

Bet Power
146 Riverbank Road
Northampton, MA 01060

March 4, 1987

Lou Sullivan
1827 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Dear Lou,

It was good to receive your letter to me c/o the New Alexandria Lesbian Library and thank you for your willingness to correspond with me. I have included my home address, above. I trust that you will keep my correspondence with you confidential ... this is the only way I will feel free enough to write. Perhaps you can assure me of this when you next write.

I sent for your book when I saw it advertised and reading it has moved me to begin calling myself a female-to-male transvestite. Previously I've identified as a butch Lesbian and sometimes still do though I've complained to other Lesbians for the last five years especially that I can count on only one hand the Lesbians in my community (and this is a big community) who are as butch as me. Most butches, if they even identify as such, have an edge of femininity or androgyny that I don't. I've felt and looked and dressed more masculine than other butches I know. When "She Even Chewed Tobacco ...," a slideshow about passing women (crossdressers) came out of the SF Lesbian & Gay History Project a few years ago, I rented it and showed it to the Lesbian community here. I thrilled at those women and their marriages, having wives and passing as men. I began to think of them as my heroes and identify as a crossdresser myself. But somehow I saw it all as from another era. I crossdress but I do not crosslive as the passing women in 19th century America in the slideshow did. I've been living very actively in the Lesbian community directing a national Lesbian archives for 10 years as a butch dyke, a very mannish woman. And I work in the straight community and earn a sizeable income as a very mannish businesswoman.

Five years ago I claimed S/M as another part of my sexual preference. I am a top, a sexual sadist, so I've been identifying as a "butch top dyke." I had a two-year long S/M love relationship with a woman who was a very feminine Lesbian when I met her but gradually weightlifted and built her body to win a state bodybuilding competition (though she keeps her face extremely feminine with makeup, earrings, etc.). It's funny because women who've seen her lately comment that she looks like a male-to-female transvestite. We broke up two years ago because she was

actively alcoholic and I was recovering in the Program and could no longer handle the effects of her drinking problem on me; her emotional cruelty and abuse. But as we were breaking up, she also said to me, "You're too masculine." Of course, that hurt me a lot because she was saying it as if it was the reason she was abandoning me. I had always supported her in her "fem" femininity, which can sometimes also be attacked by some Lesbians. But as she gradually became very muscular and wanted to fondle my breasts in bed, that also caused problems sexually for me.

Since we broke up two years ago, I have played some in the Lesbian S/M scene but I have not had a lover. I am now in the process of figuring out where I'm at on the transvestite-transsexual line and how to be happiest in the world socially and most fulfilled with a partner. I want to have the perfect lover for me and a committed, long-lasting marriage relationship very badly (two years is a long time for me to go without a partner) and I am working to remove any obstacles I feel might be in the way of this.

There are very few people I can even identify myself to yet as a TV much less discuss the process of trying to be socially and sexually happy which I'm going through. I'm even having trouble discussing it with my therapist ... a Lesbian woman I've seen for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years and who is very supportive of me in all ways, including supportive of my S/M preference. I just don't trust that she'll understand me and I fear she may confuse me or misdirect me or hurt me just because she doesn't know about TVism. There is so little written, too. I have given her your book to read and she has read it. She assures me she will not be judgmental if I choose to talk about TV/TSism with her. But I have not yet discussed my own situation further with her. Partly I'm afraid of getting too close to her if I share these intimacies (I feel it would be best to find a supportive lover to affirm myself with and share this growth with, anyway) and partly I'm afraid she'll dislike me or reject me. Any ideas about this? Better to discuss it with her or not?

