity following her "shocking revelation" appears to have succeeded quite well. The columnists are handling her plight sympathetically, and even a usually tough interviewer like Barbara Walters seemed compelled to soften her questions and to preface the airing of her 20/20 Report by dwelling on how "painful" the interview was to conduct.

So far, in Gay publications, Mrs. King has emerged somewhat of a heroine for admitting her "mistake." Presumably, Gays are so delighted to add another celebrity to their ranks that they can overlook Mrs. King's statements that she doesn't "feel like a homosexual" and hates being called one, also that her heterosexual marriage is stronger than ever and she'd like to "get this show on the road" by having a baby.

Some lesbians nodded knowingly when the news broke, remarking to themselves and their lovers, "I always thought so." And three East Bay lesbians crashed Billie Jean King's press conference in Oakland May 23rd to question her support for Gay athletes and Gay rights, pointing out that "there are 50,000 lesbians in the Bay Area."

Mrs. King's affair with Marilyn Barnett, conducted within the safety and privilege of her heterosexual marriage to Larry King, provides a lot of food for thought. And not the least of the morsels to be chewed over and digested is her claim that her right to privacy has been violated by Ms. Barnett's lawsuit.

Traditionally, the worst that anyone can do in "Gay life" is to blow someone else's "cover." There's a good reason for this: Gays are persecuted and oppressed. Disclosure of homosexuality can and often does result in loss of family, friends, future, and even freedom.

When people are forced to live like Jews in Nazi Germany or capitalists in Communist Russia (cf. Ayn Rand's *We The Living*), honesty is not among the values encouraged by society. Deception

Words -

- to be chosen carefully
to fit the allotted space
- to be pieced together
to form a picture of my thoughts

Words -

- fragile, delicate
- to be handled as carefully as
pieces of stained glass
- lest one slip and go shattering
before my full meaning is portrayed.

-EKKJ

becomes a matter of self-defense. The moral standards upheld in a free (rational) society are subverted in the context of a theocratic/authoritarian society, where institutionalized irrational prejudices are vested with the power of government. One doesn't owe honesty to an authority which threatens to **victimize** one for telling the truth.

Unfortunately, the practice of deception-as-self-defense often involves other innocent people and their lives. While Billie Jean King had the right to keep her lesbian affair to herself, her lover, and her husband--it being no one else's business--she may not have had the right to impose her decision on Ms. Barnett. Did Ms. Barnett agree to keep her affair with Mrs. King in the closet? To go along with a pretense that she virtually did not *exist*, except for playing a minor role as "personal secretary"? If, as Ms. Barnett's lawsuit alleges, Mrs. King made certain promises of financial support amounting to a marital-type contract, on which she later reneged, should Ms. Barnett have been expected to give up her only legal recourse out of a delicate respect for Mrs. King's desire to preserve a sham marriage for the benefit of her public?

Marilyn Barnett may well turn out to be the sick, unstable, self-destructive, scheming, self-serving, parasitical blackmailer portrayed by Mr. & Mrs. King in their interviews. But so far we've heard only their side of the story.

Conceivably, Ms. Barnett could be the victim of Mr. & Mrs. King's self-protective deception. She *could be* a woman who devoted herself to Billie Jean King during one of the most trying and challenging periods of her career, but was deprived of any official standing in Mrs. King's life. Did Ms. Barnett willingly agree to carry on a love affair, while Mrs. King stayed married to Mr. King? Did Ms. Barnett willingly join Mrs. King in her deception -- to the extent that Mrs. King devotes pages of her book **Billie Jean** to discussion of her heterosexual marriage, but barely mentions her "personal secretary" even while describing the three-month period in late 1972 when their love affair began?

None of this would be any of our business, were not court proceedings regarded as a matter of public concern. But we might gain something by trying to answer these questions. Where does privacy end and secrecy begin--and is Marilyn Barnett being denounced for violating Mrs. King's right to privacy, or for refusing to give up her own legal rights in order to protect Mrs. King's guilty secret? □

Free

By Lee Kinard

This morning I received a letter from Frances telling me you were dead, of a heart attack--a month ago.

I am not surprised that she didn't write sooner. In the three years I have been gone I have deliberately slowed our correspondence to a mere trickle, almost to the 'birthday and Christmas card' state.

I went for a walk in my beloved woods, remembering the day I told you both that I was selling the house and moving to a mountain cabin.

"Why?" she asked.

I ignored the smirk on your face and said, "I love the mountains, and I'm tired of this flat country. I just want to hole up somewhere and work on my book."

Later you came to my house and said, "You're running away. You're afraid you're going to let down those bars and finally go to bed with me."

"No, Bob. I'm not going *away* from anything; I'm going *to* something," a half-truth necessary for that moment. "And I'm no closer to going to bed with you than I've ever been. But I'll admit I'm tired of your trying to get me to."

"I'm not. I like the chase; I'll keep working on it. I usually get what I want."

"Not this time."

Now that you are dead, I can browse through the photo album revealing those two years--and am able to look at your picture without wanting to spit on it.

Shortly after you and Frances moved into the neighborhood, I met you at a party. You were friendly and charming--in one of your expansive moods. I found Frances intelligent, witty, and curiously gentle.

It wasn't until later that we all learned how domineering you were in your opinions, how necessary it was for you to win, how important that you be best in anything you undertook.

The men in the neighborhood quit dropping by your place for a game of pool, because you insisted on one more game, one more game, until you won, making them late for their dinners, having to offer excuses to irate wives.

The women recognized immediately that your conversations were rife with male chauvinist remarks. But they had all been exposed to that sometime in their own marriages. They were only just then tentatively learning that they didn't have to put up with it anymore.

I never did. I wonder now if that was why I became the target of your amatory advances. Or was it merely that I was single--and therefore presumably available without breaking your 'buddy' code of honor?

At any rate, it became more and more distasteful to me to listen to your put-downs of Frances. As I became more fond of her, I became more incensed at you--a teeter-totter fulcrumed by your crude insensitivity to her. I never remarked on it, tried not to let it show, having been carefully trained not to interfere in domestic situations.

But any remark thrown at me was immediately challenged. I simply refused to accept it.

A neighbor said, "Don't let it bother you; all men are like that."

"Not all men."

"Well, most of them. That's just Bob--that's his way."

"I know that. But this is *my* way. I don't have to take it, and I won't."

It started when you brought over some fish you had caught. "Don't I get paid for them?"

"Sure, if you want. Let me get my purse."

"Quit kidding--you know what I mean."

I looked at you steadily. "Oh, I see." I spun around and picked up the bag of fish. "Here. I made a New Year's resolution never to sell my body for fish."

"Would you sell your body for anything else--like diamonds?"

"No."

"Another New Year's resolution?"

"Something like that."

"So you're not into selling?"

"No."

"Are you into giving?"

"I could be--for love. But I'll never be into selling."

"I see." You studied me another moment, suddenly smiled and said, "Enjoy 'em." Then you left.

I sighed with relief; I don't like confrontations. I now shrug with impatience that I was naive enough then to think that was the end of it. I reckoned without your burning desire to win. As you could not put me down or dominate me in conversation, you now determined to put me down on my back and dominate me sexually.

You mixed it up enough to keep me off balance. There followed periods of intense sexual ploys alternating with times of innocent brotherly-like consideration. It was wearing--and you knew it. It was also punishing to be around Frances and try to feel free to enjoy her gentle companionship because of the shamed knowledge of your unfaithful machinations.

There was no reasonable explanation I could have given for breaking off a friendship with a neighbor, so I retreated more and more

into my writing, using it as an excuse to turn down invitations. But to make it authentic, I also had to shut myself off from others--it's a small neighborhood.

Why couldn't you take 'no' for an answer? I said it enough times in the fourteen months before I left. I can still hear some of our conversations.

"That's not true. You do want me."

"Yes, it *is* true. I *don't* want you."

"You want me, all right--you're just afraid of sex."

"I'm not afraid of sex. There's nothing to be afraid of."

And again: "You know you need some loving."

"I can live my life very well without 'loving' as you call it."

"You're going to be a dried-up old maid."

"Perhaps."

Another time, with a sneer: "What are you--a queer?"

"Does every woman who turns you down have to be queer? Is that the only way you can assuage your bruised masculine ego?"

Then: "You're too damned moral."

"I'm not moral," knowing of my transgressions.

"But it's unnatural."

"All right," I said tiredly. "Have it your way--it's unnatural."

And because I was so tired of your little games, and had no possibility of playing the game I really wanted, I finally left.

But I was not free of you. I had evidently moved from your immediate neighborhood only to reside in your lurid fantasies. How diabolical of you to send me lewd pictures from scattered postmarks!

I could never open my mail in public. I quaked that you would forget to seal an envelope sometime--or deliberately leave it open, and had nightmares that an obscenity would fall out while the prim postmistress was sorting mail in the village.

Now, at last, I am free of you. Now I can tell you the whole truth because, wherever you are in the great beyond, you cannot hurt me, as you would have if you had known it then. With your name-calling, your sarcastic derision, perhaps even with your fists, frustrated as you were.

I shall wait a month or two, then invite Frances to visit, and she will come. We will talk of you, of my work, of the books we've read, and the many things we used to talk of. We will renew the friendship you inadvertently sidetracked, and fill in the blanks of feelings we only alluded to in the past. And even when that communion of souls I sometimes felt with her returns, I shall not tell her of your shoddy behavior. I leave you to rest in peace, or spend eternity gnashing your teeth. It matters not, now that I am free.

So I tell you the truth again, and for the last time: I didn't want you, Bob. I never wanted you.

I wanted your wife.

Her Blue Eyes

By Diane Stein

She wore blue, soft aquamarine, that fitted her breasts and shimmered like full moonlight on a summer sea. Her eyes were wide and blue; too blue for reflection of the silky gown. In her bright, fine hair a diamond clip, delicate glittering snowflake. Her hands, expressive as waves, as feeling, as the blueness of her eyes, shook with fright, excitement, in the mirror before her as she waited for her time.

"Come with me," she said, her arm trembling as it touched my hand. I followed her to the edge, shivering with her, a small reassuring hug at the stop.

She stepped out from the curtains to the stage, into light less brilliant than the brilliance that she is. Her sea-foam gown shining next her radiant skin; the silver snowflake winking in the glare; her fine hair curled but somehow free. She walked alone into her own world, as I watched her, waited at the side and out of sight, followed her with eyes of love.

The audience in the sold-out club did not respond. They ate and drank and talked among themselves, barely noticing the regal woman in green-blue before them, barely sensing of her glow and love, too animal to share of it, of *her* as she began to sing. She sang of things they never saw, never tried to see, beauties they had never felt, senses they could not absorb. Tears ran down her face; her sea-clad visioned body shined. She stepped back from the lights, behind blue velvet curtains where I waited out of sight. Out of sight, I held her in my arms.

"It's not you; it's them," I said. "Diamonds before swine, if you ever saw it. You are lovely."

"It's not my kind of audience," she said. "They've drunk too much." The tears ran down the petals of her cheeks. She did not notice them. Her body shook. She leaned out for my love, cheek brought against my cheek, and my arms to circle her, protect her. I was accepted by her, needed, for the love I was, would always be to comfort her blue eyes. There was a flower on the stage-wing floor, a red single rose someone had dropped or lost, forgotten among the wires, among the sound equipment and the lights. I picked it up and brought it to her. She took it from me, with a quiet kiss as we walked, and gentled it against her face.

"It really wasn't me?" she asked. "Honestly?"

"Honestly. I'd tell you what I saw. To you I couldn't lie."

"Why, then?" she asked, her voice low and desperate, ready to give up, stop her work, stop her love, her life. "Why?"

"The wrong audience. Only that. Couldn't you feel it as soon as you

came out? I felt it right away. They weren't for you. I don't think they would be for anyone."

"I felt it. I couldn't turn it. It's not always like that."

"Of course it's not. It happens. You mustn't be afraid. Relax and forget them now...I love you," I said. "I'm here and I'll help you. I love you." She squeezed my waist lightly with her arm. She understood and somehow let me near.

"Stay with me," she said.

"I will."

We closed her dressing room backstage to everyone; to managers and fans, withdrew inside together, as far away from audience, from staff, from noise as could be in a public hall. I locked the door, ignoring intermittent and insistent knocks. My lady tonight had had enough. She sat down at her star-desk and I unloosed her gown, lifted off her jewels, brushed and brushed her hair. Her hand reached up to touch me more than once, to tell me that she needed me, that she wanted me to be there. Her shoulders were less tense, but still they drooped. She creamed the makeup from her face to give her skin more colors than before. She found the bluejeans and the shirt that she had come in and she slipped them on. Changed formal shoes for low ones. She was very very thin.

"Come home with me?" I asked her.

"I...I shouldn't this time. I'm ashamed tonight," she said, her head held low.

"No," I told her. "You have nothing to be ashamed of. It can happen. It wasn't you. I love you. Let me comfort you. Let me take you home."

"I should go back to the hotel. Where they want me to be, for once."

"And let that manager of yours make you feel worse? I can't let you go away like this; I can't let you go away from me," I said.

She wouldn't look at me, wouldn't raise her beautiful head. "Let me be near you tonight," I pleaded. "Don't hide from me when we need each other most. Please let me be near you..."

"Am I worth loving tonight?" she asked me, actually meaning it, not knowing her own answer, and I went to her, made her look at me, and I hugged her shaking body tight; my only love. I circled her and warmed her, tried to reach her if I could.

"Don't do this. Please don't do this," I said. "I love you so much. So very much. Please don't send me away from you."

She clung to me. I held her, kissed her, felt her longing, wavering against aloneness; against the hurt; against impossible feelings of her shame; remembering what we shared.

"Okay, Di," she said. "Let's go home."

We waited till the building was all but emptied out, stage-crews gone,

and audience, and even most of her staff and band. We walked outside, afraid of followers she didn't want to see, to where my car was parked nearby. Someone from her group would pack the shining concert gown, her makeup case, and take them with him on to the next plane. In the car she said, her eyes on mine, "I didn't want to come to you like this."

I put my arms around her shoulders. "Look," I said. "It really *wasn't* you. I wish I knew how to show you that. But even if it had been, I'd still love you; I'll always love you. I'll never turn you away from me, not for that or for anything. If you're hurt I want to be with you. No matter what."

There were tears in her eyes again. "I was such a loner till I found you, Di. It'll take some time..."

"I know," I told her, kissing her. "And time it is. I'm going to love this pain away from you. Just trust me now."

"I'm glad you made me come," she said. "I've lashed out at you before and never meant to. There are nights like this sometimes. I didn't want you to have to know them."

"I know them," I told her. "From me or from you, and I can't let you be alone tonight. I know too well what these nights are."

"I love you," she said. She touched my cheek with her finger. "Thank you...for wanting me." I kissed her and I started up the car, slowly took her to the refuge, to the safety, that together we had found.

"I'm going to love you all night long," I said. "I'm going to love you till it's gone away..."

We came into my apartment and she sat down tiredly on the edge of a chair. She didn't pet the dogs, didn't even take off her coat. Her eyes were sad and grey. I knelt in front of her and put my hands around her tiny waist. She looked at me and smiled, a little smile, and bent to kiss my face.

"Come on, darling," I said, gently. "Let's get you into bed. Can I get you something to eat? You're awfully thin..."

"No," she said. "I couldn't eat now. Just stay with me. I feel so bad..."

"I know you do," I told her, and I kissed her again. "I'm going to keep you warm and love you the whole night."

