

Bet Power
146 Riverbank Road
Northampton, MA 01060

July 24, 1987

Lou Sullivan
1827 Haight St. #164
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Lou,

Although it's been awhile since I wrote to you last and received your letter, I've thought of you often. I've been very busy and under a lot of pressure at work to carry through a huge project in an unrealistic amount of time this summer and it's been hard finding any time for myself & to relax outside of work. But, I'm very glad to be corresponding with you now and this is very important and valuable for my growth and so I thank you for agreeing to write to me. On my end, you can be secure in the confidentiality of your correspondence to me, too.

I was sad to read that you have AIDS. How are you feeling? I trust you're doing well and getting what you need, taking good care, enjoying life. I've enclosed a magazine I found quite interesting, which I immediately wanted to share with you when I read it. Have you seen this yet? I also enclose a copy of a speech I gave on Lesbians and AIDS at the 1986 Lesbian and Gay Pride March rally in Northampton.

Life is quite amazing, yes, and the older I get, the more I think so. I have been steadily developing my spirituality in the last four or five years, especially in 12-Step Program (AA primarily) and also through Native American and African shamanism/rituals and I'm beginning to explore Tibetan Buddhism. I got to a point of pain and difficulty on my path which required adding extra power to my life. That is what I find my particular brands of spirituality give to me. Though I don't believe in "God", I do believe in my own inner Higher Power/Intuition and in the Lifeforce I feel particularly from the Ocean. So, I meditate three or four times every day and I worship the Ocean whenever I get time to visit and I honor Life in all its aspects.

My process with masculinity amazes me. It seems to parallel the growth in my spirituality, time-wise. I've been taking photos of myself over the past five or six years and steadily my man inside emerges ... my body physically looks more and more masculine each year, especially my face and clothing and stance. Especially my face and hair and voice. At 37, too, I am beginning menopause. I already started "flashing" six months ago. Perhaps this is aiding the deepening masculinity, too ... do you think?

Partly because of the support in your last letter, I was able to go see a psychic healer/channel and tell her (this was the first time I'd ever said this out loud): "I've always known I'm the spirit/soul of a man inside a female body." She was wonderful ... accepting me with unconditional love and she urged me to work on self-acceptance, self-love and self-compassion more. She also did a past-life reading on my life before this one. As in all my past lives, I was a man. In this reading of my life just before this present one, I was a Japanese scientist ... an effeminate man ... who was imprisoned by Russians and raped, tortured, castrated and killed by other male prisoners. Aargh! Hard stuff, but it's helping me understand what repeats itself in this life and what gives me trouble, so I can figure how to avoid certain situations, people, etc. It is still quite new for this material to be "out" in the open and to hear myself talking about it. These are feelings and knowings inside which I've covered over for years with drugs, booze and "feminism." One thing this psychic said to me was, "don't ever doubt yourself." I will be working with her on Developing Intuition at a retreat weekend later this summer. And, a few weeks ago, I said what I know about my inner sense of myself to my regular healer (who I've been working with for 4-1/2 years). She, too, was able to accept and be nonjudgmental. She urged me to move slowly through this identification process (as she usually does, when I'm dealing with huge or hard stuff) but I'm impatient (as I usually am) to have it all together.

There's also a support group in NYC I recently learned about ("B Group") and I'm trying to get in and attend meetings. It's a group for butch Lesbians, many of whom are dealing openly with transvestism, some passing as men a lot. I learned about it from Joan Nestle, the director of the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Several of the Lesbians in the group are also into S/M as I am, so that would be additionally supportive. I am presently waiting to see if everyone agrees to take me in as a new member. I should know soon and possibly be able to go to their August meeting. I hope it works out because I need contact badly with female to male TVs.

