

Dear Randy,

July 6, 1987

Sorry we didn't connect at the Gay Pride Parade, however, my report of the event, as well as my review of Law of Desire appears below. My previous letter, which I didn't send you, is now hopelessly outdated. Why can't things stay the same for at least a little while.

Independence Day came and went rather quietly in my neighborhood. I stayed indoors for two days to avoid the anticipated M-80 street explosions which the sons of the Mafia ignite with subaltern glee. I turned on my new airconditioner, went into a yoga trance and remained there until it was all over.

They say that people involved in a struggle with AIDS confront an endless series of crisis and change. Ain't it the truth. When last I wrote I was explaining my all-natural concept of health maintenance, involving yoga, nutrition, therapy, acupuncture, and positive attitude coordinated with a doctor's supervision, yet eschewing many of the chemical options which are strewn in our path. It was subsidized almost entirely by Medicaid, and it was working quite effectively. Medicaid also paid for my drugs (the anti-AIDS pneumonia inhalent I take costs \$150 per weekly dose for that drug alone). Unfortunately, beginning this month I lost my Medicaid when they discovered I am receiving a disability pension which is \$200 above the \$400 limit of monthly income to qualify. This was quite a blow, because I can never meet my expenses as it is and to pay an additional \$200 medical spenddown is simply ridiculous. And now with an additional \$100 a month needed to buy the AL721, my finances are impossible.

Also, the new minister at Metropolitan Church has eliminated the mental health center there in favor of pastoral counseling, which means I've lost my therapist and my Writers' Group. And, Prema, the yoga lady broke her hip and the yoga is in limbo. It all went up in smoke.

At first when I realized I would lose Medicaid I was simply devastated, pounded my thymus and complained about the unfairness of it all. It is unfair. I know of many others, however, who have it worse. I'm actually very lucky, I'm a fighter and I'm clever. Life, I've discovered, is a catalogue of losses, and the way we confront them often determines how we will survive. I've decided not to mourn the loss of the Medicaid. Instead I am glad to be free of my dependence on it. I will continue what I can manage and drop the rest. The drugs invariably make me sick anyway.

How can I be so cavalier about this? First of all, I am feeling much better than I have in more than a year. I've only felt this way for three days, but it is so exciting and dramatic a change I am just hopeful it will go on. I had been sleeping 12 hours a day and still would suffer fatigue and needs naps to dredge up any endurance for a limited day. Now I am not sleeping enough, six hours. The fatigue is largely gone, I am tired, but merely from lack of sleep. I can't sleep because my mental energy has gone wild. I dragged down the laundry

and did it today.

What is the reason for this change? It began three days ago when I started taking the generic version of AL721, the egg lipid formula I wrote about. I had been taking the fake version made with soy lecithin for two months. I don't know whether this improvement will last; it's not a cure, certainly, but I am functioning much better. I'm glad I got my order in for the second shipment.

The news reports about that poor AIDS sufferer who is being persecuted for selling his tainted blood--because he was desperate for money--disturbs me terribly. I saw him being led away out of the court and could cry. He's a thin blond, once probably good looking, but now gaunt and ravaged by disease, though in his 20s. Set adrift without a life preserver, and now they are letting the sharks loose on him. This heartless society's blood is already tainted, it didn't need that man's plasma. To think that he had to stoop to draining his blood for \$8, or prostitution. It's like cutting his arm off for stealing bread and then complaining his blood is polluting the atmosphere.

The main issue here, and one we're all going to have to face, is that it's not just the AIDS people having sexual encounters they're going to have to monitor, control and regulate with threats of quarantine and imprisonment, it's the 2 million or more who are HIV infected. This is only the thin end of the wedge. This poor man is not alone in this dilemma. He is all of us. Why is he more criminal for having sex, and deserving to be locked up more than the 2 million already infected? Either safe sex is safe, or it's not. And if it's not safe for an AIDS' sufferer, it's not safe for any of the infected. All the counselors are pushing safe sex for everyone, yet the politicians are sending a totally opposing message.

Society's real agenda is as clear as a road sign. That's why we're seeing these cries for mandatory testing, to find and separate the HIV infected. As for this persecuted man, society is criminal for letting him sink to such destitution and desperation. Imagine his hunger. Yet, the prosecutors scream, "He's out there on the streets having sex. Aaagh!" They act like Lucy in the cartoon when she gets kissed by dog lips. They are now getting his passive-aggressive statement of revenge for all the welfare personnel and Medicaid administrators, and others who were aloof and uncaring. They talk so piously about how we must be compassionate to the ill, but make no move to provide minimum aid. Look at what they did to my Medicaid! Am I connected to my anger today?