I must say right off that TVism and TSism are scary to me. I am now 37, but when I was in my coming-out-into-Lesbianism stage (around age 20), I was living in Chicago's gay section and very fascinated with the gay male leather S/M scene. I remember reading gay men's publications and they were more informative than women's about sexual options. I was walking down the street one day thinking about S/M, TVism and TSism. And I found that I was questioning who I was. I admitted being absolutely turned on by fantasies of topping in S/M but dismissed it then as a preference that only men could have. I have since resolved that for myself in the last five years, with the emergence of an S/M Lesbian community which I'm also now at the forefront of, a leader in. I also admitted 17 years ago somewhere deep inside that I was probably possibly also a TV and I thought of TSism also, but TSism really scared me. All this then became material inside to hide away and not to talk about and to drink over. And I tried to drink it and drug it away back then. Needless to say, 17 years later and 5 years sober, I am re-examining

myself anew all over again and the subject of TVism and TSism comes back for me once more. And yes, it's still frightening to me and I feel quite isolated. But I'm no longer about to drink or drug over it. And so I am reaching out to others and beginning to talk in this safe "letter" way, instead. This time I need to resolve TVism/TSism for myself, once and for all. It is certainly time.

For your information, to summarize my feelings growing up, I never felt like a girl or feminine. I called myself a "person" even when I was a kid but I felt more like a boy (which I was dressed more as and treated more as) and later, like a man. I've written poetry since I was 14 and my earliest poems refer to myself as "he." The "trapped man inside the woman's body" is an idea I've related to, though it's been hard to admit this to myself. It wasn't until I came out as a Lesbian and into feminism that I thought that was wrong and self-hating and I should think of myself only as a "she" or "womin" from the standpoint of eliminating sexism turned against myself, or so those politics told me (which I no longer embrace, at least not in that way). But again, particularly in the last five years, I feel like a man inside and I no longer want to repress that feeling. Rather, it's a turn-on now. I just need to know how to actualize it more safely and fully. I've just never felt the person inside to be female or womanly, but rather male, masculine, the spirit/soul of a man (despite my 120 lb., 5'3" very gorgeous woman's body). My mannersims and attitude are so masculine, I can often tell I have more "balls" than some wimpier men around me, at work, for example.

I realize I could go on and on with this, just from the long lack of having someone to say all this to. This letter gets longer all the time! But actually, Lou, I don't want you or anyone else to tell me who I am or what to do. I have faith that I know best for me and that my own higher power inside will show me my best way. But I do want to hear others' experiences/feelings/comments. Where I am today is that I'm a transvestite. Surgery is not something I want, in fact, the idea of it terrorizes me. I'm a sexual sadist, but the thought of even having my own ear pierced much less major genital surgery is just not a possibility for me. I avoid doctors and hospitals. I know that if there was a magic wand to be waved to gently turn me into a biological man, I would choose it to be waved. But surgery, no, I am squeamish, can't stand pain, and won't choose to alter my body or take hormones. I will never actually be a heterosexual man in this life, though that is my sexual fantasy constantly. Even if I had surgery, I realize I would be a transsexual rather, and that's distinctly different to me than being a heterosexual man.

Why do I feel confused, then, if I know I'm TV and not TS. Partly because TV is a new identification for me and I'm not sure I can be lovable or acceptable in it (after all, I was abandoned/rejected just at the point of its emergence in my life by a Lesbian lover and I've been alone ever since). Partly, too, because I guess I have questions about the "continuum." Can you help me clarify, here: Does my recent growing from butch Lesbian into a transvestite necessarily mean that I will have to progress into transsexuality? It's hard for me to accept/embrace/relax about my TVism because of my fear of TSism. And thus, I often deny myself even my own private pleasures. Can I choose to remain a TV and go no further?