She took a bath, and I made sure to wrap her in my softest towels, to put my flowered bathrobe on her against chills. She watched me undress and shower quickly next, not leaving me, not allowing me from her sight, till I was ready for her, too. I tucked her into the yellow printed bedquilts, climbed beside her into the double bed, and took her finally, closely, in my arms.

"It really wasn't me?" she asked again.

"No, my love. It wasn't," I told her tenderly, stroking her bright hair, stroking the tightness of the muscles in her back. She held me, very

tightly, till I had to move her hand, kissing it as I moved it. I couldn't let her feel unwanted, not in anything, not for this night.

"It happens sometimes," she said. "I ought to be used to it, but I never am. I can't forget them. I have nightmares of them..."

"I know," I said. "You need the love too badly." She turned so she could see my face; I drew her head up on my shoulder. "You're beautiful and I love you," I said. "I always will."

"Yes," she said, her blue eyes lifted toward me. "I should know..." She moved to kiss my lips. "It doesn't even matter here, nothing does when you're holding me."

"And when you're holding me," I reminded her, smiling. My hands touched her golden skin, softly, trying to soothe and to warm her. She'd been shivering since the evening began. I pulled the quilt around her, pulled her closer to me. She lay still and silent for a long while, and the harshness of her breathing slowed.

"You see," I told her quietly. "What would you have done in a hotel room all alone?" She sighed and turned against my body, close again.

It wouldn't have been good like this. It would have gotten worse and worse."

"This is what we are for each other," I said. "Not only the good times, but to share the bad ones, too. I'll love you for them all."

"Yes," she said, warmed through now, smiling, hugging me to her, stroking my face and hair and breasts, kissing me all over. "Yes...There's a lot for you to teach me, Di."

"You're learning," I assured her, responding to her, giving and receiving with her love. "You're learning fast."

We slept that night, the rest of it, holding each other near, talking and sometimes not talking; sometimes touching, sometimes making love. Loving and reassuring one another, loving her, I caressed her until she relaxed enough to fall asleep. Her light hair tickled my face, and my shoulder went numb, but I didn't move. Didn't want to wake her from the rest she badly needed, from the peace and the forgetfulness of quiet sleep. She cried and held me tighter once, not quite awake, turned over so our bodies fit and cuddled and my arms were free. She woke completely once, not knowing where she was, then realizing, and nestling back into my warmth. I held, protected, loved her. I didn't sleep or want to sleep myself, to miss a moment of her being there; didn't want to be away from her in case she should awake, wake up needing to be hugged. I held her all the night, past the sunrise, almost until noon.

"The plane," she said, turning sleepily against me, back into my arms.

"Almost," I said. "I hated to wake you till I had to."

She reached for me again. "I can catch a later one," she said. "You didn't sleep."

"How did you know?"

"I could feel you, like you were watching over me all night."

"I was," I said.

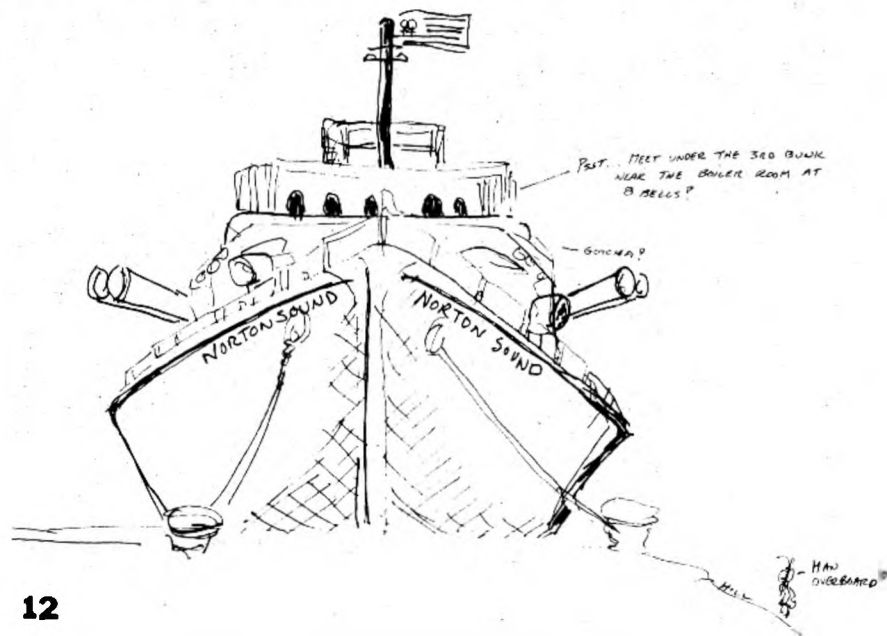
"But I didn't let you sleep."

"I wanted to watch over you, protect you. As long as you slept safe..."

She smiled at me and kissed me, her eyes wide and very very blue. "I don't think I've ever slept so well." We held each other and we slept again. Slept again in love and peace, together in each other's love.

I took her, eventually, to the airport; back to the hectic, brutal life she had to live. Another concert in another town that very night. Her group had gone on ahead of her, taken an earlier plane. Her manager would have angry words for her, when she reached this newest stage. I had to send her off to it alone. I had to watch her go away from me. Again and again, I had to watch her go away.

She comes back to me on any night she can escape. Any night without a concert; any night that she is near enough and the flight schedules meet. Any night she has for hers. Any night she can... We both know where to turn to reach each other now. We both know it well and finally. We won't forget again. We won't forget each other, or where home is. Not ever again.



The Radical Home Haircut

By Lisa Fenton

At 13, in a fit of anguish over my appearance and in rebellion against my mother's strenuous attempts to make me into a proper young lady, I cut my hair. I mean, I *really* cut my hair. The almost-to-the-shoulder curly mass hit the dust (or perhaps more accurately hit the toilet to be flushed away forever).

Emerging from the bathroom, scissors still incriminatingly in hand, I encountered my mother. She let out something like a shriek, "What have you done to yourself?! You look like a dyke!"

Now at that time I had no awareness of what a dyke was, but by the dire inflection in my mother's voice, I gathered it wasn't considered the most desirable thing to be or even remotely resemble. My mother and I were locked in violent opposition about my manner of dress. We bickered daily over my usual garb of T-shirts, blue jeans, and size 4 boys' sneakers. The latest aggravation had been my acquisition of a faded Lee Rider denim jacket and my flat refusal to wear a bra. But cutting my hair topped not only the jacket but bralessness as well.

Then a couple of years later in my sophomore year of high school, I crossed the line between Adolescent Phase/Teenage Crush to The Real Thing and fell for a girl three years older -- an honest-to-god SENIOR! Penny was not only flawlessly beautiful but terribly smart, too. She had the kind of wit that could total a steamroller coming on you at 50 m.p.h. The combination was absolutely irresistible.

Penny was one of those "all round" types. She read *SEVENTEEN* and *GLAMOUR* faithfully right along with Russian novels and psychology textbooks. Her wardrobe was perfectly color-coordinated and she wore her hair in a Farah Fawcett mane three years before Farah.

This was L-O-V-E and I reveled in it. My feelings of feminism did me no good at all when Penny suggested I let her "do something" with my appearance. I yielded completely ignorant of the tortures of beautification that lay darkly ahead. The first act of surrender was to submit myself to a "make over." Penny saw them all the time in *SEVENTEEN*. BEFORE you're drab, colorless, and look like a six-months long illness has confined you to bed in a dark room. AFTER you're positively glowing with health, vivacity, and that All-American Girl Next Door sex appeal.

Despite my yelps of pain, Penny mercilessly yanked out all unnecessary eyebrow hairs. She applied a heavy flesh-color foundation like an air-tight mask all over my face. She put Morning Rose cheek gloss on, Tawny Beige eyeshadow, and fattened my eyelashes with

Revlon Super Lash. With the final thick smear of Pink Champagne lipstick, I was allowed to see the results.

Well, I didn't know if I looked better but I sure looked different. Penny pronounced me "sultry" -- a word I wouldn't choose for myself in a million years -- but training wasn't over yet.

Meticulously, I had to shave every hair from my legs and underarms. Invariably, I'd nick myself and suppress agonized screams while applying deodorant. You can still see the scar on my left shin from repeated slashes. I resurrected my mini-skirted dresses from my closet and even resigned myself to stifling the lower half of my body in panty hose and the upper half in a bra.

The last phase of transformation was to relearn how to walk. Penny put a book on top of my head, crisply giving instructions, "Stand up straight, shoulders back, chest out, stomach in, now walk slowly, glide, g-l-i-d-e." After so many orders, I could barely move, I was so self-conscious. I flunked that part of it but kept up the rest of it for some time -- dressing in drag and painting my face, as I now think of it.

By the time I hit 17, it had gotten undeniably clear that I was indeed a Lesbian. However, not knowing a damn thing about Lesbians, I staunchly decided, "I may be one but I'm NOT looking like one." That was when I envisioned Lesbians as hulking women who smoked cigars, had tatoos, and drove Mac trucks.

Visiting an Austin Lesbian collective, I was astounded by the women there. It was my first real contact with Lesbian women and they were incredibly lovely in a REAL way. They'd eliminated the hassle of hair-curlers and permanents with their neat short haircuts. They moved comfortably in loose clothes, workshirts and jeans. They'd allowed the hair on their legs to grow freely in abandon. No make-up marred their faces. These were women not mannequins.

Not long afterwards, I cut my hair again and experienced the feeling of freedom I had first felt at 13. I was released from the male definitions of beauty I tried contorting myself to. Just as men grew their hair in the 60s to proclaim their liberation from Establishment values, so women by cutting their hair announce their rejection of male values, definitions, and expectations laid on women. My make-up got thrown out. Clothes are much more utilitarian now with comfort the first priority. The hair on my legs has grown out very nicely and no hose chokes it off and I haven't worn a bra in ages.

People can look at me and see who I am not what some fashion magazine has told me to be. I am no longer afraid that I "look like" a Lesbian and in fact rather enjoy the idea of visibility. It fosters a real feeling of solidarity when we can recognize each other on the street.

Mother was wrong about dykes. It's ok to look like one and I've never felt so beautiful before.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Black and White Of It

By Ann Allen Shockley

Naiad Press, P.O. Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302

Paperback, 103 pp., \$5.95

The author of *Loving Her* presents ten provocative short stories in this new book published by the Naiad Press. *The Black and White Of It* is a series of tales concerning lesbian couples in relationship to: each other, their families, their husbands, their politics, their color, and society.

Most of the stories lack the optimism found in many recent lesbian works. But this negativism need not be interpreted as a throwback to earlier, more oppressive trends in gay literature. Rather, it can be seen as signalling a new era of honesty in discussing the lesbian community's problems.

Especially significant in this regard is "A Meeting of the Sapphic Daughters." In it, two black lesbians are confronted with alternate racial attitudes. One white lesbian is openly hostile; another exhibits an attraction to one member of the black couple purely on the basis of her color. Both these episodes take place during a meeting devoted to the establishment of a community for, supposedly, *all* lesbians. Despite her persuasive rhetoric, once offstage, the prime meeting organizer is the most blatant racist.

Ms. Shockley offers other enlightening information for the reader intent on expanding her race consciousness. The invisibility of the black lesbian, along with the myth that black lesbians do not exist, is exposed in "Play It, But Don't Say It" and "Holly Craft Isn't Gay." "Home to Meet the Folks" scrutinizes a popular idea among some heterosexuals in the black community -- that lesbianism is a white conspiracy to achieve black genocide.

Ms. Shockley does not limit herself to portraits of black couples only. There is substantial treatment of interracial and white couples as well. The one optimistic piece in this collection, "A Special Evening," concerns two white women on their first date. Neither is sure if the other is even gay. The predictable awkwardness of such situations is captured here so well that one can't help smiling, remembering similar experiences of one's own.

A recurrent theme throughout this collection is the importance of coming out, especially to oneself. Women are shown often forsaking their women lovers for safer alternatives: husbands, social or political covers, or occasional male tricks to reinforce a bisexual identity. The lover on the losing end is played up to be the moral winner because she

has been true to her lesbian identity. Yet, sadly, she 'never gets the girl in the end.' This type of conclusion may not be the most satisfying to read. But its validity is borne out at some point in almost everyone's experience.

One slightly unbelievable element in many of Ms. Shockley's stories is the sex life her characters have. The sex is uniformly fantastic between two women whether they have just met or have been together for years, and whether they are getting along well or are totally incompatible. While insisting on honesty in all other areas, her treatment of this dimension shows less care than might be expected. Very little headway has been made so far by any lesbian writer in admitting that sexual dissatisfaction between two women can and does occur. Until lesbian sex is socially approved as a valid alternative, any negative aspects of it seem destined to remain in the closet.

The Black and White Of It is not the most well-written book on the market. Even though it is easy to read, the character development ranges from barely sufficient to almost non-existent. Occasionally it is necessary to reread dialogue to trace the identity of the speaker, as the sentiments expressed do not clearly belong to one character or another.

Despite its flaws, however, this book does deserve a close look. Few black lesbians are being published who discuss racially-based conflicts as candidly as Ann Shockley. The triple jeopardy of being black, female, and gay is generally given little attention by white lesbians. These short stories take a giant step in generating the self-examination which would be necessary to eliminate racism within the lesbian community.

--Reviewed by Sharon T.

Comments on Revolutionary Thought

By Barbara Stephens

The Revolutionary Catechism

By Sergei Nechayev, 1869

According to Max Nomad, he was rejected by leading radicals of his time, but later made a super-hero by the Bolsheviks. His manifesto has been required reading for the Black Panther Party and probably has been a source-book for the Weatherman and the S.L.A. He was sentenced to prison for murdering a comrade and died in 1882. He was the recognized prototype for Peter Verhovensky in the novel *The Possessed* by Dostoyevsky.

The document has 26 compartments; I have reproduced only nine. The abridgements are my own, but the essence has been preserved:

1. Every revolutionary must be a dedicated man. He should have no

personal affairs, no business, no emotions, no attachments, no property and no name. All these must be wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution.

2. The revolutionary knows that in the very depths of his being, he has broken all ties with society, both in word and in deed. He breaks all ties with the civilized world, its laws, its customs, its morality, all those conventions generally accepted by the world. He is the implacable enemy, and if he has intercourse with the world, it is only for the purpose of destroying it.

3. The revolutionary despises all dogmas and all sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science: the science of destruction.

4. The revolutionary despises public opinion, he despises the present social morality and hates all of its manifestations. The revolutionary defines as moral only that which assists the revolution and defines as immoral and criminal that which stands in his way.

5. The revolutionary is wholly dedicated. He must show no mercy to the state or towards the civilized classes of society, nor does he ask for mercy for himself.

6. Tyrannical towards himself, the revolutionary must be tyrannical towards others. All the emotions that move human beings, all the soft and innervating feelings of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude and honor, must give way to a cold and single-minded passion for the revolution. For him, there exists only one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction--the success of the revolution. Night and day he must have but one thought, but one aim--merciless destruction. Coldly, relentlessly, he pursues his aim, and he must be prepared to perish himself, as he must be prepared to destroy with his own hands those who stand in his way.

7. The nature of the true revolutionary is to exclude all sensitivity and all romantic enthusiasm; he must exclude equally all thought of hatred and revenge. The revolutionary passion, practiced at every moment of the day until it has become a habit, is to be employed coldly, with calculation. At all times the revolutionary must obey, not his personal impulses, but only those which serve the cause of the revolution.

13. He should not hesitate to destroy any position, any place or any man in this world. He must hate everyone and everything with an equal hatred. All the worse for him if he has in the world relationships with parents, friends, or lovers; he is no longer a revolutionary if he is swayed by these relationships.