The hardest thing in my life now is this long lack of having a lover. It's been 2-1/2 years since my last relationship broke up and I'm feeling lonely and deprived. It's hard to find who and what I want: a very feminine Lesbian masochist/submissive who's sober and loving and who wants to have a committed, long-term S/M marriage like I do. I question myself constantly about why it's being so hard to have this. I ask myself questions like, "Is it because I'm not together enough about my TVism?" "Is it because I was so traumatized by the last breakup?" (Did I tell you my last lover told me I was "too masculine" and along with leaving me for another woman, set me up to go to jail for trespassing when I tried to talk things out with her?) "Is it because I live in New England and it's too repressed here?" And on and on.

Sometimes, too, I begin to wonder where to look for my new lover. Many Lesbians are averse to all that's masculine (they'd rather be with a mirror-image feminine female) and in the past, a few have accused me of being "male-identified." I'm often more attracted to straight women physically because they're ultra fem, which I require. But they're either not open to a Lesbian or they're bisexual, which presents problems with non-monogamy (which I don't need). In the end, I know I will have to continue persistently searching in the Lesbian community for that rare ultra fem who needs to bottom and needs to be fucked by me like by a man. Where the hell is she? I'm so frustrated and sick of being single! Isn't there someone in SF you know who you could send out here airmail?!

If you want, you can tell me about your relationship, Lou. What happened, and why did you leave? I'd love to know about your life .. especially your thoughts and feelings right before you began any of your TS surgery/transformation and your acceptance of yourself throughout. How do you find support for your process?

I'd like to hear you write more, too, about what you said in your letter ... the part about, "I'd rather be a physically handicapped male than a mentally handicapped female." That interested me. Can you elaborate?

And, can you send me a photo of yourself (or xerox)? It would help me picture you when I write to you.

I think where I'm at today, what I feel safe with and clear with is this: I'm a Lesbian transvestite top. I do sometimes explore the idea of changing my sex but I get terrified of the prospect of surgery, which I don't want. So, I think I will choose to work out my needs through crossdressing and passing as a man whenever I can. This, in itself, feels huge to me right now. I've been an "out" dyke for 17 years and an "out" sadist/top for five. It is the TV part that I now need to embrace and affirm and let myself have and be. I don't know why, but my fear of this part of my process is greater than it was for the other parts of my sexual realization process. Perhaps because I've never had a partner who affirmed this in me enough and I'm in an un-confident place right now about finding her (though, I am turning this attitude around with affirmations, visualization & "Manifestation" rituals). Perhaps because I fear I'll "fit in" even less than before. And I agree with you, I'm probably paying too much attention to others and their reactions rather than to me and my needs and my selfhood. Perhaps because I've convinced myself no one will love me if I am fully who I am and say "these are what my needs are, this is what I deserve to have; give it to me."

Recently I saw a notice in Outrageous Women (a Boston woman-to-woman S/M magazine) for graphics/photos of f to m transvestites to print. So, there are some rumblings of beginning discussions about f to m TV out here on the East Coast.

The "labelling" you mentioned we do with the self-definitions like TV, TS, Lesbian, Gay, etc. Labels, yes, but for me it's always been important, very important to be "out" and to identify myself, mostly because that's the way I am able to find support from others like myself. Also, I feel a sense of pride in saying exactly who I am to the world.

Do you know what type of store I could buy a mustache in? I want one, but I don't know where to go.

I bought this great pale light yellow man's sweater recently which I'm wearing these days and everybody compliments me on it ... even people at work. (That proves to me that when I honor myself and am true to me and good to me, people around me somehow notice/feel it and they honor me, too ... contrary to my fears of the opposite happening.) I never would wear pastels before (not in women's clothing) but now I'm buying these bright pastel men's things that really suit me! Like you, I don't own or wear anything that is remotely feminine and I've been like that for years and I also always had to wear dark color men's clothing (browns and blacks, etc.). Now I'm loosening up a bit on the colors. Probably because men are, in general. The pastels in men's clothing these days are everywhere. And the styling ... particularly in Italian men's clothing ... wonderful! Makes me want to succeed at my career even more, so I'll have more money for all the fashion.

This is new and fresh: a young f to m Lesbian TV out here recently painted my portrait with me posing crossdressed in full black leather & gear. She has an exhibit showing now in Northampton called "Prostitutes, Biker Women & Leatherdykes" and I'm one of the paintings. There was an opening for the communities last weekend and, though I couldn't attend, women told me they love it. I'm a real exhibitionist. What fun! I'll send you a photo of the painting, when I get them developed.