I also have some new social and sexual concerns. First, let me explain. I wear articles of men's clothing all the time, in every situation. I wear men's pajamas and robes and slippers. I wear men's underwear all the time I'm awake. And I wear Grey Flannel cologne or Pierre Cardin Man's Musk. At home and in the Lesbian community, I wear men's trousers, neckties, or men's shirts and sweaters. In the S/M Lesbian community, I wear all sorts of male costumes and leather. At work (I have a management position in advertising for a large corporation), I wear slacks, sweaters and tailored suit jackets, sometimes men's formal shirts, shoes with flat heels. Never, never skirts or makeup. I don't own any. My hair is very short (ears out and sideburns a bit), cut like a man's. Everywhere I go, in all situations, I look more like a man than a woman. I shortened my name from "Betty" (ugh!) to "Bet" about 10 years ago. Lesbians know me as a butch (though I've been saying more lately that I'm a TV); straight people I work with know me as a woman who looks very masculine. I feel like I crossdress constantly but I do not fully crosslive (in that I don't say I'm a male on my ID's or at work and I socialize with dykes not straight men). I've never attempted to find a partner among straight women. My partners (3 major ones, so far) were all from among Lesbians and that is where I continue to look today.

Socially there have been some awkward times for me lately. Some examples: I and straight women around me feel uncomfortable when I walk into a women's restroom. A woman with kids in the car next to me stares at me and says quite loudly to her kids, "My god, is that a man or a woman? Oh, it's a man with scraggly hair." A Lesbian at a conference where I gave a lecture on S/M wrote to me later that at first she couldn't tell if I was a man or a woman and then realized I was a woman. A "politically correct" Lesbian tells me and others that I'm "male-identified" (some kind of sin, to her). A male-to-female TV in a gay bar cruises me when I'm all dressed up in leather biker drag and then says to me dissapointedly when he realizes, "Oh, but you're a woman!" Most times, on an everyday basis, I think people in public don't notice me because they're too involved with their own days but when they do see me, they most often think I'm a man or they can't tell which sex I am and are a bit afraid of me, I think. Frankly, I like being taken for a man. I feel like I'm doing my act well and that clarity is better than someone first thinking I'm a man and then saying, "OH, excuse me, Ma'am" which is really awkward.

I wonder if I could be more comfortable socially somehow. It looks like my choices are to either: (1) become more feminine in appearance so I won't get these reactions (which I simply WON'T do) or (2) try cross-living (passing totally) as a man as well as crossdressing (which seems it's out because it's too complicated in its impact on my career and which community I want to belong to socially and cruise in: Lesbians) or (3) remain as I am with crossdressing only and put up with the awkward social moments sometimes. My present choice of (3) is OK but I sometimes feel I neither fit in the straight community I work in nor in the Lesbian community I socialize in and politically work in. Any suggestions? Or do you know of any f-to-m TVs I might contact who have resolved similar questions?

Sexually there have been some hard moments, like the last lover's rejection which I've described. I have begun to realize that most Lesbians want to make love to another Lesbian's womanly body (her breasts, her cunt) whereas I need to be handled/treated just like a man. Besides being a top, I also need to always wear a dildo, have my "cock" worshipped, fist fuck my partner (anything to foster the illusion of my being a man), and have no fondling of my breasts and no penetration of my vagina (this last requirement has been one of my rules since I was a teenager). The partner I require must be ultra feminine, submissive, masochistic and must need to be fucked like a straight woman. Yet I don't want to change my body, so I don't think I should look for partners among straight women. For me to be satisfied, my partner must fully participate in the illusion/fantasy of me being a male sexually, though not actually physically. Even alone, by myself, I get totally hot putting on a "cock" or codpiece or padded Brut briefs. I have thought I have a better chance of finding my long-term partner among Lesbians because Lesbians are more willing to receive dildo fucking than straight women who want an actual penis. Yet sometimes, again, it feels like I don't fit sexually either among Lesbians or among straight people. Among Lesbians, I am a different sort of Lesbian who sexually always must wear a cock and be treated like a man (this, in fact, can be attacked by some Lesbians and so I have to be very protective of myself). . . But among straight women, I would never truly be a straight man with a penis and I don't think they'd accept the dildo cock I have to wear. Because I require monogamy from my lover, bisexual women are not a possibility for me. I would feel nearly devastated if a woman I loved left me to be with a biological male.

Do you have any comments on my sexual situation? How have you solved any similar issues for yourself, as a TS?