22. The purpose of our society is the entire emancipation and happiness of the people.

Bringing Down America:
An FBI Informer with the Weathermen
By Larry Grathwohl
Arlington House Publishers, 1976

With the Weathermen
By Susan Stern
Doubleday & Co., 1975

If Karl Marx should reincarnate himself into the late 20th century, he would be a "stranger in a strange land." His prophesies would have been stood on their heads, turned around, and bent backwards at ninety-degree angles. For example, revolution has occurred not in advanced industrial nations, but rather in predominantly agrarian societies such as Russia, China, and most of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, peasants rather than factory workers were the moving force in China and North Vietnam and Soviet military troops in the case of Czechoslovakia and most of Eastern Europe. And after fifty years or more, the State has had no intention of withering away.

Now, in Amerika, where factory workers are apt to be beer-sloshing, apathetic boob-tube watchers and the "peasants" are apt to be agribusiness magnates such as Safeway, Wells Fargo, or B of A, the left must find a new vanguard for the RRRREVOLOOOOOTION! Who shall it be? Franz Fanon had the answer -- the lumpenproletariat -- "the lowest of the low" whom even Karl Marx had come to distrust and despise. Literally, the pimps, prostitutes and thieves, the thugs, swindlers and rapists shall destroy the State and establish the New Order.

An alternative view has been given by Regis Debray (**Revolution Within the Revolution?**) stating that professional revolutionaries will start and accomplish the revolution without the consent of anybody else. After all, workers and peasants have something to lose: their homes and crops, friends and families and material possessions. A worker may love his wife and children more than the revolution, and therefore he is not to be trusted. Political parties and ideologies are to be abandoned, for they can create opportunism or sterile intellectual bickering. So what's to be left is military strategy and ACTION. How this differs from the Kapp rebellion or the Munich beer-hall putsche remains to be seen. So, let's examine the Weathermen.

At first glance, the title of Grathwohl's book leads to some kind of prejudice, depending on one's opinion of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A young man of working-class origin has just returned from the Vietnamese War and volunteers to penetrate the Weatherman faction of the SDS, and this is his story. There emerges a hell-hole of

brainwashing, purges, plots and counterplots, and general paranoia. A persistent party line speaks: smash monogamy, separate lovers from their loved ones, or a mother from her child, if such attachments are fonder than love for the revolution.

He concludes that their post-revolutionary plans would "make George Orwell's 1984 a pleasure to live in." In view of plans for complete control of all individual thought and movement, isolation and education camps for those who disagree, and "liquidation" of the incorrigibles, one wonders why he couldn't have found a better ally in his search for freedom.

So, I sought another side of the story, from a true believer, Susan Stern. Susan Stern (1943-1976) was an attractive, dark-eyed woman who joined the SDS in 1967, the Weatherman faction in 1969, participated in the Chicago Days of Rage in October, led repeated attacks on the ROTC, and spent many months in courts and jails.

There were times I sort of liked Ms. Stern and found her funny and outrageous. She made many statements that were informative and full of insight; and, other times, she was so abysmally blind. I wished to heaven she'd wise up and get out of the movement. But no, she didn't until she got kicked out -- first by the Weathermen, for not being weathermannish enough, and later out of the Sundance Collective for being too much of a Weatherman. Between times, she shot speed, smoked pot, dropped acid or barbiturates, and preached that far-out Weatherman party line. So, let Ms. Stern speak on episodes in her life:

On Black Panthers at an SDS Convention

"The Panther's speech, which began as an attack on PL (Progressive Labor Party) had ended with an attack on Women's Liberation, which included a remark about 'pussy-power.' Their line was that women should fuck anyone if necessary for the revolution." A near-riot by the SDS women ensued from this.

At Reed College (Portland, Oregon)

"I spewed out the Weatherman line like a cheerleader -- Living as couples will only hinder you in this development; monogamy is a tool of the system to oppress women. Leave your boyfriend, your children, your parents, school -- anything that comes between you and the revolution."

Remark from her ex-husband, Robby Stern

"These people aren't human. What's so revolutionary about being cruel?"

Insights

"The truth for me and too many other Weatherwomen and Weathermen in love with the revolution was that we weren't trying to build, but to destroy a country. We simply represented no alternative to anyone. Once we tore down capitalism, who would empty the garbage? Would the world be communist? Would the Third World control it? Would all the whites die? Would all sex perverts die?"

"The worst aspects of the Weathermen: the lack of love and lovingness, the singlemindedness which refused to accept human difference and human error."

Rationalizations

"If two people were monogamous, then they paid more attention to each other than they did to any other person they came in contact with. This was a deterrent to the collective. If monogamy were smashed, the theory went, everyone would love and trust each other equally, and not some people more than others."

"What was supposed to replace the antiquated relationships? Group gropes, homosexuality, autosexuality, or asexuality? In an effort to encourage collective members to sleep with each other if they have to have sex, a sleeping schedule was set up. According to it, you were to have a different bed-partner every night, regardless of sex. The schedule was never forced in our collective, but its very presence testified to the seriousness with which we approached the problem of smashing monogamy."

Insight

"The major thing which horrified me was the interest in, admiration for, and concentration on Charles Manson and his family. Almost everybody in the bureau ran around saluting people with the fork sign."

"I didn't agree that all white babies should die."

"Anything was applauded -- as long as it terrified the bourgeoisie and made them think they were next."

Ms. Stern, contrary to her rhetoric, did practice monogamy with Garrity, an outsider, and a man whom she loved. Criticism became heavy: call it the Synanon game or Maoist brainwashing -- any injury or illness was no exemption. On November 1969, Ms. Stern suffered a severe concussion during a Mobilization demonstration. There were blackouts, memory lapses and speech disabilities that foreshadowed permanent brain damage. The doctor ordered rest and no excitement; she moved out of the Weatherman Safehouse to Garrity's pad for recovery. But the tormenters came over daily to accuse her of being

"racist, anti-communist, sexual-deviate, selfish, egotistical and undesirable."

Towards the End

"We were tired, the revolution seemed old. We were hungry. And accepting the cloak meant giving up oneself entirely. We were alone and isolated -- the dream had turned into a nightmare."

"Liberals considered us adult vandals at the best, or Stalinist butchers, Narodniks, and hebephrenic schizophrenics. The political freaks and anarchists thought we were ridiculous."

"At night, police or rightwingers threw bottles through the windows; the glass shattered all over the bed. The living room was a garbage pail of dirty plates, beer and wine bottles, piles of dirty clothes and shoes..."

In 1970, Ms. Stern was kicked out of the Weathermen, and she briefly joined the Sundance Collective, followed by the Seattle Liberation Front. The long months in court and prison took their toll. At Purdy's Women's Prison, she at last found Lesbian love, from a fellow inmate.

But time was fleeting and the hours short. She survived by topless go-go dancing and wrote a book. Then, at the age of 33, she died from general exhaustion. A wasted life, a haunted, tragic life...Could she have lived differently in a liberated world of gay love?

Further Reading:

Non-Fiction

Payne, Robert -- **Zero**

Fanon, Franz -- **Wretched of the Earth**

Caute, David -- **Franz Fanon**

Debray, Regis -- **Revolution Within the Revolution?**

Nomad, Max -- **A Skeptic's Political Dictionary**

Fiction

Dostoyevsky, Fedor -- **The Possessed**

Zamiatin, Eugene -- **We**

Orwell, George -- **1984**

Hlasko, Marek -- **The Graveyard**

Insights

"The truth for me and too many other Weatherwomen and Weathermen in love with the revolution was that we weren't trying to build, but to destroy a country. We simply represented no alternative to anyone. Once we tore down capitalism, who would empty the garbage? Would the world be communist? Would the Third World control it? Would all the whites die? Would all sex perverts die?"

"The worst aspects of the Weathermen: the lack of love and lovingness, the singlemindedness which refused to accept human difference and human error."

Rationalizations

"If two people were monogamous, then they paid more attention to each other than they did to any other person they came in contact with. This was a deterrent to the collective. If monogamy were smashed, the theory went, everyone would love and trust each other equally, and not some people more than others.

"What was supposed to replace the antiquated relationships? Group gropes, homosexuality, autosexuality, or asexuality? In an effort to encourage collective members to sleep with each other if they have to have sex, a sleeping schedule was set up. According to it, you were to have a different bed-partner every night, regardless of sex. The schedule was never forced in our collective, but its very presence testified to the seriousness with which we approached the problem of smashing monogamy."

Insight

"The major thing which horrified me was the interest in, admiration for, and concentration on Charles Manson and his family. Almost everybody in the bureau ran around saluting people with the fork sign."

"I didn't agree that all white babies should die."

"Anything was applauded -- as long as it terrified the bourgeoisie and made them think they were next."

Ms. Stern, contrary to her rhetoric, did practice monogamy with Garrity, an outsider, and a man whom she loved. Criticism became heavy: call it the Synanon game or Maoist brainwashing -- any injury or illness was no exemption. On November 1969, Ms. Stern suffered a severe concussion during a Mobilization demonstration. There were blackouts, memory lapses and speech disabilities that foreshadowed permanent brain damage. The doctor ordered rest and no excitement; she moved out of the Weatherman Safehouse to Garrity's pad for recovery. But the tormenters came over daily to accuse her of being

"racist, anti-communist, sexual-deviate, selfish, egotistical and undesirable."

Towards the End

"We were tired, the revolution seemed old. We were hungry. And accepting the cloak meant giving up oneself entirely. We were alone and isolated -- the dream had turned into a nightmare.

"Liberals considered us adult vandals at the best, or Stalinist butchers, Narodniks, and hebephrenic schizophrenics. The political freaks and anarchists thought we were ridiculous.

"At night, police or rightwingers threw bottles through the windows; the glass shattered all over the bed. The living room was a garbage pail of dirty plates, beer and wine bottles, piles of dirty clothes and shoes..."

In 1970, Ms. Stern was kicked out of the Weathermen, and she briefly joined the Sundance Collective, followed by the Seattle Liberation Front. The long months in court and prison took their toll. At Purdy's Women's Prison, she at last found Lesbian love, from a fellow inmate.

But time was fleeting and the hours short. She survived by topless go-go dancing and wrote a book. Then, at the age of 33, she died from general exhaustion. A wasted life, a haunted, tragic life...Could she have lived differently in a liberated world of gay love?

Further Reading:

Non-Fiction

Payne, Robert -- **Zero**

Fanon, Franz -- **Wretched of the Earth**

Caute, David -- **Franz Fanon**

Debray, Régis -- **Revolution Within the Revolution?**

Nomad, Max -- **A Skeptic's Political Dictionary**

Fiction

Dostoyevsky, Fedor -- **The Possessed**

Zamiatin, Eugene -- **We**

Orwell, George -- **1984**

Hlasko, Marek -- **The Graveyard**

Letters:

On Rape

I found your inclusion of articles on guns [Lesbian Voices, Vol. III, Nos. 2 & 3] interesting, if not controversial. Living as I do, in an area where "Stinky" has been striking, I find my arsenal of floodlights, security locks, noisemakers on the window ledges, bedside whistles somewhat inadequate. On the other hand, the spectacle of rapists with guns on the streets --- well. Perhaps I could make a modest proposal, a universal curfew barring men from the streets at all times and hours.

Considering alternatives that may be of help, I want to include information gleaned from acquaintances on jury duty, women blue-collar workers, women bus-drivers, and even some Pacific Islanders. Such "street-knowledge" (that one never learns in a University) may save a person's life.

1. How about the old-fashioned menstrual taboo. Several women have been spared rape because they either were menstruating, or were wearing pads or tampons. Kotex, with a little red ink or vegetable dye, may save your life!

2. Acting insane also involves an ancient taboo: fear of the "madwoman." I was spared forceful perversion by this gimmick during my attack on the shores of Lake Merritt. Rolling my eyes, grimacing, and watching the fear that permeated my assailant's face as he sensed that a "madwoman" could really injure him in a frightful way.

3. The Japanese Sleeper. Perhaps some of you have watched wrestling matches and the antics of a Mr. Moto. Actually such techniques are taught in lifesaving classes as a way of subduing the violent struggles of the drowning victim. There are certain places on the neck and face (and elsewhere) where the nerves lie close to the surface of the skin. A gentle rubbing of these parts can render a person unconscious. Do take up some of these courses.

4. The Philippino Stiletto. Philippino women carry large safety pins with them when they travel in crowded public buses. Orientals may be docile elsewhere, but not in the Philippines. A hatpin could be an effective alternative. And, don't forget some other legal items, such as a comb, a ring of keys, a compass, and a new device soon to be marketed called the Rapel clip.

Perhaps you misunderstand pacifism. Most pacifists I know do believe in self-defense, including the late Mr. Gandhi. What goes is non-violence as a political tactic, as an alternative to violence and terrorism, and a complement to political action that may be ineffectual by itself. And we do oppose war under most circumstances, and find diplomatic channels an imperative in this dangerous nuclear epoch.

I would like to see a world freed from dominance, hierarchy and power trips. Wouldn't it be nice if men were reared to the ideals of gentleness and sensitivity and tolerance, and women could walk the streets at all times of night without fear? Some cultures have attained this goal, yet these isolated primitive societies are very few.

Most organized systems have been oppressive. Monarchies, feudal kingdoms, aristocracies, kapitalism and kommunism have all been based on the dominance of a few over the many. Add to this, the oppressed become the oppressors, both before and after the "revolution." The peasant beats his horse, his wife, and his children. The blue-collar worker slaps his wife around, and then baits some women or minority workers at the shop. Minority males retaliate by baiting some other females--either within or outside their ethnic group.

In total anarchy, the system could be worse, if not unlivable. In a power vacuum, private paramilitary forces of the far left or far right would mushroom and make life intolerable for any person outside of the mainstream. The recent power blackouts in New York City give one an inkling of what could happen in the complete absence of social controls. Vigilante forces which could possibly abolish crime in the streets would also produce their own forms of nightmares, given the bigotry and intolerance that permeates the general public in positions both high and low.

For these reasons, I veer towards protective laws, and educational efforts geared to a kinder, more humane and equalitarian world. A world where **individuality** rather than "individualism" (read: dominance) is encouraged. I visualize schools where gay studies, women's studies, and labor history are a part of the curriculum; where cooperation is taught rather than competition; and children are allowed their own creative outlets, in the absence of any strict sex-role structuring. Rather than abolishing public schools, more are needed with these guidelines in mind.

May I live to see the day when rape and "queer-bashing" are swept away forever, into the ashcans of history.

--Barbara Stephens

Butch & Femme Indians?