Recently I went to the Quad Cinema in my neighborhood and saw an amazing film, Law of Desire by a Spanish filmmaker. It was the most fascinating movie I've seen since A Room with a View. Next week I shall see the Joe Orton thing Prick Up Your Ears also at the Quad, which is the new film by the My Beautiful Laundrette director. I read John Lahr's excellent biography of Orton so I'm both interested but apprehensive to see the movie; the film has been criticized for not achieving the power of the book, which was considerable.

Law of Desire is a very stylish semi-pornographic gay comedy about obsessive love. The hero is a film director named Pablo, an attractive 35-year-old. We see him at trendy discos drinking, consuming lines of coke and fending off potential sexual encounters. Pablo is in love with Juan. Juan doesn't know what he wants emotionally but he's certainly hot for Pablo. They have a farewell fuck before Juan, ripe with ambivalence, goes off and leaves town. Pablo wishes he could just forget Juan, but Juan fans the flames with frequent phone calls and letters. Disatisfied with one of the letters, Pablo writes his own letter reflecting what he wants to hear, mails it back to Juan and demands that he sign it and mail it back. This becomes an important plot twist later on. The bogus letter falaciously indicates the commitment actually missing from Juan.

Pablo is too egotistical to have a lover. He can't share his life. He is, however, devoted to his sister Tina, an actress (who is actually his transexual brother). They got the most feminine, bosomy woman, Carmen Maura, to play Tina. She later stars in Pablo's stage production of The Human Voice, certainly the silliest part of the film.

All the while, Pablo has been observed by Martinez, I think that's his name, I may be wrong, a beautiful, masculine, 20-year-old with jet black hair. He wrangles an introduction at a disco. They go home together and fuck. Very steamy scene. Very unsafe sex, frontal anal penetration. The point was that this young man was surrendering his virginity and the impact and the passion of the scene was overwhelming. Filmmakers today go all the way with aggressive necking and lovemaking. Afterwards it is clear Martinez is madly in love with Pablo and wants to get serious. Pablo is reticent to get involved. He still has fantasies of Juan giving in on the one hand, while trying to forget him on the other. To complicate matters, Martinez encounters "the letter" and realizes that he has a rival. He runs off in a huff, feeling betrayed, but can't resist returning to Pablo to try to save him from his disolute lifestyle (coke sniffing, etc.). Pablo can't make any promises, but Martinez is so overwhelmingly seductive and committed, he is irresistable.

With everything pointing now toward Martinez, who should call but Juan who is unhappy and finally has decided he is in love with Pablo. Pablo resists these protestations for about a second and then agrees to hop in his car the following night to see him. Martinez finds out about this intended meeting and drives out immediately for a confrontation with Juan. They argue, Martinez attempts to force Juan into a sexual encounter "I want to possess you because Pablo loves you". They struggle at the top of a cliff and Martinez throws him off to his death. Did I say this was a comedy?

Next we get involved with a police investigation. Pablo is suspected of the murder. Pablo knows who the real culprit is and confronts Martinez who admits killing Juan to clear the way for their love. (I say love, but none of this is love, it's mad sexual obsession). He forces himself on Pablo who breaks away, horrified. Too hysterical to drive, he smashes his car and suffers amnesia. Meanwhile, Martinez

launches a sexual relationship with the transexual sister. Pablo finally recovers his memory and when he discovers his sister is involved with the loon he calls her on the telephone and tries to get her to leave the apartment without making Martinez suspicious. He, of course, figures there is a plot against him and holds Tina hostage. He offers to exchange her for Pablo, and Pablo agrees.

With the police and gawkers in the street, Pablo and Martinez confront each other alone in the apartment. The scene is so implausible, it's amazing that they made it work. Martinez attempts to make love to Pablo (who has a broken leg, by the way). Pablo at first is about to jump out of his skin but once again the power of Martinez's unspeakable obsession conquers him. Then, feeling that he has to pay for this hour of love, Martinez kills himself with a gun. Pablo, now responsible for the deaths of his two lovers, falls all over the body with grief as the police attempt to get in.