Also, Lou, do you think SF is the heaven for sexual minorities that I hear it is? Do you think I'd have an easier time there? I've wondered if I should move to SF. Are there many "out" f-to-m TVs or f-to-m TSs there? T

These are all my thoughts and questions for right now. I want to thank you in advance for your consideration and your attention to this long letter. I hope you are well and I look forward to hearing from you. And once again, congratulations on your bravery in contributing to the world your Information For the Female-to-Male.

Sincerely,

Bet Power L

Bet Power



Mary Murphy

Bet Birdfish



Bet Power
1984 - 1987



Dear Lou,

to me c/o The New Alexandria Lesbian Library

It was good to receive your letter, and thank you for your willingness to correspond with me. I trust that you will keep my correspondence with you confidential. This is the only way I will feel free enough to write. Perhaps you can assure me of this when you next write.

I sent for your book when I saw it advertised and reading ^{it has moved me to} ^{begin} "call myself" female-to-male transsexual. ^{Previously, I've identified as a bottom lesbian - though I've ~~not~~ complained} ^{and sometimes still do} My fascination ^{is} ~~has always~~ ^{been} ~~for~~ ^{with} ~~other~~ ^{lesbians} (to be lost five years ago especially), but I can count on ^{only} one hand the lesbians in my community who are as butch as me. Most butches, if they can identify as such, have ^{an} edge of femininity or androgyny that I don't. I've ~~never~~ ^{and looked out dressed} ~~felt~~ ^{more masculine than} other butches I know. When "She Even Chewed Tobacco..." a slideshow ^{me} ^{Lesbian History Project} about passing women (crossdressers) came out of SF a few years ago, I rented it and showed it to the lesbian community here. I thrilled at those women and their marriages, ^{having} ^{and passing as men...} ~~the~~ ^{wives,} I began to consider ~~them~~ my heterosexual identity as a crossdresser myself. But somehow I saw it all as from another era.

I consider but I do not crosslive as the passing women in ^{19th century America is} the slideshow did. I've ~~not~~ ^{very recently} been living in the lesbian community, directing a national lesbian archives on a butch desk, a very masculine woman. And I work in the straight community & am a ^{business} ~~visible~~ ^{woman} income dressed as a very masculine woman.

Five years ago I claimed ~~slut~~ as another part of my sexual preference. I'm a top, a sadist, so I've been identifying as

It's funny because women who've seen her lately comment that she looks like a male to female TV.

a "bush top dyke." I had ^{2-year-long} an s/m relationship with a woman who was ^{very} feminine, ^{lesbian} when I ~~met her~~ ^{met her} but ^{gradually} ^{weight-lifted and} built her body except to win a state ^{bodybuilding} competition (though her ^{she keeps} ~~fr~~ extremely feminine ^{with} ^{earnings} ^{etc.} male up). We broke up ^{2 years ago} because she was actually alcoholic & I was recovering & in the program & could no longer handle ^{the effects of} her drinking problem ^{on me; eventually because} But as we ^{were} breaking up she also said to me, "you're too masculine." Of course, that hurt me a lot because she was saying it ^{out it} was the reason she was abandoning me.

I had always supported her in her "fem" femininity which ^{sometimes} ~~also~~ ^{but she gradually became her masculine that} also be attacked by some lesbians ^{also caused problems especially for me} ^{and wanted to fuck me best in bed}

Since we broke up two years ago, I have ^{played some in the lesbian s/m scene but} ^{if I have} not had a lover.

I am now in the process of figuring out where I'm at on the transactite-transsexual line and how to be happiest in the world socially & most fulfilled with a partner. ^{I want to} ^{have a} ^{the paper (next to my) belly (2 years is a long time for me) + I am working to remove any obstacles} ^{I feel might be in the way of this.} ^{to go without} ^{myself + yet}

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less discuss the process of trying to be socially & sexually happy while I'm going through. I'm even having trouble discussing it with my therapist - a ^{lesbian} ^{woman}

I've seen for 4 1/2 years & who is very supportive of me in all ways, including supportive of my s/m preferences. I just don't trust that she'll understand & I fear she may confuse me or mis-direct me ^{or hurt me} just because she doesn't know about transvestism. There is so little written, too.