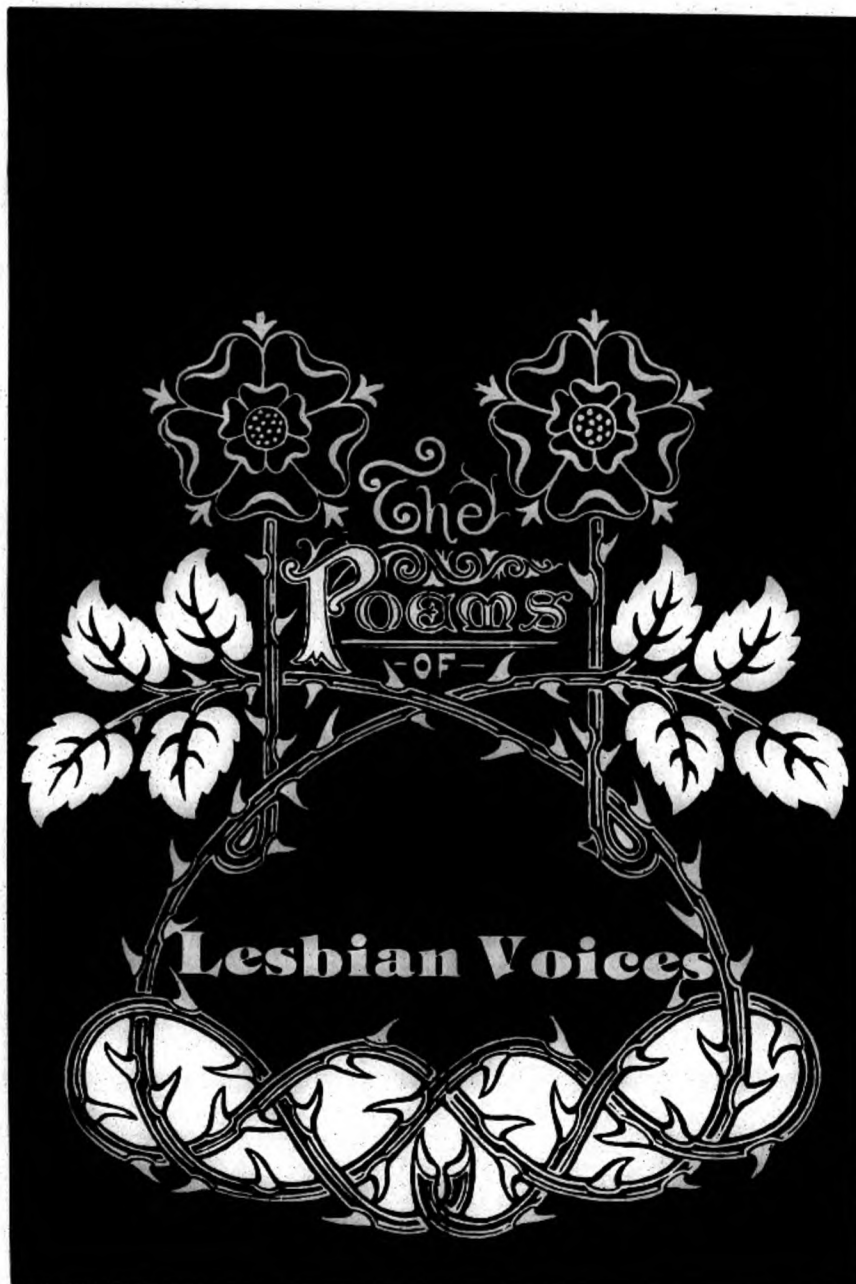
I read Judith Schwarz's review of **Gay American History and Lesbian Lives** [Lesbian Voices, Vol. III, Nos. 2 & 3] and I definitely agree that "butch" is idolized in our lesbian ancestors. In our present day lesbian community, butch is still idealized as the correct posture or attitude. Many lesbians strive, sometimes desperately, to project the butch image - the male image. In the lesbian community, butch is the

manifestation of male supremacy and the resulting male uptightness due to fear of losing control or losing the pretense of control. As long as lesbians internalize the heterosexist lie that men (or male-identified lesbians) are superior to women, butch will be idolatrized at the expense of truly woman-identified lesbians.

Which brings me to my motive for writing this letter. When discussing lesbianism among Native Americans, Judith says, "True, the lesbian was somewhat accepted as a male member of the tribe, but each of her wives suffered from ridicule and teasing by the other tribal members, which eventually drove them away." Her "wives"?!! This is a denial of their own lesbian, woman-loving selves! Again, the "butch" is the "true lesbian," and her lovers are "just women" (her "wives" in this case). As for the lesbian who "was somewhat accepted as a male member of the tribe," she was probably a large woman (in a male-identified world, bigger is better) who was not simply skilled at, but excelled in, hunting and fighting and whatever other skills thought of as "male" in that culture (Amazon cultures would consider these feminine skills). Consequently, this lesbian who was good at "male" skills was grudgingly admired and superficially accepted as "one of the boys." Some lesbians today in so-called "non-traditional" jobs or roles (some athletes too) buy into this trip and even feel as men do that what they know, or what skills they have, make them superior to women. The self-destructive contradiction in butch is that you have to feel superior to what you are - a woman.

I don't know if that Indian lesbian who was "accepted" as male truly felt and/or acted as if she was superior to her sisters because I don't know what was really happening in her life. But I **do** know her lesbian lovers, who were **not** accepted as males OR as "real" women, were persecuted too; and I wonder what happened to these women and most other lesbians who didn't (and still don't) spark the salacious, voyeuristic interest of the male world's historians. These historians make them invisible. But lesbian historians like Judith Schwarz will hopefully be able to trace the wisps of smoke back to the original fires. Power to you, Judith.

--Margaret Murphy
Sturgeon, Mo.



It Would Be

it would be a lie
to say i don't want you
i do

it would be a lie
to say i don't think of you
i do

it would be a lie
to say i don't love you
i do

so why must i lie
hiding thought, desire and love?
i do

but i don't understand why

--Carolyn Shama

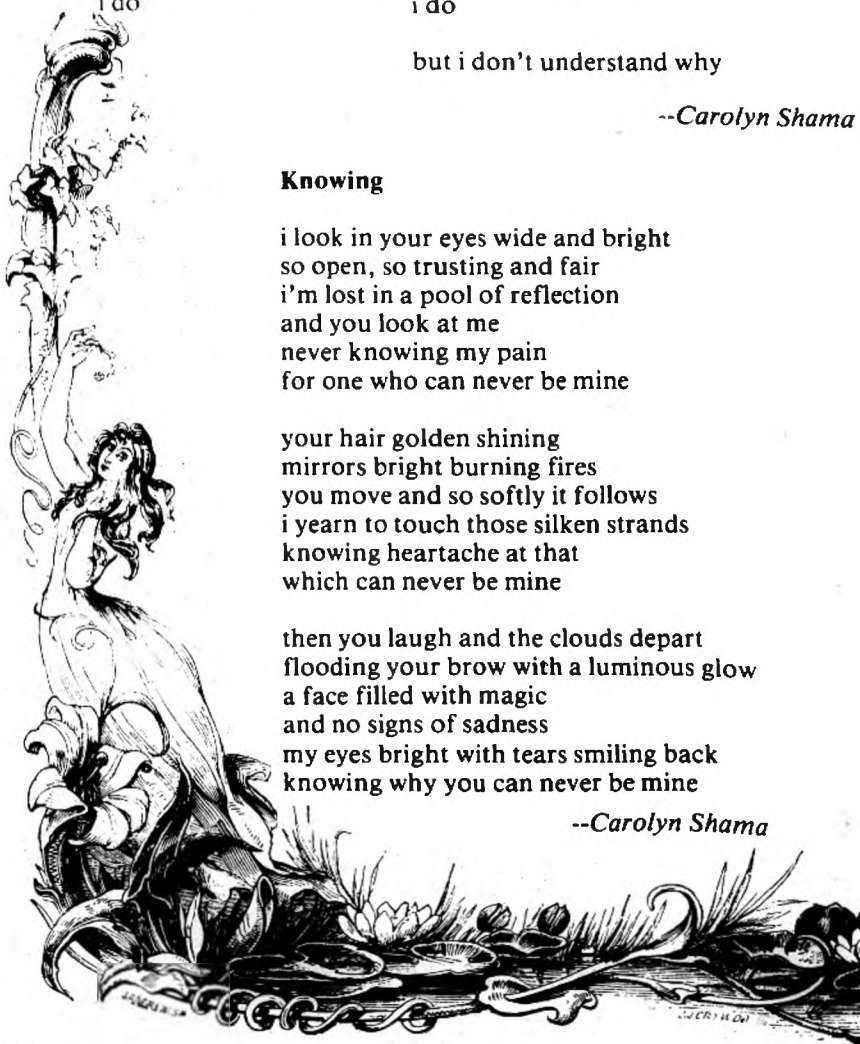
Knowing

i look in your eyes wide and bright
so open, so trusting and fair
i'm lost in a pool of reflection
and you look at me
never knowing my pain
for one who can never be mine

your hair golden shining
mirrors bright burning fires
you move and so softly it follows
i yearn to touch those silken strands
knowing heartache at that
which can never be mine

then you laugh and the clouds depart
flooding your brow with a luminous glow
a face filled with magic
and no signs of sadness
my eyes bright with tears smiling back
knowing why you can never be mine

--Carolyn Shama



Our Garden

i could feel it, and you must have too
that current, that spark between me and you
that look in your eyes, your lips in a smile
told me that waiting had been well worthwhile

i'll always remember the sun in your face
as you gazed through my eyes to some point in space
the warmth and the comfort your body was giving
made me remember the reasons for living

and living meant caring and sharing our love
as close and as warm as a hand in a glove
our moments together, our thoughts and our needs
would bloom every spring and plant its new seeds

the weeds we would have to pull out one by one
until only flowers were left when we're done
and standing together, so tended and pure
our heads held up high, so proud and so sure

remember the feelings, remember the night
we stayed in our garden 'till morning's first light
and then with the moisture of morning's first dew
became a rare essence, part me and part you

--Carolyn Shama



It hasn't caught up with me yet--
Your leaving me just as you did;
My senses all have boxed up my heart
And sat upon the lid.

They fear to see Pandora come
To wreak her havoc there:
For then the pain would all flow out,
And the little box be bare.

--Lee Kinard

Doubles

You arrived here
after a 400 mile
night drive,
tired & dejected,
expecting just
another bum deal.
You didn't realize
then, but I saw you
crossing the banks
of the Loire,
Joan of Arc
in hiking boots.

--Leslie Powell

Marie,

This is
just to
tell you
that the bell
works now

and has
ever since
I've
lived here

- at times
I have
wished it
in hell -

Of course
you will
not come
again

still, this is
just to
tell you
that the bell -

--E. I. Louch

Friendship's Creed

I will give you all that I am.
I will share with you
Dreams of all I would like to be.
I will open the windows
into me
And walk through the doors
into you.

I will laugh with you
But never at you.
I will cry with you
But never knowingly cause you pain
I will tolerate your faults,
As you will tolerate mine,
For perfection would bore us both.

The things you confide in me
Will be locked in the space within me
That belongs to you.
Neither will you give away
Any of my secret self,
For friendship would die there--
Turned cold by the betrayal. I shall be me

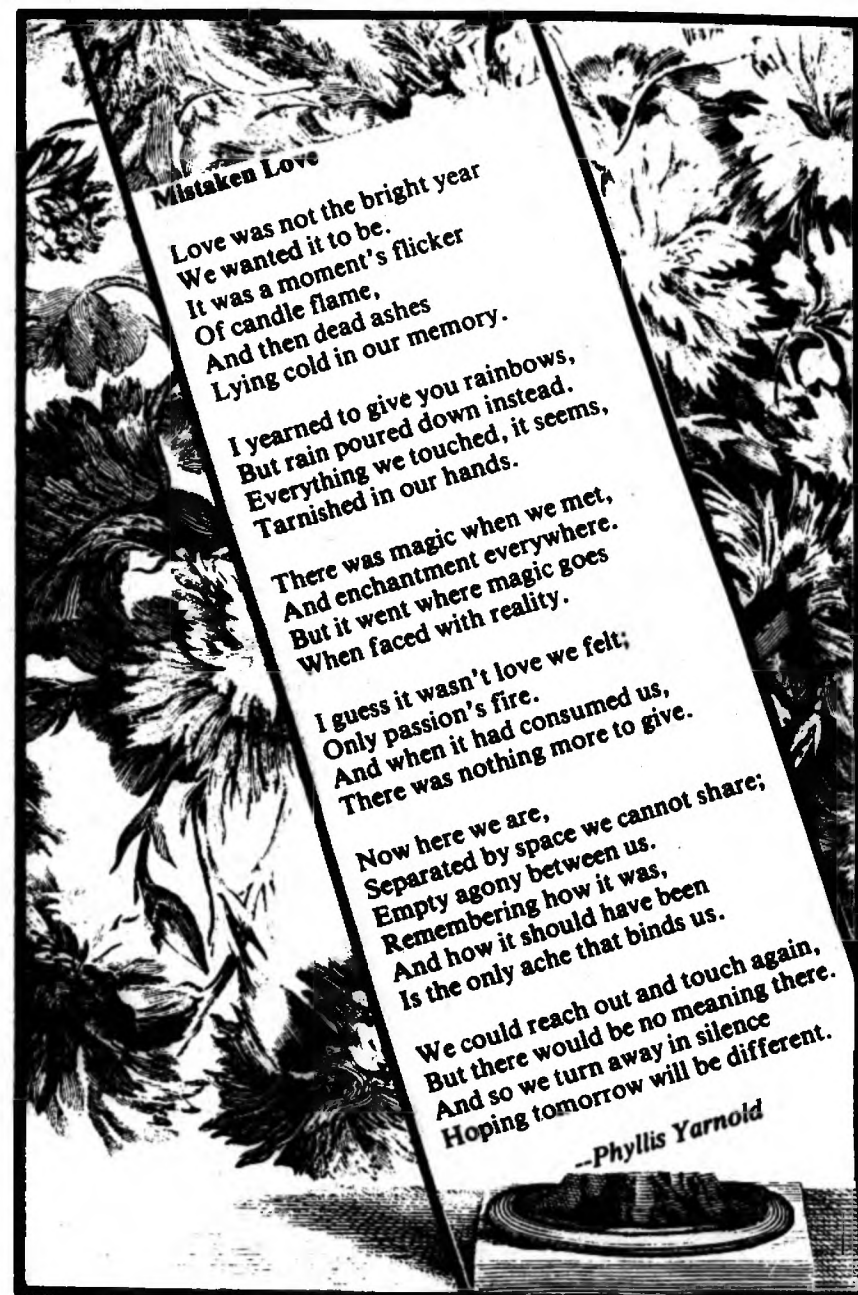
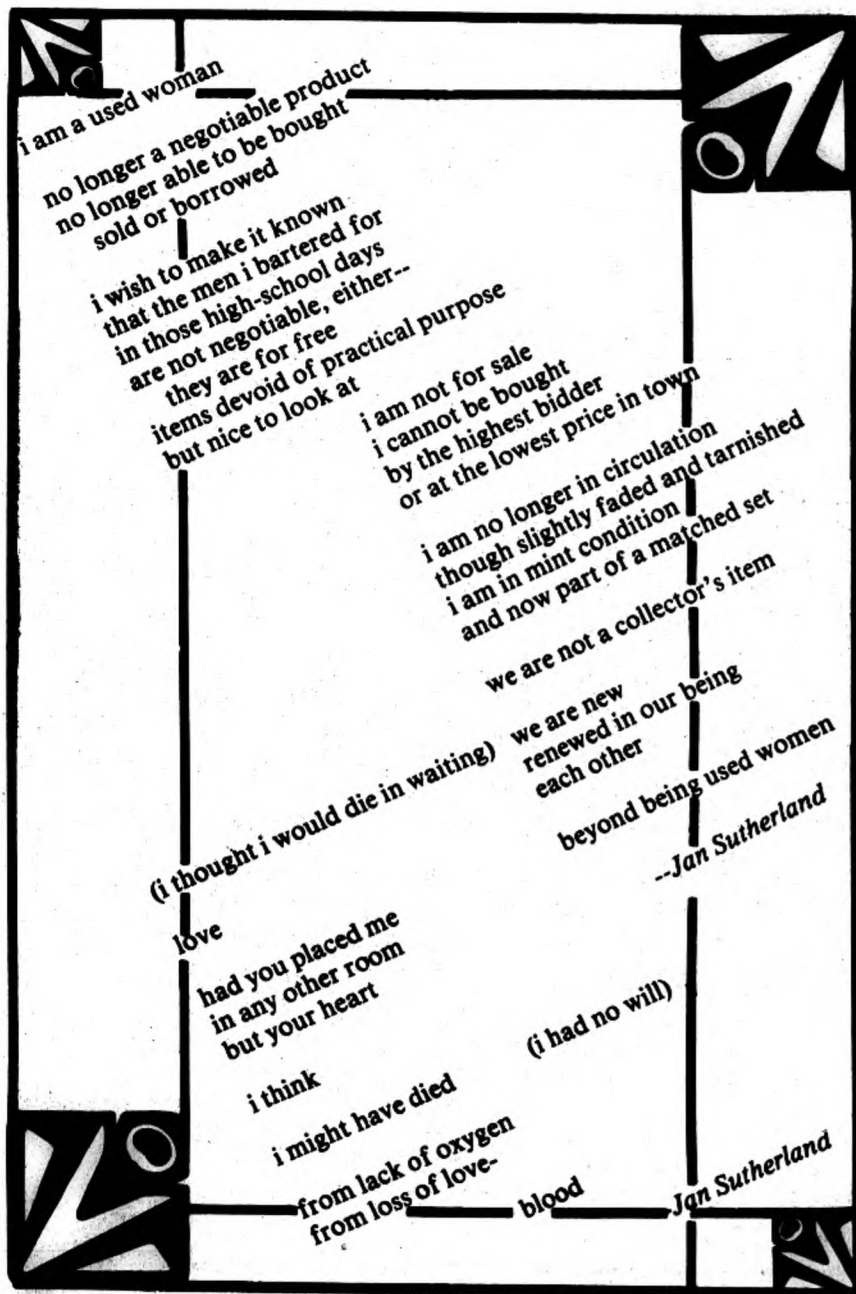
And you will be you.
The mixture of our selves
Can create a sunny day
Or a quiet evening.