I hope you take less time to write back than I did. Write soon! I'll try and answer sooner, too. Take good care. I send you love & healing energy.

Another Long Letter.

Bet

Bet Power

P.S. Thanks for the clips from International Ms. Leather. If you see any more info. on the leatherwomen's scene in the Bay Area, I'd appreciate getting it. Also, if the butch Lesbian you mentioned who is now TS is interested, I'd like to write to him. If so, please give him my name & address & ask if he'll give me same.

Bet also sent me Yoga Journal "Living w/ AIDS"

SPEECH BY BET BIRDFISH AT
THE LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE RALLY
IN NORTHAMPTON, MA ON MAY 3, 1986

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN ... IT IS NOT AN ISSUE ... GAY PEOPLE ARE DYING. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN AND CARING FOR OUR GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE OUR LESBIAN PRIORITY.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE WE'RE LOSING THE MEN WHO CAN BE OUR BROTHERS AND SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO GAY MEN AND LESBIANS STOOD TOGETHER AND FOUGHT BACK AT STONEMALL BEGINNING THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT UNIFIED AGAINST UNJUST TREATMENT. BECAUSE GAY MEN AND LESBIANS ARE INDISPENSABLE TO EACH OTHER STILL IN THE FACE OF VICIOUS HOMOPHOBIA WHICH DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE BY SEX. BECAUSE GAY MEN AND LESBIANS WOULD BE PERSECUTED ALIKE IN THE BACKLASH TO AIDS BY SLITHERING MAGGOTS LIKE PAUL CAMERON WHO USED A STATE UNIVERSITY TO CALL FOR THE CASTRATION OF GAY MEN, THE IDENTIFICATION AND MUTILATION OF LESBIANS AND THE QUARANTINE OF ALL GAY PEOPLE.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE WE MUST SEE THE REAL EPIDEMIC NOW IS AN EPIDEMIC OF IGNORANCE AND FEAR. BECAUSE WE COULD ALL POSSIBLY LOSE THE FEW CIVIL RIGHTS WE HAVE GAINED, WITH FORCED AIDS TESTING BY EMPLOYERS, GOVERNMENT AND PRISON SYSTEMS, WITH REFUSAL OF PROTECTION BY INSURANCE COMPANIES, WITH GOVERNMENT LIST-KEEPING OF THE NAMES OF GAY PEOPLE WITH AIDS AND THEIR SEX PARTNERS. SUCH LISTS ALREADY ARE KEPT BY LAW IN MINNESOTA, IDAHO, SOUTH CAROLINA AND WISCONSIN. THE GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY FOCUSED ON RECORD-KEEPING AND TRACKING INDIVIDUALS, NOT ON FINDING A CURE FOR AIDS.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE THE CRISIS OF AIDS CAN MAKE OR BREAK OUR MOVEMENT. WE CAN MAKE THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS A MAJOR MOBILIZING FORCE FOR ALL GAY PEOPLE. OR WE CAN DO NOTHING, AND BE FURTHER DEPRIVED OF OUR DIGNITY, OUR BASIC HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS, OUR VERY LIVES. WITHOUT THE GAY MOVEMENT THERE IS NO LESBIAN MOVEMENT. WITHOUT THE LESBIAN MOVEMENT THERE IS NO MOVEMENT FOR GAYS.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE THERE ARE 20,000 AMERICANS WITH AIDS IN THE U.S. RIGHT NOW AND ANOTHER 200,000 WITH AIDS-RELATED COMPLEX. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE AN ESTIMATED 7% OF THAT TOTAL OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS ARE WOMEN AND THAT IS A CONSERVATIVE FIGURE AND THAT FIGURE IS RISING. CONSERVATIVE BECAUSE WOMEN, AND ESPECIALLY LESBIANS, ARE INVISIBLE IN THIS GOVERNMENT'S HEALTH STATISTICS. BECAUSE WOMEN, PARTICULARLY WOMEN OF COLOR WHO ARE THE GREATER PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WITH AIDS, ARE OFTEN TOO ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED TO SEEK HELP FOR AIDS. BECAUSE WOMEN DON'T TRUST GOVERNMENT AIDS PROJECTS ENOUGH TO PRESENT OURSELVES FOR TESTING. BECAUSE WOMEN ARE TOO OFTEN SILENT ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALLY-TRANSMITTED DISEASE.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE HEALTH CARE SPECIFICALLY FOR THE NEEDS OF LESBIANS IS A RIGHT WE HAVE DONE WITHOUT FOR TOO LONG.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE ONE MORE PERSON IS DIAGNOSED WITH AIDS EVERY DAY IN MASSACHUSETTS ALONE AND 15 TO 20 MORE ARE DIAGNOSED WITH AIDS IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. EVERYDAY, DAY IN AND DAY OUT, MORE GAY AND LESBIAN LIVES ARE THREATENED OR TAKEN BY AIDS. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE ONLY 25 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN RECENTLY PROPOSED BY SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY FOR AIDS RESEARCH AND HOSPICE CARE. HE'S ASKING ONLY 25 MILLION TO STOP A KILLER DISEASE WHICH HAS YET NO KNOWN CURE. 25 MILLION FROM A GOVERNMENT WHICH SPENDS HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS ON DEATH ... NOT LIFE ... IN AID TO THE CONTRAS, SUPPORT FOR RACIST APARTHEID, NUCLEAR TESTING, WAR GAMES AND INTERNATIONAL VIOLATIONS, SPACESHIPS THAT EXPLODE IN THE AIR.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE SOME LESBIANS SOMETIMES DO SLEEP WITH GAY OR BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL MEN. BECAUSE SOME LESBIANS SOMETIMES DO SLEEP WITH BISEXUAL WOMEN OR LESBIANS AT RISK FOR AIDS BECAUSE THEY OCCASIONALLY SLEEP WITH MEN. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE SOME OF US DO LIKE SEX IN NON-TRADITIONAL WAYS AND OUR PREFERENCES REQUIRE SPECIAL SAFETY IN THE FACE OF AIDS. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE SOME LESBIANS DO BEAR CHILDREN BY ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION FROM GAY, BISEXUAL OR HETEROSEXUAL MEN. BECAUSE WOMEN CAN PASS AIDS ON TO OUR CHILDREN IN UTERO AND THROUGH BREASTFEEDING. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE SOME LESBIANS DO USE DRUGS AND TAKE THEM INTRAVENOUSLY. BECAUSE SOME LESBIANS DO SOMETIMES PROSTITUTE OR MAKE LOVE WITH HIGH-RISK WOMEN.