(I feel it would be best to find a supportive lover to open myself with (maybe) and share this with,

She assures me she will not be judgmental if I choose to talk about TV/TSS with her.

I have given her your book to read & she has read it. But I have not ^{yet} discussed my own situation further with her. Partly I'm afraid of getting too close to her if I share these intimacies, & partly I'm afraid she'll dislike or reject me. Any ideas about this? Better to discuss it with her or not?

A I must say right off that transvestition & transsexuality are scary to me. I am now 37, but when I was in my coming out - into lesbianism stage (around age 20), I was living in Chicago's gay section & very familiar with the gay male leather S/M scene. I remember reading ~~gay~~ men's publications ^{& they were more informative than women's} about sexual options. I was walking down the street one day thinking about S/M, TV, & TSS. And I found I was questioning who I was. I admitted being absolutely turned on ^{fantasies of, typing in} by a S/M but dismissed it ~~then~~ ^{as a preference that only men could have.} I also ^{admitted} ^{17 years ago} ^{something deep} ^{inside that I was probably possibly} ^{when I'm now also at} ^{the forefront of} ^{the S/M lesbian community} ^{which I'm now also at} ^{in the} ^{Thiefprint} ^{of a lesbian} ^{community} ^{then become} ^{material} ^{and to hide away & not to talk about.} ^{and the subject of TV & TSS comes back to me} ^{once} ^{more.} ^{once and for all.} ^{and beginning to talk in this safe "little" way, instead.} ^{back} ^{away, then.} ^{Needless to say,} ^{17 years later + 5 years} ^{and the subject of TV & TSS comes back to me} ^{once} ^{more.} ^{And yes, it's still frightening to me & I feel quite} ^{isolated.} ^{But I'm no longer about to drink ^{or drug} over it.} ^{And so I am reaching out to others, ^{and beginning to talk in this safe "little" way, instead.} ~~instead~~ ^{with} ^A ^{This time I need} ^{to resolve transvestition/transsexuality ~~now~~ to myself,} ^{once and for all.} ~~instead~~ ^{It is certainly time.}}

The "trapped man inside the woman's body" is an idea I've related to, but it's been hard to admit that to myself.

Franny information

To summarize my feelings growing up, I never felt like a girl or a female. I called myself a "person", but I felt more like a boy (which I was dressed more as) & later, like a man. I ~~wrote~~ ^{was} written poetry since I was 14 and my earliest poems refer to myself as "he." It wasn't until I came out as a lesbian & into ~~the~~ feminism that I thought, I should think of myself as a "she" or "woman" from the standpoint of ^{democracy} sexism turned against myself, or so those politics told me. (which I no longer embrace - at least not in that way) But again, particularly in the last 5 years I feel like a man inside & I've just never felt the person inside to be female or womanly, but rather male, masculine, ^{the spirit/soul of a} man.
 My mannerisms + attitude are so masculine. I've often told I have more "balls" than some wimpier men around me - at work for example.

I realize I could go on & on with this just from the ^{long} lack of having someone to say ~~that~~ ^{this letter gets longer all the time!} But actually, low, I don't want you or anyone else to tell me who I am. I have faith that I know ^{and that my own higher power will show me my best way.} But I do want to hear others' experiences/feelings - best for me. Where I am today is that I'm a transvestite. Surgery is not something I want, in fact, the idea of it terrifies me. I'm a sexual sadist, but the idea of even having my ^{own} ear pierced much less ^{I avoid doctors/hospitals.} genital surgery, is just not a possibility for me. I know if there was a magic wand to be waved to ^{gently} turn me into a biological man, I would choose it to be waved. But surgery, no, I am squeamish, can't stand pain and won't choose to alter my body or take hormones. I will never actually be a heterosexual man in this life, ^{even if I had surgery.} though that is my sexual fantasy constantly. ^{Even if I had surgery,} I realize I would be a transsexual ~~or after surgery,~~ rather, and that's distinctly different to me than being a heterosexual man.