Neither time nor distance
Shall be a barrier between us,
For the love is there
And we are aware of it.
Though I give myself away to others,
And you share yourself with many,
One part of me is uniquely yours,
And one part of you belongs to me.

We are a separateness,
Blending when we can,
Touching when time allows.
And we are more complete
For having known and loved one another.

--Phyllis Yarnold





For Rita, the room-mate

Raspberries,
and doves,
white doves,
soft, small,
one for each hand,
and the bush that burns,
like your tough Mick's hair.

But that was underneath.
On top?
Freckles,
Nefertiti nose,
ballerina neck,
and shanty Irish underwear.

Faded pink, grayed lilac,
washed-out blue,
flower-sprigged,
Vanity Fair.

It began with
convent-issue underpants,
saggy, baggy,
elastic sprung.

Then came the panty girdle,
taut rubber, satin reinforced,
a cast iron casing
to contain and restrain the thighs,
105 lbs. of college freshman.

Pettipants over girdle,
down to stocking tops,
no lower inch bare,
all inviolate below.

Padded bra.
two inches of fiberfill,
small piece of vanity, or
breastplate of further modesty?

Nylon slip to top you off,
trimmed with frayed gray lace,
straps attached with
baby sister's plastic diaper pin.

Each morning you donned your holy habit
beneath the nightgown's
flowered flannel tent.
As surely as if you wore nun's wimple and black veil,
your vestments proclaimed your virtue.

But I knew what hid beneath,
and I watched and waited,
measured the pleasure once
tasted, smelled, touched,
those raspberries,
white doves,
and flaming delta
whose fire I alone
could ignite.

--Penelope Ocha
©1981

For my Junior Leaguer

A potato rolls
across the floor,
knobbed, scabbed,
leaving a trail of
grime in its wake.

It's peasant food,
eaten simply,
enjoyed with no
forethought, consumed with
no regrets.

And we peasant folk, we
smear grease round our
mouths, drip gravy down
our chins, wipe hands on
our skirts, deliver
hearty belches of contentment.

Have you bedded a peasant
wench? It's roll
in the straw, flick off
the fleas, touch earth-scented
flesh. No cocks will crow but
dogs will bark and
dawn will glow through
mud-spattered glass.

I own no white linen hankies, no rich
napery. There's an absence of
hygienic bidets. You will scratch
the itch, your nose will
run, we will raise a cloud of dust.

I have no refinement
to give. It's all
knobs and scabs. Watch me
roll on the floor. I leave
a trail.

--Penelope Ocha
©1980

Objet D'Affection*
for Mary Ann

Although you are open in mid-room
for the others,
for me,
I have glassed you off.
A marble woman,
You marked some old Greek grave.
Your depthless eyes see everything.
Standing back in allowed admiration,
I lose the lovely habits of your days.

I will never be told what you thought or lived;
I won't know who you were.

Keeping this distance,
I cannot touch your sculptured skirt.
Your mouth of stone eludes me.
You will always be a secret.

--Lisa Fenton

**Inspired also by an unpolished marble statue
of a woman with a cloak made about 1,000
years ago. She resides in the Dallas Museum
of Fine Art.*

Affair Exchange

I have many semi-sided words at hand.
They are self-taught and easily used.
These are your little visions I manipulate.
These are film clips I've edited
to the perfect scene of desiring.

There are kits if lives I could tell you about.
I have revealed those details that would win you

Tell me
who is it you'd most enjoy seeing here?

Here is my great myth and your huge expectations
Here are my lies, my wish
And then, there is whatever you can spare to trade for them.

But despite all this and everything you ask
some things must remain ungiven, unspoken, unseen

One risk can not be taken

Only then do we get what we want

--Lisa Fenton

For a long time, starting in my early years,
A sound, and cries most fearsome have been within my ears.
The source of these I could not then define -
I did not know that they were only mine.
This sound, these cries that no one but me hears:

The sound - my world is torn apart!
The cries - the anguish in my heart!

The source of these now becomes quite clear -
The loss, through death-in-life, of all that I hold dear.
The loss in death is but cruel works of fate.
The loss in life from lessons learned too late.
The fault is mine, the cause my weaknesses and fear:

The sound - my world is torn apart!
The cries - the anguish in my heart!

The cries are not for me alone -
For sins for which I can't atone,
For fear and guilt and loneliness and shame,
With the sound and with the cries they came
And added to my drowning soul a stone:

The sound - my world is torn apart!
The cries - the anguish in my heart!

Would that I could unfeeling be
And still the love that is so much of me,
That I could run away and safely hide
And shut away the pain I feel inside.
The stilling of *these* only then might be:

The sound - my world is torn apart!
The cries - the anguish in my heart!

The pain is there still, but *now* I know
That in my grief there *is* a place to go.
The light of our love shines in my darkness still!
The strength of that love, the power of it will
Rebuild the world that is torn apart
And still the cries within my anguished heart!

-- Winn

To Al

I love you, my precious one!
I have since time-out-of-mind,
Before there was a sun
Or a universe defined.

I am in love with you so very much!
You are my heart, my mind, my very soul.
All my needs are you, and with your touch
You heal the wounds of life and make me whole.

You are my life, all that I want and need!
With your love, you shield and nurture me.
From the bonds of self I have been freed
And given strength to live, to love, to be.

To you and only you do I belong!
All that I am and have, I give to you alone.
Our love in love's own strength grows strong.
As I am yours, I know you are my own.

I want the world to hear this joyous hymn
My fulfilled soul will sing through all eternities
Of love with no beginning and no end.
I pledge my love now and beyond all infinities.

-- Winn

Closure

Do you know how trying
these Sunday phone calls are,
when you ask me of Thanksgiving plans
when autumn's dying leaves
are falling around me
and bared branches
expose my windows to the world?

Have you sensed the hush
muting my honesty,
or the hesitations
tainting the truth
with grey tones of deception?
These "little lies" amass at once
forming a gigantic rock
pressing against my heart.
And I'm no Sisyphus in strength,
although the rock may weigh the same.

I am stifled by this armour
that attached itself to my skin
the moment I let myself love women.
My encumbered movements
are indiscernible to a stranger's glance,
but to you, mother,
the vague mumblings
of your daughter's voice must draw question marks
around your heart.

And today we spoke of familial love,
and I was relieved
to be conversing across the miles;
for I couldn't have borne
the softness of your brown eyes upon me.

I couldn't have borne
the softness and the stone
for a minute or two.
I would have been compelled
by this voice inside me
to forsake the stone for the softness.
The armour would have dropped
right there before us,
never to be between us again.

This voice would have risen
to make me stand alone in my conviction
with the softness before me.
And in that moment of courage
I would have saved our love
from this gnawing deception.
I would have defied the rock and the armour
in defense of our love,
with five brief words
lilting into the softness:
"I am a lesbian, mother."

And the "I would have's"
are still with me,
but I feel myself drawing closer
to that moment of courage.
When it comes, please remember,
that I'll be saying all of it
for the love we share
and your softness.

--Jan Braummiller

Changing Woman's Sonnet

Moon she spirals
To move the planets out of our eyes
Slips her age by us lithely
Her words wizen but do not calm

When sun buckles down
Spreads boisterous in leaving
Calls out from the pasture
Moon gestures quietly
When romance nods to her
Throwing off coverlets of purple
Rising again to lace hands of gold
On the folds of this sundown's veranda.

Book on the floor
Languishes falling back with time
Couched in the line of your hand
Traces a small searching muse
We have talked of tomorrow
As if it harbors no uncertainty
But are caught by love
Which has found no root
To grapple onto days of turmoil

I am calling out choices
That turn into orbits
So still time must argue me
To call out securities
Which darken and boil
Near a new kettle.
A need for silver
Orbits my shoulder
Elusive and formless
Far from any moon.

Seasoned so to this path that sways
I paint love again without reason
Past parables I want
But to feel the changes you honor
And I sing to free this promenade
To a future without a tempo.

We'll gather lithe sounds
Only to spill them
We'll laugh and name our revelry
We'll notice which crescents time to us
Then we'll sway the pulse of our talk
To choose for our love:
The orbit which has no pattern.
We'll argue the timing of a dream
And hope not for eternity--

--Laura Koplewitz
December 1978



arning

By Dorothy Feola

The first time I heard it, I wasn't quite sure I **had** actually heard it. Laurel seemed to be sure I hadn't. Which just goes to show you that even Laurel can (sometimes) be wrong. But then there was that second time -- the second time I was **sure** I had heard it, only -- I wasn't sure if it was a joke being played on me or if I might possibly be imagining it -- thereby embarking on some kind of breakdown.

I was kind of hung over that morning. You see, I haven't got much of a capacity for drinking, and all it usually takes is more than two drinks to give me a headache and/or aggravate my colitis. But, all the same, it seemed like I was spending more and more evenings, after the bookstore closed, heading straight for the women's bars. (And since I was usually on the late shift, there until closing time, I usually ended up one of the last to leave the bar.) Of course, there was nothing that said I had to order hard liquor. But I usually did. Maybe it had something to do with masochism; but I rather doubt it. It was more like a way of killing time through the lonely nights. And, needless to say, the nights were all the more lonely when you loved someone -- and were helpless to do anything about it.

On that particular morning, I felt more tired and drained than anything else. And on top of that, my back was killing me from falling asleep on the couch. Again. The fact of the matter was that Laurel, the young woman I loved and 'used to live with,' wouldn't let me sleep with her anymore. But she didn't seem to mind if I slept on her (our?) couch from time to time. (I had this feeling that if I didn't wake up crippled and sore all over, she would have taken that away from me as well.)

"Here. It's hot. Drink it slowly."

"Yes, mother," I mumbled, sitting up straight on the couch, reaching out for the mug. It was a mistake. I winced as too many muscles in my body cried out with pain and soreness. "For chrissake, you'd think this couch would know me by now," I complained. "Instead of embracing me, it's still fighting me. It's a Goddamn torture rack, that's what it is."

I drank from the mug. It was hot tea, with milk, without sugar. I liked coffee better. My colitis didn't. I even liked sugar. But I had a tendency to gain weight much too easily. When we were (really) living together, Laurel would manage to make sure I was relatively free from temptation by volunteering to do most of the cooking. (Then, of course, there was the fact that she was just a much better cook than I was.) At

least that was one thing that hadn't seemed to change; in her own peculiar way(s), she was still looking after me, even now.

"Perhaps if you tried using some of that romantic dialogue, which seems to come so natural to you, it would respond more pleasingly," she said, quiet but deliberate, standing there, looking down at me. "I'm sure you've had lots of success with it in the past."

"The past is the past, and there's only one woman in my life that I really want to respond to everything I do or say," I assured her, meeting her gaze directly. "But she won't even let me touch her anymore."

She paused, significantly, then, soberly, "That's one of the privileges you gave up when you decided to walk out on me."

"But I wanna make it up to you -- you know that," I reminded her.

"Do I?" With that, she turned and went back into the kitchenette, leaving a heavy silence in the room.

Stubborn bitch, I thought, feeling hopeless, everything being as it was at that moment. Wasn't I even entitled to one mistake - ? Even if it did take me several months to be positive that's exactly what it was. I just felt like I had to see for myself what it was like to be really free and independent again, after living with someone for over three years. After all, I practically came back on my hands and knees, didn't I? What the hell more could she ask for in the way of personal satisfaction? And if that wasn't all she was after -- why hadn't she changed the lock on the door? -- or demanded the key back? -- or even tried to convince me that we really didn't love each other anymore? Just giving me a hard time, that's all, making me suffer and pay the price for what now seemed like rash stupidity. I mean, here she was, letting me crash every time I needed to come home again, needed not to be alone, or with a comparative stranger, needed sometimes just to be near her -- Oh, well, it was hard enough for me to figure out when I was in shape for it, my head clear and everything. All I knew was that my life had been going steadily downhill lately, and more and more things were mattering less and less.

"Is this your Saturday at the store?" she called from the kitchenette.

"No. At least, I don't think so. At this point in my life, I'm never sure of anything anymore." I grinned to myself. "What did you have in mind? I'm yours for the taking."

"You'd be a hell of a lot better off if you'd go home and do your homework," she told me, leaning against the frame of the archway that led to the kitchenette, her hands wrapped around a familiar mug. I was looking across the room at her, questioning. "You left your notes on the snack bar again," she informed me, in answer to my silent inquiry. "You're cutting your deadlines a little close, aren't you - ? Seems to me you were working on that very same review almost two weeks ago. And it doesn't look much different now than it did then: first draft jibberish."

She always did have a good memory for details. I sighed heavily, practically slamming my mug down on the coffee table. "So---?" she persisted.

I shrugged lazily. "So I just don't dig what I'm doing, the kind of writing I'm doing now. This is routine shit work, and I'm a creative writer -- but I don't know, I just don't seem to have the time or energy or inspiration anymore to do the kind of writing I really enjoy doing."

"But you're getting paid for this kind of writing," she reminded me. "The kind of publications that are using your stuff now, there's just no place in them for poetry or short fiction about women loving women. And, besides, someone has to do it, so why not you? You're capable and you can use the extra money."

"Well, I don't like this kind of writing, and I feel like I'm faking the whole thing," I admitted to her. "Sure I can do it, but it's draining me 'cause I don't like the feeling of disliking and not being satisfied with almost everything I write lately. I'm not a critic -- I'm not even a journalist -- it's hard for me to stick to the facts. -- I like to improvise, let my imagination run wild, use it to the extreme."