IT IS TIME WE FACE THE REALITIES IN OUR LESBIAN LIVES. WE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO BE SILENT ABOUT WHO WE LOVE OR WHAT WE DO IN BED, ASHAMED ABOUT WHAT SEXUALLY-TRANSMITTED DISEASE WE HAVE OR OUR PARTNER HAS, OR ISOLATED IN HOW WE DECIDE TO FIND SPERM DONORS TO HELP US CONCEIVE OUR CHILDREN. AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN AND TALKING OPENLY TO EACH OTHER NOW IS MORE A MATTER OF SURVIVAL THAN EVER BEFORE.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN AND LESBIANS SHOULD NOT BE PRESSURED BY THE TONE OF THE HOMOPHOBIC BACKLASH AROUND US INTO BLAMING THE VICTIM. BLAME IS A USELESS THING AND NO ONE DESERVES AIDS. WE ALL HAVE A RIGHT TO PLEASURABLE, POWERFUL AND SAFE SEX. THE WAY WE WANT IT, THE WAYS WE CHOOSE IT. IT IS OUR LIFEFORCE AND A GOOD AND PRECIOUS THING. WE ARE A PASSIONATE PEOPLE. LESBIANS, RATHER, MUST LEARN ABOUT AIDS AND KNOW THE SAFE SEX GUIDELINES AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST AIDS. AT THE LIBRARY WE ARE GATHERING MATERIALS ON AIDS AND THESE INCLUDE INFORMATION SPECIFICALLY ON LESBIANS AND AIDS.