Gay Pride Day was a great success in New York. What a glorious, perfect day: cool, bright and splendid. The universe was completely receptive and open; it was a day of joyous fellowship. I started out with hopes of marching down Fifth Avenue with Kent Jarratt, my therapist friend. I planned to bus up Eighth Avenue, but the bus never showed up. I quickly walked to the subway, but realized I was experiencing shortness of breath. I decided I would never make it walking in the parade so I got some sunnyside eggs, bought the Sunday Times and went home. I felt much better after reading the paper on the sofa with the cat and went down again at 2 p.m. and got a position at Washington Square Park at the Arch where Fifth Avenue turns into Washington Square North. It was a very mixed crowd, like at the Halloween parade, lots of gay people of every stripe and description, but also families with children, old folks, but thankfully no baby strollers.

Anticipation filled the air as we waited for the sounds of the parade to get down the avenue. Finally there was a shriek of motorcycles and blaring bike horns. The lesbian motorcycle honor guard, more than a dozen of them, roared into view. Just behind them Mayor Ed Koch was leading the parade. He didn't do the whole march, but picked it up into the Village where the tv cameras were set up. The march came to a halt while he posed for the requisite interviews. There were so many cameramen, there will be endless shots of the parade on cable television.

It was a splendid event and very entertaining, and moving as well. I was in tears constantly, but I cry so easily these days. I am enthralled by the seething humanity of gay people, all so diverse and so happy looking, freely expressing an aspect of their lives with justifiable pride. As you know I've always been more than a closet activist. That such diversity can come together with a sense of community is deeply inspiring. I've noted this over and over again in the response to the AIDS crisis.

The parade was endless, I couldn't believe how it went on and on. I stayed for the whole thing. I was amazed, shocked really, at how few

people I recognized at the parade. I didn't see anybody I knew; all were strangers. I saw one of the St. Clare's volunteers, and Albert from my yoga group. That's it. Overall, it was wonderful to see so many living gay people. They're trying to kill us off, but we just keep coming on strong.

I wish I had taken notes. There were so many cute moments that went by that I've forgotten. Marsha Johnson, the black transvestite who created gay history by defying police in the Stonewall riots in 1969 (the launching pad of gay liberation), stole the show making an appearance as Vanna White (or Black, if you prefer). The animal world was amply represented. There were gay dogs, gay cats, a gay rabbit and gay snakes, all wearing their purple scarves. Lavender is the color of the day. All the religions were on hand. Gay Jews, boy were there gay Jews, from every borough, even from New Jersey. There were gay atheists mocking religion. Gay witches and pagans. You couldn't escape the Catholics who were more political than ever this year. They presented a float depicting St. Patrick's Cathedral surrounded by barricades which said, "No gays allowed". There were protesters, as there always are, at St. Patrick's where religious rednecks congregate, but they were shouted down by the overwhelming numbers, there were 20,000 marchers and 100,000 on the sidelines. Also, the ousted gay priest Rev. John McNeill was given a car and waved to the crowd and later offered a lofty speech at the rally at the Christopher Street Pier, attended by a sea of people; it was very impressive.

Academia and the professions were given there due. All the Ivy League schools, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and many others marched by. Also the gay doctors, psychologists, policemen. The warmest applause came, as it always does, for the Parents of Gays. How can you resist a mother who marches in the street with a sign around her neck that said, "I have a fabulous gay son". The Gay Fathers also got a big hand (although probably not from their exwives). Sybil Bruncheon, the muscle-bound transvestite, offered an example of what I think they call "gender fuck", mocking sex roles, flexed his big arms and wore a strapless white affair with lavish arrays of jewels and was followed by cars publicizing his show Night of 1000 Gowns. All the health groups were there: GMHC, Community Health Project and countless other smaller projects.

Many of the floats were not terribly imaginative, trains and indistinguishable things with gaudy geegaws. The best was the Act Up float. Act Up is the major liberation group of the moment. They presented a concentration camp with barbed wire with Reagan as the head guard wearing yellow latex gloves; all the other guards who theatrically circled the float wore these yellow gloves. It looks ridiculous, but they're actually being used in our country! Larry Kramer, the author and gadfly, handed out flyers to the bystanders. The gay athletes offered a mobile volleyball game. The largest contingent, oddly enough, was the Sober Together group, hundred of men and women, I couldn't believe how many there were. The gay Chelsea Garden Club wore purple gloves with green thumbs. The PWA Coalition had a larger group than usual and they weren't distanced this year by the other contingents around them. Skinny Albert from my yoga group

was there carrying the banner; so you know the yoga is doing something good.