"Yes, I realize that discipline hasn't been one of your more obvious traits." I didn't even give her the satisfaction of looking at her. Here I was, spilling my guts out to her, and all she could do was be bitchy about the whole thing. I took a cigarette out of the wooden box on the table, doing a good job, I thought, of ignoring the dig. "If you go back to working full time again, you could write the kind of things that make you more comfortable, go back to what makes you happiest. For peanuts. Or nothing. Or you can work it this way, with a job you really like, and make this extra money. It's a choice only you can make."

Some laugh. Once I got back to New York, it was hard enough finding a job, especially one I liked well enough, to begin with. I lit the cigarette with the table lighter, inhaling deeply, thinking about the steady, well paying job *she* was settled into. "Maybe I can find me another woman to supplement my income," I replied, easily, in retaliation against her obvious complacency.

"I'll get your notes. Then you can get the hell out of here."

I had obviously struck a nerve. Even if it might only have been a matter of pride. Well, shit, who cared. Even if she tossed me out on my ass, I was still glad I had said it. Now -- if I only had the inclination to turn the statement into (a) reality --

While she was busy, I slipped into the john, carrying my tea and cigarette with me. I purposely took my time, attending to all the necessary proprieties. Then, since I still had some clothes and underwear hanging around, I changed in the bedroom, putting on fresh underwear and a clean shirt.

I came back into the living room, barefooted, holding clean socks. My

notes were on the coffee table; Laurel was sitting on the arm of the couch, leaning to one side, her arm along the top, the other hand around the mug in front of her. With her relaxed and leaning to one side like that, I could really appreciate how she looked, in a gray silk robe, with aquamarine designs, Oriental in nature. The robe must have been new, since I didn't recognize it. (For just a moment, I couldn't help wondering if anyone else had seen her in it.) Her hair was a natural ash blond, straight, and hung below her shoulders. Now it was brushed into softness, parted in the middle of her head, hanging half over one shoulder. All that time, taking things (our relationship) for granted, I had almost forgotten how lovely she was to look at. How, when we had first become (sexually) intimate, she almost literally took my breath away.

"I want to come home again," I told her, feeling it, like a pain, down deep in my gut. "I want things to be the way they used to be."

She gazed directly at me for a few moments, expressionless, then got to her feet. "You have your own place now, Jamie, and I think you should go home to it." She hesitated only slightly, then turned and went into the bedroom.

I sat down on the edge of the couch, feeling dejected and miserable. It was then that I noticed the thick, dried red stuff all over the pages that my notes were written on. *Oh, my God*, I thought immediately, *I must have gotten into a fight last night and --* And what? Come back here and bled all over my notes? Somehow that just didn't sound quite right. Even for me. It just didn't add up. For one thing, where were the bruises? The ones on the outside, the ones that were noticeable. There just weren't any of those.

I went to the bedroom doorway, carrying the papers. "Laurel, there's blood all over my notes--"

"It's ketchup," she informed me, not even turning around from the mirror.

"Ketchup? Are you sure?"

She turned from the dresser mirror, buttoning her blouse, clad only in the blouse and panties. "Reasonably so---since my leftover piece of meatloaf is missing---the dirty dish was in the sink---the rye bread was on top of the refrigerator---and the ketchup bottle and empty milk glass was on top of the snack bar." She shook her head, more than just a bit disapprovingly. "Really, Jamie, the very least you can do is clean up after yourself," she reminded me.

"Oh, yeah, I remember now," I recalled, nodding. "I was hungry when I came in. But I knew what your answer would be---so I settled for food instead." I shrugged. "I've been doing a lot of that lately: substituting, learning to be satisfied with one thing in place of another."

"It won't hurt you. Everyone does it, at one time or another. In fact, it helps most people to cope with the world around them."

We just stood there, looking at each other. It was almost too much for me. "Can I kiss you---if I promise to leave right away?" There was a slight pause on her part, then she dropped her eyes, shaking her head. "---It's been a long time---"

"I'm just not ready yet." She raised her eyes to mine---and I could almost see my (own) pain reflected in them. "Please, Jamie, don't make things any more difficult than they already are."

I had this feeling I should be saying something. Warm words of reassurance or something. Anything. But there was a pleading in her eyes that brought home some guilt, dropping it right on the doorstep of my conscience. And there it stood, like a dead weight I wasn't able to move out of the way. I forced myself to turn (from it), and went back into the living room. Before I was able to think about any other action, I switched on the radio, finding some music. I threw myself down on the (unfriendly) couch, hoping the music would help to drown out any depressing thoughts my feelings were about to serve up to me. Closing my eyes, I felt more than weary, wishing I could just turn off my entire life for a while. Perhaps (even) for good.

Now---I remember closing my eyes, letting the soft music on the radio just wash over me---trying to concentrate on it, pushing away, temporarily, any thoughts and feelings that were going to be too disagreeable---and I must have started to doze off---(then) I was brought abruptly back, consciously aware of sharp words---a news bulletin---moving in, taking the place of restful music. It seemed as if the whole atmosphere of the room was suddenly charged with urgency---forcing me to open my eyes to attention. I listened to the words as they were repeated: "---that's a four-alarm fire, blazing out of control---"

I jumped to a sitting position as the newscaster repeated the address. "Laurel--!" I yelled, dashing for the phone, which stood on the counter of the snack bar.

"What's all the racket about?" Laurel's voice came from behind me.

"---My apartment house is on fire---" I muttered, already dialing the phone.

"What---? How do you know that? And who are you calling?"

"---Chippy."

"Chippy? What are you calling her for?"

"She's there. She met someone at THE DUTCHESS last night---they were really coming on to each other---a subway ride back to Brooklyn---you know---"

"Still play the good-natured cavalier, as always," she commented, dryly.

Just as I turned to look at her, wondering how she could still continue being her own calm, bitchy self in the face of what was happening, a sleepy voice said, "---Yeah, hello---"

"Chippy, it's Jamie---"

"Jamie's not here. Try the phone number at East 27th."

"Chippy, wake up, damnit! Get the hell out of there!-the apartment house is on fire!"

"What-?!"

There was a pause.

"What the fuck are you doing-? Are you still there?"

"Jamie, what's going on, calling me at this hour of the morning, joking around like this---? This isn't a bit funny. What the hell time is it, anyway?"

"Are you nuts-?! Just get out of there!" I shouted. "And grab my new typewriter if you have the time," I added, as a second thought, now that I knew she was still safe.

"Nothing, it's just Jamie---" I heard her saying, her mouth obviously away from the phone. "Go back to sleep, Jamie, you've just had a bad dream, that's all," she told me.

"Wait-! Don't hang up!" I ran my fingers through my hair, trying to think of what I might do to convince her. "Listen---listen to me---go look out the window---yeah, that's it, just look out the window---"

"What for?"

"Just do it, Goddamnit! Just look out the windows in that room---"

There was a slight pause, then a sigh. "Oh, all right, if that'll satisfy you."

Soon she was back. "There's nothin' there," she told me, tiredly.

"Whaddya mean, nothin'-? There has to be---those are the windows facing the street mentioned---"

"What am I supposed to be lookin' for, anyway?"

"Fire equipment---police---all kinds of stuff like that."

"Nope, nothin' like that out there. Just a few parked cars---buses---taxicabs---some people---all that regular, everyday stuff. Can I go back to bed now?"

"You better get some clothes on and check it out anyway," I warned her, the shadow of a doubt already working inside my head.

"Check what out, for chrissake?"

"The fire, stupid! Do it! And if you let anything happen to you, I'll kill you myself!" I slammed the phone down, confused. "Now that was a smart thing to say," I mumbled to myself. I glanced up at Laurel, who was leaning against the stool beside me, fully clothed. I shrugged. "Oh, well, she knows what I mean, I guess."

"No fire?"

"Apparently not." I shook my head, wondering what to make of it. "I just can't understand it---"

"Well, what made you think there was a fire in the first place?"

"A news bulletin came over the radio."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, of course I'm sure," I snapped, automatically. But---was I really? I moved around the room, being aware of doing almost a restless pace. "Maybe---maybe they made a mistake with the address. -It could happen."

"Get a news station---" she suggested. "If they'll have it on a music station, they're bound to have it on a news station."

"Good idea," I agreed, going for the radio. "A four-alarm fire---the local news stations will be sure to repeat it from time to time."

Hardly speaking at all, we listened to twenty minutes of news. None of it had anything to do with what we were waiting to hear. "Well---I've got things to do," Laurel finally declared, slipping off the stool. "You stay here and listen, if you like, while I go out and do the laundry. If there's any validity at all to it, it's certain to be on the local news eventually."

I felt myself frowning at the somewhat bored tone of her voice. I got up from the couch just as she came across the room. "And just what do you mean, 'if there's any validity at all'?" I confronted her, standing directly in her path. I searched her face, but came up blank. Nothing unusual about that, since she could be very good at hiding her feelings when she wanted to. Which, I had always suspected, was a great deal. Only, what *she* obviously never suspected was that she could very seldom fool me. She only thought she could. Because I let her. Because I had this strong feeling that she would be turned off by anyone, even me, trying to get into her skin and, perhaps, finding out what *really* made her tick. But it had gone on too long. And it had become a habit. Then a way of life. "You think I'm lying, don't you?"

She sighed, tiredly, shaking her head. "No, I don't think you're lying."

"Oh, yeah, you do, you think I'm lying," I nodded, trying to control my temper. I stepped away from her, feeling my fingers curl into fists. "And just what the hell could I hope to gain from such a pathetic tale as this?" I demanded. Her silence seeped into me. "My God, you must think I've completely flipped out."

"I'm not sure what to think anymore---you've been doing so many irresponsible things lately---"

"And it's mostly because I don't know what to do with myself anymore---I can't even think straight---because I want us to be a couple again. I love you. I think you still love me. We shouldn't be living apart the way we are. I told you I'd do anything to show you how sincere I am about this---but you don't seem to want to give me a chance."

"I've told you---I'm just not ready to make any real decisions yet." She turned away, and I thought she was going to leave the room, but then she turned back again. "You were gone about four months; the very least you can do is give me at least that long to make up my mind."

Four months. Seemed more like a year. Actually, it didn't even take me that long to realize that I had made a mistake. But once I got back to New York, I had to find a job and a decent place to stay, be together enough in a number of respects, so it wouldn't look as if I had an ulterior motive when I asked to be taken back. And since it was the truth, and there were no other reasons than my loving her, missing her, and wanting her back, it was something that was very important to me. Even though I practically crawled back.

Before I left, we had discussed the split rationally, and parted without any hassles, in a quite civilized manner. Laurel would never have had it any other way, you could bet on that. Now, on the other hand, if it had been her leaving me, I would probably have decked her. And wrecked the apartment as well. That was the difference between us: I showed everything on the outside when I felt emotional enough about it. Which was a great deal of the time. Because so many things consciously bothered me.

"I guess I should tell you that I have a date tonight," her voice cut into my silent thoughts.

I was surprised, disappointed, but I tried not to show it. "With a woman?" Stupid question. But, even so, it seemed important that I ask.

"Of course it's a woman. Would it make you feel any better if it was a man?"

"Worse." If possible. "I hope you enjoy yourself." Like hell.

"Thanks. I'm sure I will." The tone of her voice met the coolness of my own. Could she, likewise, be attempting to hide some other feelings, I wondered. Christ, didn't it ever stop, trying to outguess each other?

She started for the bedroom.

"Who is she? Do I know her?" I just couldn't stop myself. We had never discussed what (who) we were involved in individually, either while we were apart or now, while we were separated, and it had become like an unspoken rule between us. So now I was breaking the rules again. So what else was new?

"No." She didn't turn around to look at me. "Someone I met just before you came back. An older woman. A fashion designer."

"Worldly and sophisticated, I suppose," I volunteered, making it more of a statement than a question. Laurel would just be the type to go from one extreme to the other, trying to avoid making the same mistake twice. I, of course, was the type to make the same mistake over and over again. And still not take the hint. It wasn't that I was dense, you see, it's just that I was a different type person. I learned from my mistakes, I guess, but---I guess I just had to be sure before I could change something or leave it alone altogether. Just look at the fuckin' mess I made of/in my life by doing something that could be considered, by my standards, 'impulsive.'

"In her own way, I guess," Laurel answered my 'statement.' "Actually, she's quite unassuming for someone in her position."

"Good for her," I responded, unimpressed.

She turned to glare at me, pausing only briefly, then, "Any more questions?"

"Just one. And just how do I compete with that?"

Silence. Then, "Up until six months ago there was never any competition where you were concerned, Jamie, and that's a fact."

"And now?"

I heard her sigh, and she closed her eyes for just a moment. "Just go home, Jamie. Everything seems so complicated when I talk to you now. --I just can't think straight when you're around." And she turned and went into the bedroom.

Well, there was only one thing left to do: kill myself. I mean, things couldn't have gotten much worse. Could they? And if I didn't do it right then and there, I might never get around to doing it. Then I'd be forced to endure all this crap for who knew how much longer.

But first I would light another cigarette and make myself a cup of instant coffee. *With sugar*. Then I would--- Well, I'd cross that bridge when I came to it.

When Laurel left with the laundry (some of it mine, no doubt), I assured her that I would be gone by the time she got back. She said "fine" and I said "okay" and we tried to avoid direct eye contact. Only we weren't completely successful at it. And I wanted so badly to hold her and ask her not to go out with that older woman and to stay home with me and make love instead. So, probably sensing another confrontation of sorts, she made a hasty exit from the apartment. For just a moment I considered jumping out of the window---just as *she* was passing under it. Well, at least I hadn't completely lost my sense of humor, peculiar as it was.

I was gathering my stuff together, getting ready to leave, when the radio (which had been on all the while) made the announcement again. Automatically, I dropped whatever was in my hand(s) at the time and, without thinking, ran to the door, opening it---then to the window, opening it--- By the time I consciously realized that these were just futile reflex actions, the news bulletin was over. Damn--! Again when no one else was in the room. But at least this time I knew for sure that I had heard it.

I turned off the radio and went for the phone. As I dialed, I noticed, with some dismay, that my hands were far from steady. A few more weeks under this kind of stress and strain, I thought to myself, and they'd be carrying me out in a strait jacket. "Chippy, did you check the building?" I asked as soon as she answered.

There was a heavy sigh at the other end of the phone. Then, quietly, "Listen, Jamie, you didn't tell me when you offered me the keys to your apartment that I'd have to take on the job of janitor as well. What the hell is this all about, anyway?" When I told her everything that had happened, she just replied, "So they made a mistake in the address, that's all."

"On two different stations?" I shook my head, as if she could see me. "That's highly unlikely."

"Why don't you call the stations," she suggested. "That is, if you're really sure of what you heard," she added, as a second thought.

"What, you too?"

"Laurel didn't believe you, huh?"

"Never mind about that for now," I brushed it aside, determined, for the time being at least, not to let it get the best of me. "The important thing is that I know what I heard. And now I'm sure I heard it twice."

There was a slight pause on the other end, then, "Okay, look---you make the calls to the stations---and I'll make a call of my own."

It took me a while, but eventually I was able to get through to the proper people connected with, first, one newscast, then the other. I was told that *no fire of any significance had been reported in the borough of Manhattan for at least forty-eight hours*. I questioned the information verbally, but, for the most part, accepted it both times without even arguing with myself. The news station suggested I *check with the fire department closest to the area I was concerned about if it would make me feel any better*.

Just as I hung up the second time, the phone rang. It was Chippy. "I checked with someone I know who has press connections, and she called back to say that the newspapers don't seem to know anything about any four-alarm fire in Manhattan---"

"Yeah, me too."

"Well, that's that, I guess."