AIDS IS A LESBIAN CONCERN BECAUSE WE ARE THE POWERFUL HEALERS AND CAREGIVERS AND THE CREATORS AND PROTECTORS OF LIFE AND HEALING IS NEEDED MORE THAN EVER RIGHT NOW. WE NEED NOT BE CAREGIVERS FOR ANY OTHER REASON THAN FOR OURSELVES ... FOR OUR LESBIAN SELVES FIRST OF ALL ... FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE ON THIS PLANET AND ESPECIALLY FOR OUR OWN HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLES. CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY MEANS EACH OF US STARTING WITH OURSELVES AND CARING FOR OURSELVES AND OUR MOVEMENT FIRST OF ALL.

HOW ARE YOU CARING FOR YOURSELF? HOW ARE YOU CARING FOR OUR LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITIES? WHAT LESBIAN OR GAY POLITICAL GROUP HAVE YOU JOINED? WHAT SENATORS OR CONGRESSPEOPLE HAVE YOU PRESSURED FOR MONEY AGAINST AIDS? WHAT LESBIAN OR GAY SUPPORT GROUP HAVE YOU STARTED? WHICH LESBIAN OR GAY FUNDRAISER HAVE YOU COLLECTED MONEY AT? WHICH LESBIAN OR GAY CRISIS LINE OR ARCHIVE OR PROJECT OR BUSINESS DO YOU SUPPORT? WHICH LESBIAN OR GAY ISSUE HAVE YOU WRITTEN A PAPER FOR COLLEGE ABOUT? WHICH LESBIAN OR GAY SPIRITUAL CIRCLE DO YOU SIT IN AND WORSHIP IN? THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF WAYS TO CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES IN THE FACE OF AIDS AND THE EPIDEMIC OF STRAIGHT IGNORANCE AND FEAR.

AND IF YOU ARE STRAIGHT, HOW ARE YOU CARING FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MEN? HOW MANY LETTERS HAVE YOU WRITTEN DEMANDING FROM YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES SIZEABLE GOVERNMENT MONEY AGAINST AIDS? HOW MANY FIGHTS HAVE YOU WAGED ALONGSIDE LESBIANS AND GAY MEN FOR GAY CIVIL RIGHTS? GAY PEOPLE ARE DYING. WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO COUNTERACT THE INHUMANITY OF HETEROSEXIST INACTION AND BLAME IN THE FACE OF THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIVES?

WE LESBIANS AND GAY MEN ARE A MAGICAL, LOVE-CENTERED PEOPLE. FAIRIES AND FAGGOTS, WITCHES AND MEDICINE MEN, SHAMANS AND AMAZONS, QUEENS AND QUEERS, BUTCHES AND BULLDYKES AND LEZZIE FEMS. WE ARE A BEAUTIFUL, CREATIVE PEOPLE WHOSE LIFESTYLE MORE THAN ANY OTHER IS A PATH OF SHINING BRAVERY AND LOVE. THROUGH TIMES OF GREAT HISTORICAL DEVASTATION IN PLACES LIKE CONCENTRATION CAMPS, FOXHOLES, MENTAL HOSPITALS AND PRISONS, OR ON THE STREETS FEELING THE DAILY VIOLENCE OF QUEER BAITING, WE HAVE LOOKED DEATH MEANT ESPECIALLY FOR GAY PEOPLE IN THE FACE, AND TRAVELLED RIGHT ON THROUGH. BY LOVING OUR LIVES, OUR LESBIANISM AND GAYNESS DEEP INSIDE OUR BODIES AND SOULS, BY CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY, WE CAN TURN EVEN DEATH AROUND.