Of course, the activists and socialists were present in great numbers. There were gay Puerto Ricans, black gospel groups, Rainbow Coalition adherents, and lesbians everywhere, and not one of them have been watching their weight (except the bikers early on who obviously were eating their Lean Cuisines). They would sing "For Me and My Gal" and "When the Dykes Go Marching In". Harvey Fierstein served as a Grand Marshall and camped it up on the back of a black convertible. Rolla Rina, who does a Tinkerbell routine on skates, twinkled into view with magic wand sprinkling good will. The rather questionable contingents were on the streets too: there were two child molesters carrying the Nambla banner, the S&Mers in full regalia and accoutrements could not be ignored, and also sex clubs like Man Hole and Hellfire; very kinky as you can imagine. There were discos and rock radio stations with floats covered with slimy-looking black transvestites, writhing shamelessly.

But you will be interested in the musical offerings. There were two marching bands featuring gay twirlers and jugglers. They did the ubiquitous "I Am What I Am", naturally. Gay square dancers, replete with caller in a car promenaded enthusiastically twirling through the streets. But my fave were the gay mummies with a complete band, banjos and saxophones strutting by. I was in heaven and waiting for the sunrise. And in Philadelphia mummies tradition they were followed by their bus, with a rather bemused-looking attractive driver, where they ducked in for refreshments. Delightful!

You can imagine what I've forgotten; but you get some idea of the day. I stood there quietly, drinking it all in, I wasn't about to overwhelm myself by applauding. When I tried to move after the parade went by, I was stiff and wobbly and decided I would skip the rally at the pier and go home and see the cat. I napped for 10 minutes and the phone rang. It was Kent. He invited me to dinner. I rallied and did the stairs a third time.

Kent had viewed the parade from uptown and then cabbled to the Village. We decided to walk over to the rally. It was so mobbed we had to take a diversionary back route to get to the speaker's platform. We heard one speech and left for dinner while a singer provided amplified entertainment that bounced off buildings and could probably be heard in New Jersey. We tried out a new restaurant on Bleecker Street called Grampa's with very good Italian fare. The Grampa was the actual Grampa Munster of the tv show. He greeted us at the door and later came by and patted me on the back and said, "Buon appetit". While we were dining we tried to remember who played the vampirish woman on the series. I thought Olivia de Haviland? No. Dorothy Lamour? No. Then it came to me: Yvonne De Carlo.

Both Kent and I were seduced by the veal dish which was served with delicately seasoned asparagus, fresh green beans, artichoke hearts, fresh mushrooms in a cognac sauce. It was heavenly. We also did an antipasto of buffalo mozzarella cheese, prosciutto, marinated peppers,

capers, olive slices, miniature tomatoes and lettuce. I wondered at first: do I have the appetite to eat all this, (the sulphur drugs I take have not helped my appetite), but I was finished before Kent and then started on buttered Italian bread. I even had a capuccino, breaking my coffee fast, it was delicious. I was stuffed. As we left I complimented Grampa on the veal and we promised to come back. The entree was \$10. Not bad.

Then we walked back to Christopher Street to see what was happening. We floated out to the pier and there was a tremendous mob waiting to cross the highway, attended by an enormous police contingent, controlling the flow. I told Kent how glad I felt that I could walk through this crowd without the confusion and dizzy paranoia that I would feel if I were in bad form. I felt pretty good. As I was saying all this I realized that Kent was having a claustrophobia attack, but we stayed together and made it across the street and on to the pier where we watched the many passersby until the sun went down. Of course, they've ruined this famous pier which was a summer treat for sunbathing in the past. They enclosed the whole thing behind barbed wire fences. So now you get the feeling of being in a concentration camp; who wants to see the Statue of Liberty through a wire fence? With darkness upon us and the sounds of crunching glass providing a tinge of forboding, we made our way back to Sheridan Square, got a fresh lemonade at a deli, and Kent went uptown to walk the dog. What a lovely evening; Kent is such a wonderful person.

Thank you, Randy, for all your help. You are setting a standard that more people that more people should follow in these times.

Letter Peter
from
Davaachar,