How can that possibly be that? I wondered. But, for some unknown reason, I was extremely hesitant about allowing my feelings (about it) to get out of hand. Even with a close friend like Chippy.

"Listen, I've got an idea," she went on. (Too cheerful, I thought.) "Susan has to leave soon---so why don't we meet for lunch in about an hour and a half." I hesitated further. Too long, I guess. "Listen, we can talk," she went on, at the sound of my silence. "I think, just between us, you and me, it's about time you made some decisions of and on your own. Limbo don't seem to be working out so good for you, if you know what I mean. And you're not alone, pal, 'cause I'm starting to feel like my life is goin' nowhere too."

I felt, as far as I myself was concerned, I knew what she was getting at. And, Christ, she was so right. I guess I had to hear it from someone else

before I could make up my mind to get off my ass and do something about it. I wasn't sure what exactly---but all of a sudden I was feeling stronger about making some definite decisions. And the first decision concerned my place of dwelling. "Okay," I told her, ready to handle first things first. "But let's make it near there. I want to check with the fire department near that area, then I'll need your help---to clear out my apartment."

"Maybe she was putting you on about having a date tonight," Chippy suggested, sprinkling an abundance of salt over her cheese omelet.

"Put that damn salt shaker down," I cautioned her. "You're going to eat yourself to death and turn into a pile of garbage one of these days. Your eating habits are really abominable, you know that."

"Yeah, well, they only seem to bother you when you got things on your mind," she reminded me.

"If Laurel had you for only one month, you would feel a big difference in your body," I told her, in spite of the fact that her body looked pretty good from the outside.

"Is that an offer?" she grinned over her chocolate eggecream. "Besides, you're just jealous because your colitis won't allow you to eat all the things you'd really like to."

"I wish you would start taking Laurel more seriously," I said, wondering if I should start taking her *less* seriously myself. "So she's kind of square, but she's been good for me, you have to admit that. For one thing, my colitis bothers me much less now than before she insisted I look after my diet. And look at all the weight I've lost. I smoke less. I drink less. I feel more relaxed. I'm in much better shape than I ever was. At least I used to be, anyway."

She tilted her head slightly to one side, looking directly across at me. "Seems to me that, except for telling me that the fire department was no help to you, you've done nothing but talk about Laurel since you came in here. Now, are you really thinking of moving all your stuff out of the apartment and leaving for some state where they think you talk funny?"

I laughed quietly, thinking of the women I had stayed with for a short time in San Francisco, who (had) teased me about my 'New York accent.' (Little did they realize that a Bronx accent does not necessarily a New York accent make.) "Listen, Brooklyn," I came back at her, "you and I both know that we could go upstate or out on the island, or even to Westchester or Staten Island, never leaving New York, and they'd still think we talked funny."

"Guess you're right," she mumbled, just before draining her glass. "Is it okay if I order another eggecream or am I in for another lecture?"

"It's your body," I smiled, tolerantly. Actually, for all outward ap-

pearances, she was very pleasing to look at: average height, kind of wiry, green eyes, her hair a long shag, the color of honey. I had met her before I met Laurel, when we were both in the same C-R group.

"Listen, getting back to your earlier question," my thoughts brought me back (as usual?) to Laurel. "You know Laurel---do you think she would lie about going out on a date just to, say, annoy me or make me feel bad?"

She shook her head without hesitation. "You or me, maybe. In fact, probably. But Laurel, no. Besides, she's gettin' back at you just doin' nothin' and she don't even have to get mud on her bloody scruples. And, on top of it all, she probably feels all justified and everything 'cause she knows you're on a kind of guilt trip. You diggin' this?" I nodded. "Good. I sure as hell hope so." And she went back to eating her omelet.

I sighed deeply, pushing away my half-eaten food. I leaned on my elbows, my chin against my interlaced fingers. "I really feel like I just gotta get away or I'm gonna go nuts. I can't take much more of this--- And this fire business---it might very well be the beginning of some kind of breakdown. Either I imagined it---or someone is playing tricks on me."

"Who would do something like that?" she frowned.

"No one I can think of," I admitted. "That's the reason I think I should just pick up and go. Either there's some crazy person on my tail or I'm the crazy person. Either way, my hanging around is just gonna cause more trouble. ---I'm unhappy---Laurel's unhappy---"

"Oh, shit, you know," she muttered. I looked up at her. She put down her fork and seemed to take a deep breath, looking down at her hands, on the table in front of her. "Look---why don't you stay with me---we could live together---even as a couple---we could take care of each other ---since we both, you know, we could both use someone who needs us---"

Stunned, I was at a total loss for words. Out of the blue like that, I was completely taken off guard.

She glanced up at me almost timidly. "It doesn't have to be permanent---and, who knows, we might even get to feel comfortable enough with it to enjoy it on a full time basis."

"Chippy---what are you trying to say---?" I finally found some words. But I felt I had to say more before she answered me. "We don't feel that way about each other. It just wouldn't be fair to either of us, since we don't love each other."

"Sure we do," she assured me.

"Well, of course, but it just isn't the same thing. It's, you know, like Platonic." We had discussed such things between ourselves individually, as well as in groups, so I knew that Chippy believed, like myself, that lesbians could share love without getting sexually involved.

"And that's terrific, right?" She leaned over toward me in a sort of conspiratorial way. "See, we like each other, really like each other, and

we get along really good, and that's what it's all about." She hesitated, and I waited, getting the feeling that it was not the time to interrupt her thoughts or feelings. Something I thought a bit odd was coming off here, and I felt it was entirely up to her to tell me what it was all about. In her own way, in her own time. Sure enough, she soon went on, softly, earnestly, "I'm just getting so tired of running around all the time---in and out of relationships---one night stands--- I'm gonna be thirty-two years old for chrissake---isn't it about time I got into a decent, steady, healthy relationship?"

"Well, sure, I understand, but---"

"And the same can be said for you. We can't keep bouncing around, man."

Oh, boy, this had to be handled just right. "Listen to me, my friend," I started. "None of us has to 'settle' for what you're suggesting anymore. Too many lesbians in straight marriages have had to do that in the past. Even now, though it's not as common anymore, I'm sure. And, believe me, it isn't much different when two women play at the same game: getting together for many of the wrong reasons. What I mean is that none of us should have to pretend in our private lives. Aren't we forced to do enough of that? And women like us, you and me, two dykes, we've got something really special going. Now tell me" -and I reached over and covered her hand with mine, feeling real tenderness and affection- "would you be willing to take the chance of ruining it all just for a desperate stab in the dark?"

I gave her a few moments of silence, to digest it all, let it sink in. Then went on, "This is obviously a bad time for both of us. We're both so vulnerable right now---it would be so easy to give into temptation--- But do you think it would be worth the risk we would be taking if we stopped to realize that our whole friendship could be at stake?"

The pause and the obvious reconsidering going on behind the look of contemplation made me no less than overjoyed that I could manage to have a way with words when I set my mind to it. Truth be known, I would rather have chopped off one of my fingers with a meat cleaver than hurt her over something that could be as serious as what she had been suggesting.

"Okay. But I just don't think I want to see you leaving again," she told me, decisively, holding my hand between both of hers now. "I thought it was a mistake the first time, you know that. But you thought it would be easier without the temptation of Laurel around to inhibit you. Okay, so I felt you were wrong, but I understood, I could feel where you were coming from, especially after a couple of years with the Dragon Lady." (I tried, but I couldn't suppress a quiet laugh at that last bit. But I wasn't really amused. Well---not too much, anyway.) "It was a mistake though that kind of effected me too. When you weren't here, I felt lost. I

even thought of going up to see Laurel, just to get the feel of you that I knew would be still there; that's how desperate I was becoming. But it taught me what I should have known already: that I need to know you're around, within phoning distance. For me to say "can I come up?" or "can you meet me?" Maybe it's a little selfish, but it's how I feel. ---I guess it's 'cause sometimes I feel like you're the only one who really cares about me. And I guess it's 'cause you're the only real close friend I have--even though I know a lot of people. See, it's not the number that counts, is it?"

"No, you're right, it certainly isn't," I agreed. And perhaps it was only natural that she feel the way she did, since we both seemed to be 'loners' before we met in C-R, then started 'palling around' together. When Laurel came into my life, even before we started living together, I always made sure I left time (in my life) for Chippy. Even though she and Laurel never really hit it off together. But, still, I was very touched by these sudden expressions of emotion. Only, if anything, it made my decision about leaving (again) even more difficult.

"Just promise me that you'll try to work things out, either with Laurel or without her, before you make any definite decisions about going anywhere else," she said, as if she could read my mind.

Actually, she didn't even have to ask, since I probably wouldn't even have moved back to the Bronx without at least one more try at a reconciliation with Laurel. I nodded. "You got it." I paused, thoughtful, wondering if I should recommend what I had in mind. I decided I would. "How about we really tie one on tonight, just you and me," I suggested.

"Your colitis---the way you've been off your diet lately, you'll be sick for a week."

I shrugged. "So what? One last binge."

She looked tempted, considering it for a few moments. Then she shook her head. "Better not. We'll keep ourselves busy moving you from your place to mine. A light, restful evening with the TV, then tomorrow you can go see Laurel again. With a good night's sleep behind you, and a clear head, one last confrontation with Laurel could pretty well be to your advantage. Just lay the law down to her, let her know you mean business, and that you're tired of being stalled and put off. And if that doesn't work, try kicking her in the ass. You can even tell her it's from me." She shook her head, making a careless gesture with her hand. "Forget I said that."

"Oh, I shouldn't tell her it's from you then?" She sort of smiled with a shy, crooked movement of her mouth. It made me laugh. "You haven't even questioned why I find it impossible to stay in that furnished room even for one more night," I reminded her. "Aren't you even curious?"

She shook her head, digging into her omelet again. "You got a hunch, right? Well, that's good enough for me."

And what more trust and loyalty could one ask for in a friend?

She glanced up briefly. "You gonna finish that-? Can't let it go to waste, ya know."

So how come we always seem to fall in love with the wrong person---?

I had a pretty restless night, although I tried not to toss and turn too much, since I was sharing Chippy's bed with her. Obviously I wasn't too successful though, since she took me into her arms sometime during the night, telling me to "relax and get some sleep." And I fell asleep in her arms, at last getting a hint of the kind of comfort and security I had once shared with Laurel.

One impulsive thought crossed my mind before I fell asleep, coming back to me again the next morning. I asked Chippy about it as we sat over a late breakfast in her small kitchen. "If I do decide to leave New York, why don't you come with me. We could both start over again in a new place. Whaddaya say?"

To my surprise, she seemed totally unmoved by the unexpected suggestion. "We'll see what happens, okay?"

I nodded (disappointed?). "Sure."

"I think I'm gonna call Susan and see if she wants to go to an LFI meeting this afternoon. You can drop us off when you drive into the city to see Laurel." She stood up, sliding the chair out behind her. "My mail is over there in the corner---get M.R. or CITY WOMEN and see what the program for today is, willya. I'll go find her number. ---I copied it on something."

As she left the kitchen, I stretched in my chair to where the mail was piled, on a tall wooden stool, which was standing in the corner behind me. I grabbed the newspaper first, folding it at the right page, scanning the dates. Chippy came back into the room with a small slip of paper between her fingers. "What's the program for today?" she asked. I looked directly up into her face, wondering if I should laugh or not. "Well-? Didn't you find it?"

"Oh, yeah, I found it all right," I told her, nodding. "Are you ready for this? The discussion is on *CREATING AND MAINTAINING LESBIAN FRIENDSHIPS*." I looked up again, smothering a grin. "I kind of get the feeling that there should be a sort of subtitle, like: *BY NOT TURNING THEM INTO FRUSTRATING LOVE AFFAIRS*."

We watched each other inside the quietness of the room. Then, quite spontaneously, we both burst into the kind of laughter that accompanies the sudden feeling of relief. And it was exactly what we both needed. It shattered a slight tenseness between us that had been threatening to become thicker as the day wore on.

"What the hell was happening there, anyway?" Chippy wanted to

know.

I shrugged, only guessing. "I suppose our better judgment was warning us to be careful of traps."

"Come again," she looked puzzled.

"Last night---it was nice---it could easily become a habit---if we let it. Any excuse under the sun would do---like a trap closing shut." I emphasized the last by closing my fingers into a tight fist.

"Oh, yeah, that." She hesitated, then, "Open your fist." I did. "And keep it open until such a time if and when we close it willingly. And not before. Dig?" I nodded, a bit surprised at the (sudden) authority in her voice. "And, shit, man, get out of those faded jeans and into some romantic, courting clothes. Furthermore, you're gonna do it up right: flowers, candy, wine, the whole bit. And you will be your own charming, gracious self."

"Let us not forget," I reminded her, "that Laurel is not exactly the impressionable type. Especially where yours truly is concerned, all things considered."

"You'll work it out," she remarked, easily, reaching for the phone. But as she raised her hand to dial, she suddenly turned back to me, more sober than I would have expected. "How about we both start trying to get our individual acts together, pal. I don't like seeing you unhappy and, much as I hate to admit it, I'm afraid that's how it's going to be for you without Laurel. As for me---now that I've finally met someone that I just might possibly develop some kind of meaningful relationship with, I don't want to be tempted to take the easy way out and leave town with someone I'm naturally comfortable with and already care about. --- Especially since our 'better judgments' are apparently determined to keep us apart." She winked. "Now get lost, willya."

She turned back to the phone, and as I passed out of the kitchen, I touched the back of her neck briefly, gently, impulsively.

She turned and smiled warmly; mostly with her eyes.

There was nothing more appealing than a woman who could smile with her eyes.

Laurel was a natural. In fact, she seldom smiled in any other way.

And just thinking about it, made me feel so Goddamned homesick.

At Chippy's insistence, chorused by her new 'friend,' Susan, I was practically coerced into picking up 'gifts of adoration' on the way into the city. It wasn't so much that I was rebelling because I didn't like the idea; it was more that I had this fear that Laurel would be scornful of this kind of last desperate attempt at salvaging what was left of our (deteriorating?) relationship. Or even worse, she might start to pity me. And that would surely have destroyed what was left of anything positive between us. And probably be the beginning of the end for/of me, since I would hate myself for just not picking up and leaving, as I had con-

sidered doing in the first place.

But I allowed myself to be convinced, giving in almost too willingly, getting the flowers, the candy, and the wine. And it only occurred to me when I was stepping on the elevator, down in the lobby, that she might not even be home. But, just the same, I felt certain that I would not have called ahead of time. After all, the element of surprise was one of the few things I still had going for me. And small comfort that it may have been, I just wasn't about to give it up.

One thing I *had* decided ahead of time was not to use my key, as I had been doing all along. I felt sure it would be best to ring the bell---for all kinds of reasons---some of which I hadn't even wanted to think about.

Just as my finger leaned into the bell, the door flew open; Laurel stood there in her street jacket. I could almost feel my heart sinking as we stood face to face, both of us poised, as if time was suddenly standing still. After what must have been only a few moments, but seemed like much longer, she took what sounded like a deep breath and a sigh at the same time, her body seeming to go suddenly limp, and ended up throwing her arms around me, her body nestling into mine.

Immediately my heart was lifted again, bouncing around, practically knocking itself out being indiscreetly 'uncool.' All the gifts fell to the floor as my arms closed around her to complete the embrace. I stood perfectly still, almost afraid to move, hoping she wouldn't decide (discover?) she had made a mistake.

Just as I was settling into enjoying the whole thing, content to be silent and still (for the time being), I realized that she was trembling in my arms. Immediately I suspected that something was not right. --Since, much as I might hate to admit it, this kind of physical contact between us would hardly have elicited such a reaction. More than curious, I tried to disentangle myself; but she just wouldn't budge. An ominous feeling flooded through me, and I could feel myself actually break out into a sweat.