1827 Haight St. #164
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July 23, 1987

Dear Lou,

Although it's been awhile since I wrote to you last and received your letter, I've thought of you often. I've been very busy and under a lot of pressure at work to carry through a huge project in an unrealistic amount of time, and it's been hard finding any time ^{for myself} to relax outside of work. ^{the summer}

But, I'm very glad to be corresponding with you ^{now} and this is very important and valuable for my growth and so I thank you for agreeing to write to me.
 (On my part, you can be ~~sure~~ ^{confident} in the ^{confidence} of your correspondence to me, too..)

I was sad to read that you have AIDS. ^(that... me?) ^{How are you feeling?} ^{and getting} ^{what} ^{you need,} I ~~hope~~ ^{trust} you're doing well. I've enclosed a copy of a magazine I found quite interesting, which I immediately wanted to share with you when I read it. Have you seen this yet? I also enclosed a copy of a speech I gave at the 1986 Lesbian & Gay Pride March Rally in Washington Lesbians & AIDS.

Life is quite amazing ^{yes,} and the older I get, the more I think so. I have been steadily developing my spirituality in the last few years, especially in 12-Step Program (AA primarily) and also through Native American and African Shamanism / rituals and I'm beginning to explore Tibetan Buddhism. I got to a point of ^{per- and} difficulty ~~at~~ ^{to} my path which required adding extra power to my life. ^{But} ^{is} what I find my particular brands of spirituality gives ^{to} me.
 Though I don't believe in "God," I do believe in my own inner Higher Power / intuition and in the life force I feel particularly from the Ocean. So I meditate three or four times daily and worship the Ocean whenever I get time to visit and honor life in all its aspects.

My process with masculinity annoys me. I've been taking photos of myself over the past 5-6 years & steadily my man inside emerges -- my body physically looks more & more masculine, especially my face & clothing & stance. Especially my face hair & voice.

At 37, m, I am apparently transgender. I already stated "Honey" to my ex - Patsy. This is ^{doing the deepening masculinity, too - do you think?} Patsy because of the support in your last letter, I was able to ^{go} see a psychotherapist/therapist and tell her (the first time I'd ever said this out loud): "I'm the spirit/soul of a man inside a female body." She was wonderful - accepting me with unconditional love & urged me to work on self-acceptance & self-love & self-compassion more. It is still quite new for this material to be "out" ^{in regards to how my feelings about it} "The Feelings & Knowings inside which I've covered over for years with drugs, booze & "feminine".

~~After~~ A few weeks ago, I said what I know about my inner sense of myself to my ^{replen} therapist (who I've been working with for 4 1/2 years). She, too, was able to accept & be non-judgmental. She urged me to move slowly through this ^{slow} ~~iterative~~ process (as she usually does when I'm dealing with huge a-ha stuff) but I'm impatient (as I usually am) to have it all together.

There's also a support group in NYC I recently learned about ^("B-Group") & I'm trying to get in & attend meetings. It's a group for transgender, many of whom are dealing ^{openly} with transvestition ^{some pass as men a lot.} I learned about it through Tom Nettle, the director of the Lesbian History Archives. Several of the women in the group are into STM as I am, so that would be additionally supportive. I am presently waiting to see if everyone agrees to take me in as a new member. I should know in a ~~few weeks~~ ^{few weeks} soon & possibly be able to go to their August meeting. I hope it works out because I need contact badly with female to make TSU.

She also did a post life reading on her 1st before that one - in ad my part (was I wrong) - this thing is trans a sign of self-hatred & self-hatred by definition - not by other people's definition - I might have made a mess of it but still helping me understand what she says in this letter.

The biggest ~~part~~ thing in my life now is this long lack of having a lover. It's been 2 1/2 years since my last relationship broke up & I'm feeling lonely & deprived. It's hard to find who & what I want: a very feminine lesbian masochist / submissive who's sober & loving & who wants to have a committed, long-term S/M marriage like I do. I question myself constantly about why it's being so hard to have this. I ask myself questions like, "Is it because I'm not together enough about my TVision?" "Is it because I was so traumatized by the last break-up?" (Did I tell you my last lover told me I was "too masculine" & along with leaving me for another ♀, set me up to go to jail for trespassing when I tried to talk things out with her?) "Is it because I live in New England & it's too repressed here?" And on and on.