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Why do I feel confused, then, if I know I'm transvestite and not transsexual. Partly, too, because I guess ~~because~~ I have questions about the "continuum." Can you help me, ^{how?} Does ^{my recent} growing from butch lesbian into ^a transvestite necessarily mean that I will have to progress into transsexuality? It's hard for me to accept/embore / ^{relax about} my transvestite because of my fear of transsexuality. Can I choose to remain ~~at~~ ^a transvestite & go no further? And thus I often deny myself even my own private pleasures.

I also have some ^{new} social and sexual concerns. First, let me explain. I wear articles of men's clothing all the time, in every situation. I wear men's pajamas & robe & slippers. I wear men's underwear all the time ^{and I wear grey flannel cologne or Pierre Cardin Men's Musk.} At home & in the lesbian community, I wear men's t-shirts, neckties, or men's shirts & sweaters. ^{In the subculture community, I wear all sorts of male costumes & leather.} At work (I ^{work} ~~work~~ ^{have} at a ~~senior~~ management position in advertising for a large corporation) I wear slacks, sweaters & tailored suit jacket, sometimes men's formal shirts, shoes with ^{flat} ~~no~~ ^{heels}, ^{Never, never skirts, etc.} My hair is very short, cut like a man's. Every where I go, in all situations, I look more like a man than a woman. I shortened my name from "Bethy" (ugh!) to "Bet" about 10 years ago. Lesbian know me as a butch (though I've been saying more lately that I'm a tv); straight people I work with know me as a woman who looks very masculine. I feel like ~~to~~ cross-dress constantly but I do not fully ^{in that I don't say I'm a male on my ID; at work & socially with dykes.} cross-live. I've never attempted to find a partner ^{among} ~~with~~ straight women. My partners (3 ^{major} ~~main~~ ones) were all from

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"male-identified" (some kind of sin, to her).

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Some examples: I and ^{straight} women around me get uncomfortable when I walk into
a women's ^{rest} bathroom. A woman with kids in the car next to
me stares at me and says to her kids "my god, is that a
man or a woman?" - oh, it's a man with scruffy hair."

A lesbian at a conference where I gave a lecture on S/M wrote to me later that at first
she couldn't tell if I was a man or a woman. A male-to-female trans
in a gay bar ^{when I'm all dressed up in leather} curses me, then says to me ^{disrespectfully} when he realizes, ~~I~~

"oh, ^{but} you're a woman!" Most times ^{on an everyday basis,} I think people ^{in public} don't
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I am a different sort of ^{lesbian} ^(that is, in fact, or be attracted by many lesbians & I have to be very particular of myself) sexually always must wear a cock & be treated ^{truly} like a man. ^{with a penis} But among straight women, I would have ^{truly} be a straight woman. & I don't think they'd accept the ^{dildo} ^{cock} I have to wear.

Because I require monogamy from my (male), bisexual woman ~~is~~ not a possibility for me.
I would be deeply ~~but~~ devastated if a woman I loved ^{left me} ~~would~~ to be with a biological male.

Do you have any comments on ~~past~~ ^{my} sexual situations? How have you solved
yourself, as a TSF?

These are all my thoughts and questions for right now - I want to
Thank you in advance for your ^{and your attention to this letter} consideration. I hope you see
well and I look forward to hearing from you. And, once again,
congratulations on your bravery in contributing ^{to the world} your
"The ~~Foundation~~ ^{the} for Female-to-Males."

Sincerely,

Bert Power

Also, low,

P.S. Do you think SF is the ~~best~~ heaven ^{for sexual minorities}, ~~or not~~ that I hear it is?

Do you think I'd have an easier time here? I've wondered if

I should move to SF. ~~Are there~~ ^{many} ~~more~~ ^{out} a f-to-m

twi a ^{f-to-m} tsf, ~~can~~ here?