"What happened?- Did something happen? What happened to you?" Conscious of an annoying feeling of apprehension, closely akin to fear - caused by the strong feeling that anything that could shake *her* up like this was bound to leave *me* devastated-I lifted her into my arms. Only vaguely aware of the fact that it was a rash and impulsive gesture, one that my back wasn't about to appreciate, I came into the room, kicking the 'gifts' out of the way, leaving the door open behind us.

Bending over, dropping her onto the couch, made it just about impossible for her not to let go of me. I sat down on the edge of the seat, right next to her. "All right now---take it easy---stay calm---like me---" I must have been sitting too close to the edge because all I did was shift the position of my legs---and I found myself sitting on the floor. "Don't get upset---" I told her, getting to my knees.

"I was so afraid---I couldn't get you on the phone---I couldn't get Chippy---"

I groaned inwardly, just able to suppress it. If she called Chippy, she must surely have been desperate. "Go on," I encouraged her, covering her hand with my own. I was glad I had eaten a light breakfast.

"---I tried not to worry---but I couldn't help it. Oh, Jamie, I was so worried that something had happened to you."

"Me? What have I got to do with it?"

"---It was the fire---"

"The fire? But I thought---I mean, you were kind of skeptical about all that---"

"That was yesterday. Then I heard it on the radio myself today---and I didn't know what to think---but it frightened me and I've been calling all over---and no one has seen or heard from you yesterday or today---and I just had this bad, almost scary feeling---"

"Wait a minute now," I stopped her, sitting up on the couch again. "Are you trying to say that you heard about the fire on the radio yourself?"

"Yes, I just said that," she nodded.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"On a real radio?"

"What are you doing, giving me a taste of my own medicine? I heard it on the same radio you heard it on. It's the only one in the apartment. -Or have you forgotten so soon?"

I glanced over at the radio, wondering why, after living with us all this time, the damn thing was pulling all this crap on us. The whole situation was way past a joke now, and approaching obscenity. "Maybe the radio and the couch ought to get together and hire themselves out haunting houses or something." Still holding her hand, I stood up. "C'mon, come with me."

"Where?"

"We're gonna check this out in person once and for all. If we come up with nothing, we'll throw the Goddamn radio out. And maybe the couch too. But if we don't do this first, put in a physical appearance together, now, I have this feeling that we'll never be comfortable with it for the rest of our lives. And even then, we're gonna have trouble, but now you heard it too so--- Something is saying that this has got to be done. Now."

As I was pulling her toward the door, she first became aware of my gifts for her scattered all over the floor. And being the neat and tidy person that she is, she automatically started to bend down to pick them up. "Later, later," I told her, propelling her toward the door.

We could see the black smoke for blocks even before we got there; the sky was clouded with it. I felt Laurel move closer to me, her hand lightly touching my arm, indicating that she was seeing the same thing I was. I nodded, silently answering her gesture.

The entire street where my recent apartment house was located was blocked by people, fire apparatus, police, ambulances; all of which compelled me to park the car about two and a half blocks away. We walked quickly, silently, all the rest of the way. When we reached the direct area, we managed to get a close enough view of the activities, standing across the street, near the corner of the next block. It was as close as we could possibly get.

I stood with my hands in the pockets of my jacket, close enough to Laurel to feel her sleeve against mine, spreading my clammy palms against the material on the inside of the pockets. It was a bad fire, with lots of activity going on. It had to be a four-alarm. None of the proceedings seemed to really surprise me. It even gave me a sudden, kind of unusual feeling of freedom. But, Christ, why did I have this almost overwhelming feeling of guilt? Or, rather, more like I should be feeling guilt(y). Why, when I hadn't done anything at all to cause any of this?

I told Laurel to stay where she was and wait, then (I) moved through the crowd, asking questions as casually and discreetly as I could. When I returned to where Laurel stood, I related, "The consensus of opinion seems to be that the fire started from some kind of explosion down in the boiler room. It's an old building, and no one seems that shocked. They say it happened sometime after noon. Today, of course."

"So what I heard on the radio was the truth," Laurel commented. "And what you heard." She was looking directly into my face, apparently at a loss for words. (And I hadn't even told her about the second time I heard it.)

"Yeah," I wondered out loud, "just what *did* I hear?"

She shook her head. "We'll probably never know, Jamie," she said, softly, "but I doubt if worrying about it will do us any good. Why don't we just appreciate it for the kind of miracle it might very well be and just be grateful for everything it will give us."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," I nodded, not one bit surprised at how she was taking it all in her stride. "Only---what do we do with the radio?"

She smiled then, and it was like old times: all in the eyes. Just the way I loved. Then, unexpectedly, she reached for my hand. "For now, we go home and dance to it, slow and close, drinking the wine you brought. Then, later on, we can have a quiet candle light dinner to it, the music soft and soothing. I'll even cook your favorite: spaghetti, with clam sauce. If you promise not to make a hog of yourself and get sick. After all---you don't want to spend the night in the bathroom, now, do you?"

Filled with wonder, and aware that my eyes were stretched open wide, I touched her forehead lightly with my fingers. "Laurel, are you sure you're feeling all right? ---You're beginning to sound like me."

She pulled me away from the people, walking quickly down the street, toward the car. We were still holding hands. I was wondering if she had forgotten, since she usually didn't approve of displays of affection in any place that was the least bit public, let alone on an open street, in broad daylight.

At one point, she stopped abruptly, and, as I practically walked into her, pulled me into a vacant doorway. "I love you, you know that, of course. Seems like I always have, almost from the first day we met. It never occurred to me that I had to keep telling you, since I thought it was quite obvious. ---Why else would we be living, and loving, together all this time?"

After blinking, I just had time for my mouth to fall open, hanging there a moment or two, before she grabbed my hand and started moving again. When we got to the car, she swung me around, just about throwing me up against the fender. "I knew you would be back before long, simply because it just seemed impossible to envision the two of us separated forever. Or even for a prolonged period of time. But if by some chance it had happened, and you hadn't come back, make no mistake, I would have adjusted and coped and learned to live with it. And even though I'm glad that I didn't have to go through all of that, that's why I couldn't take you back so easily. It was a test for myself as well as you. When you finally showed up, I tried so hard to play it by ear, take each day at a time, but it was so hard seeing you there all the time---and, yet, I could never get myself to seriously turn you away---always chased you, leaving the door wide open, so to speak.---Even though I was so apprehensive about giving in too easily. I just couldn't take the chance of making it all too easy for you. And I think you can understand that."

I could. And I believed her. But--- "But when we talked about my leaving, you seemed so, I don't know, civilized and rational about the whole situation. ---It almost seemed as if you didn't care more than the inconvenience of the whole thing. You know, breaking up what had become a kind of routine way of living."

She shrugged easily. "What good would it have done to act otherwise? The seed had already been planted, in your mind and in your heart, and you had to do what you had to do. I could have carried on, did all kinds of hysterical things, and, sure, I could probably have gotten you to stay. But what for? What good would it have done in the long run? You had to leave on your own, free and clear, and find things out for yourself. It was the only way it could have been done." She paused just briefly, her eyes sweeping over me. "Don't you agree?"

I marveled at her perceptiveness, her insight, her strength of will to

handle things the way she felt they should/must be handled. It was admirable. Even if it *was* a bit tough to live with at times. But, shit, none of us were perfect. And I knew that better than most.

"What are you grinning at?" she asked, a bit suspiciously.

I was thinking a lovely thought. "You never told me that you fell in love with me almost from the first day that we met."

"Well, now that I have, I hope you're not going to hold it over my head." I opened the car door for her, still grinning. "Jamie---" I held out my hand to help her into the car. Still grinning. "Oh, go to hell," she snapped, slapping my hand out of the way. She got into the car and slammed the door while my hand was still on the handle. "Now I suppose there'll be no living with you," she muttered through the half-opened window.

I went around to the other side of the car, practically kicking my heels in the air. Life had suddenly become livable again. In fact, it had suddenly become quite desirable, and I was pretty anxious to get on with the business of living it. And, believe me, it was about time.

As I turned the corner at the end of the block, I took one last look at the blanket of smoke, hanging under the daytime sky, and knew I would remember it for as long as I lived.



A Woman's Newsletter

*Free advertising to women, book reviews, poetry
social contacts, calendar listings, special features*

P.O. Box 2306

Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Send \$1.00 for sample issue

Notes on Contributors to This Issue

Jan Braumuller - Lives and writes in Washington, D.C.

Winn Crannell - Lives in Cupertino, Calif. She was active in Santa Clara County's Gay Rights Campaign last year.

Lisa Fenton - Lives in Dallas, Texas. She has been involved in Houston's Gay Radio, was active in picketing "Cruising" last year, and has written for the Lesbian/feminist press for over five years.

Dorothy Feola - Lives in the Bronx, New York, where she edits and publishes the "Women's Network" newsletter. "I just learned recently that my work will appear in an anthology - the first time for me that I know about - put together this year by Counterpoint Press, to be published in 1982."

Betsy Hill - Lives and draws in San Jose, Calif.

Lee Kinard - Lives in Orlando, Florida, where she is working on two books.

Laura Koplewitz - Lives and writes in Northampton, Massachusetts. "I have a B.A. from Hampshire College. My current projects are a slide-tape documentary of the Women's Pentagon Action, a demonstration of over 2,000 women at the Pentagon in Nov. 1980." She plays classical and jazz guitar and piano, and is "outlining a book on interviews with women in music (performers, composers)."

E.I. Louch - Lives and writes in London, England. Her poetry has been published in "Focus" and elsewhere.

Rosalie Nichols (Nikki) - Lives in San Jose, California, where she and her partner Johnie run a print shop, Ms. Atlas Press. She is also Executive Editor of "Lambda News," a Gay community newspaper.

Penelope Ocha - Lives in Seattle, Washington, where she is a dance critic and fashion writer. "I have an undergraduate degree in medieval philosophy and an MA in English. I regret neither, but did not find either to be the path to riches, fame, glory, or even a teaching appointment that I had once desired with all my heart." She is presently collaborating with a Canadian writer on a novel set in the northwest in the '50's. "We are at the stage in the book at which we fly back and forth to work on revisions, yell and scream a lot, and ball up a lot of paper and throw it on the floor. But I have high hopes for the book, and so does my collaborator."

Leslie Powell - Lives in Long Beach, California, where she has been active in the Gay Outdoor Club.

Carolyn Shama - Lives in Santa Clara, Calif. She has written previously for "Lesbian Voices" and is active in M.C.C.-Redwood City.

Johnie Staggs - Lives in San Jose, California, where she and her partner Nikki run a print shop, Ms. Atlas Press. She is a political activist in the Democratic Party, but her true love is graphic arts.

Diane Stein - Lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She writes for "Women's Network" and has a book of short stories coming out from Womenprints Press titled "innocence/experience."

Barbara Stephens - Lives in Berkeley, California, and has been a regular contributor to "Lesbian Voices." She was active in the early Daughters of Bilitis and served as D.O.B. Librarian in San Francisco in the late '50's.

Jan Sutherland - Lives in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Sharon T. - Lives in San Jose, California, and has written for "Lambda News."

Phyllis Yarnold - Lives in Houston, Texas.

THE GAY WEEKLY

Please enter my subscription to *Gay Community News*
(50 issues per year, 50¢ per issue)

6 wks/\$2.00 1 yr/\$17.50 (add 20% for foreign)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Gay Community News, Suite 60, 22 Bromfield St., Boston, MA 02108

All subscriptions sent in sealed envelopes. Make check or money order payable to "GCN". Do not send cash through the mail. Our subscriber list is confidential, and is never sold or used except for mailing GCN.

Gay Women

Write/meet nationally, internationally, with confidentiality and supportiveness through

The Wishing Well

Magazine & Services

Introductory copy \$4 ppd. Write:

P.O. Box 117, Novato, CA 94948

THE NATIONAL GAY TASK FORCE

Enclosed is my contribution of:

☐ \$30 Basic membership

☐ \$35 Foreign member

(outside of Continental U.S.)

☐ \$40 Contributing member

☐ \$45 Household membership (2)

☐ \$50 Sustaining member

☐ \$100 Supporting member

☐ \$500 Sponsoring member

☐ \$1000 Lifetime member

☐ Charge it on my Mastercharge:

Card No. _____

Interbank No. _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

NGTF

80 Fifth Avenue • New York, New York 10011 • (212) 741-5800

Women's Network

c/o Dorothy Feola
2137 Quimby Avenue
Bronx, NY 10473

★ *Newsletter of female self-expression
for lesbian/feminists* ★

(212) 597-7091

NATIONAL EDITION of GAYELLOW PAGES PUBLISHED

Renaissance House announces publication of
GAYELLOW PAGES for USA and CANADA
Eleventh Edition, 1981

This 288-page directory, for lesbians and gay men, of businesses, services, publications, organizations, etc., is the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide of its kind. It is available in bookstores in almost every state and province for only \$6.95 (\$8.50 Canada); or by mail \$8 US funds (outside North America \$9 US funds) from Renaissance House, Box 292 Village Station, New York, NY 10014.

Yes! I care about DINAH and want to help support her! Here's my donation for a renewal ☐ or I'm a new subscriber ☐

☐ \$ 5.00 Supportive Sister ☐ \$10.00 Appreciative Amazon

Mail To: _____

Make Checks Payable to DINAH.

--Thanks, Sister!

Lesbian Activist Bureau P.O. Box 1485 Cincinnati, OH 45201

The Naiad Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 10543
Tallahassee, FL 32302

OUTLANDER

BY Jane Rule

\$8.00 Postpaid

THE MARQUISE & THE NOVICE

by Victoria Ramstetter

"The First Lesbian Gothic"

\$6.00 Postpaid

BLACK LESBIANS

Compiled by J R Roberts

"The First Annotated Bibliography on the Subject"

\$7.00 Postpaid



★ *A Total of 25 Books Available* ★

Women's Network

c/o Dorothy Feola
2137 Quimby Avenue
Bronx, NY 10473

★ *Newsletter of female self-expression
for lesbian/feminists* ★

(212) 597-7091

NATIONAL EDITION of GAYELLOW PAGES PUBLISHED

Renaissance House announces publication of
GAYELLOW PAGES for USA and CANADA
Eleventh Edition, 1981

This 288-page directory, for lesbians and gay men, of businesses, services, publications, organizations, etc., is the most up-to-date and comprehensive guide of its kind. It is available in bookstores in almost every state and province for only \$6.95 (\$8.50 Canada), or by mail \$8 US funds (outside North America \$9 US funds) from Renaissance House, Box 292 Village Station, New York, NY 10014.

Yes! I care about DINAH and want to help support her! Here's my donation for a renewal ☐ or I'm a new subscriber ☐

☐ \$ 5.00 Supportive Sister ☐ \$10.00 Appreciative Amazon

Mail To: _____

Make Checks Payable to DINAH.

--Thanks, Sister!

Lesbian Activist Bureau P.O. Box 1485 Cincinnati, OH 45201

The Naiad Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 10543
Tallahassee, FL 32302

OUTLANDER

BY Jane Rule

\$8.00 Postpaid

THE MARQUISE & THE NOVICE

by Victoria Ramstetter

"The First Lesbian Gothic"

\$6.00 Postpaid

BLACK LESBIANS

Compiled by J R Roberts

"The First Annotated Bibliography on the Subject"

\$7.00 Postpaid



★ *A Total of 25 Books Available* ★