Sometimes, too, I begin to wonder where to look for my new lover. ^{Mom} Lesbians are aware to all that's masculine (they'd rather be with a ^{feminine} ~~man~~ - ^{in the past a few have accused me of being} female) & I'm "male-identified". I'm ^{often} more attracted to straight women ^{physically} because they're ultra-fem, which I require. But they're either not quite a lesbian or they're bisexual which presents problems with ^(which I don't need) non-monogamy. In the end, I know I will have to continue searching in the lesbian community for that rare ultra fem — who needs to bottom ^{needs} & to be fucked ^{by me} like by a man. Where the hell is she? I'm so frustrated & sick of being single! Isn't there someone in SF you know who you could send out here airmail?

If you want, you can

what happened + why did you leave?

Tell me about your relationships, love; Do you have a ~~longing~~ ^{you thought} ~~one & it~~ ^{is} ~~it long-term?~~ I'd love to know about your life ... especially ~~your feelings~~ ^{before & right after you} TS surgery ^{transition} ~~transition~~ and your acceptance of yourself ^{for} ~~How do you find support in your process?~~

I'd like to hear you write more about what you said in your letter ... the part about "I'd rather be a ^{physically} handicapped male than a mentally-handicapped female." That interested me. Can you elaborate?

And, can you send me a photo of yourself (a xerox)? It would help me picture you when I write to you.

I think where I'm at today, what I feel safe with, ^{is this:} I'm a lesbian-transvestite top. I do, ^{sometimes} explore the idea of changing my sex but I ^{get} terrified of the prospect of ^{what I don't want} surgery. So I think I will choose to work out my needs through crossdressing and passing ^{as a man} whenever I can. This, in itself, feels huge to me right now, I've been ^{"out"} like for 17 years and an "out" soloist/top for five. It is the TV part that I now need to embrace & affirm & let myself have & be. I don't know why, but my fear of this part of my process is greater than it was for the other parts of my sexual ^{relativism} process. Perhaps because I ~~still feel~~ ^{think} I'll "fit in" even less than before. Perhaps because I've convinced myself no one will love me if I am ^{fully} who I am and say "these are what my needs are, this is what I deserve to have; give it to me."

And I agree with you. I'm probably paying too much attention to other people's reactions to me & my needs & selfhood.

Recently I saw a notice in "Outrageous Women" (a Boston woman-to-woman
slur magazine) for graphics/photos of transvestites to print ^{about FT-M}
So there are some rumblings of ~~disorder~~ ^{disorder} beginning ^{about FT-M}
out ^{here} on the East Coast.

Do you know what type of store I could buy ^a mustache in?
I want one, but I don't know where to go.

(That proves to me that when I have myself on time ^{to me}, people around me honor me, too - ^{& contrary to my fears of the opposite}).

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I never would wear pants before (not in woman's clothes) but
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things that really suit me! Like you, I don't own or wear anything
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This is
New & Fresh...

At ~~the~~ a young FT-M lesbian TV out here recently painted ^{providing in}
my portrait with me ^{app-} dressed in full blood leather ^{It's a}
She has an exhibit showing her in Northampton ^{men's clothing..}
called "Prostitutes, Bike Women & Leather Dykes" & I ^{wonderful!}
one of the paintings. What fun! I'll send you a photo of the ^{Makes me want to}
painting, when I get them developed. ^{succeed at my}
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^{more}
^{more}
^{from the}
^{fashion.}

At I hope you take less time to write back than I did.
Write soon! I'll try & answer sooner, too.
Take good care. I send you love & best wishes every day.

Bet Power

P.S. Thanks for sending the clips from International Ms. leather. If you ^{see any} more
info. on the leatherwomen's scene in the Bay Area, I'd appreciate getting it.
Also, if the butch lesbian you ^{mentioned} who is now in is interested, I'd like to write to ^{him}. If so,
please give ^{me} my ^{name} / address & ask if ^{he'll} give me some.