

The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #11, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #214, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

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December was a busy month as always, getting ready for the holidays, visiting, partying. We saw a couple plays. The Madison Rep's version of *The Man who Came to Dinner*, whose meaning took several amusing turns by having the old, crotchety, famous critic played by a black man, but otherwise was fairly lightweight. More powerful was the Rep's version of *The Lady Sings the Blues*, about singer Billy Holiday. The actress/singer's rendition of "Strange Fruit" was incredible and horrifying.

Scott and I spent Christmas Eve alone together, as we traditionally do — a fancy dinner out, champagne and presents at home. This tradition got started many years ago when we let ourselves get so busy shopping, cleaning and cooking and getting ready for a full house the next day. My whole family plus extras, 12 people in all, were coming to dinner on the holiday. It was late on Christmas Eve; Scott would leave for work at 11 P.M., and we went out in search of a quick meal because we hadn't had time to plan anything for ourselves. We roamed through the city. Everything was quiet, deserted. Nothing was open unless you had reservations. It was *real* depressing. Finally we decided just to grab something at Perkins, which we thought was open around the clock. Actually Perkins closes on Christmas Eve. They were locking the door as we drove into their parking lot. As we drove away, the stress of the past few days caught up with me and I started crying. Scott felt really shitty because he was going to have to drive me home and then leave for work less than an hour later. We resolved *never* to let that happen to us again, and ever since have carefully reserved time and planned a romantic evening for ourselves the night before Christmas. Nothing is allowed to interfere. Scott no longer works the late shift, and we've had lovely Christmas eves ever since. I've given up analyzing why I still think of this holiday as an important one. I'm not a Christian any more. I don't particularly like the commercialization of the secular holiday. And yet the years of family tradition (and the fact that we both celebrate that tradition with our families) keeps it a landmark event in my year.

Back to 1998. We spent Christmas day in Milwaukee with my family at my brother and sister-in-law's new home. Dan and Kelly announced that they were expecting a baby in June and much of the day was spent talking about little "TBA." Another large part of the day was spent listening to my sister Julie's account of her 3-month, around-the-world trip. She showed off photographs and told wild stories. She's always been a risk-taker and in fact did a lot of overly exciting things when she was in New Zealand — paraplaning, bungee-jumping over a wild rapids, rapids surfing, spelunking into a very deep, vertical cave, and glacier hiking. I think there was more, but I've blocked it out. We all had a great time.

The plan was to go to Iowa and visit Scott's family the next weekend, but on New Year's Day the Midwest got hit with a monster blizzard and no one traveled for several days afterward. We ended up bringing our gifts to Iowa a few weeks ago, late in January. The kids seemed to enjoy getting gifts in a second shift and it worked out fine. Frankly, Scott and I were pretty exhausted on New Year's weekend anyway, because we were still recovering from our annual New Year's

Eve party that we throw at our house. 50 or 60 people attended and we didn't say good-bye to the last one until 8 A.M. It felt kind of nice to wrap ourselves in aghans and gaze out at the snow storm outside. It was gorgeous. It's just too bad that our snowblower chose that weekend to develop problems. We ended up having to shovel all too much snow — several feet worth — out of our driveway and off our sidewalks.

I'm not complaining about the weather, though. We've had some fairly brutal winter temperatures and chill factors, and some heavy snowfalls in the past few weeks. And right now as a result of several thaws and re-freezes, there's a lot of ice on the roads and sidewalks. But the January thaw has already set in, and is stronger than normal. Real winter weather didn't even start till December 20th and here it is early February, and the end is already in sight! This is nothing! This sort of weather used to last from mid-November straight through to early March. We've hardly noticed winter and now it's already showing signs of retreating! I'm betting that I will be back on my bike commuting to work, sometime this month. The temperatures are already fine for biking. It's just the icy roads that stop me.

I'll be glad to be biking again. I've been using a stationary bike at home, but I don't like not going anywhere. . . . I continue to do exercises for my leg, but it hasn't gotten much better. The bad days are just as bad or worse than they ever were, so we'll soon be looking for another diagnosis. But I've got techniques for sleeping easier and I'm keeping busy and paying as little attention as possible to my leg (except when navigating those icy sidewalks; then I am paying all too much attention). Not much more to say about it.

I read Marge Piercy and Ira Wood's *Storm Tide* and recommend it highly. It's very interesting in its shifting points of view: they do some really different things in weaving male and female points of view within a narrative. I was also surprised by how much I liked John Varley's *The Golden Globe* (considering that it was an homage and dialog with various Heinlein themes) and not so surprised by how impressed I was by Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Talents*. *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, by Connie Willis, exhausted me with jumble and trivia and Elizabeth Ann Scarborough's *The Lady of the Loch* made for excellent plane reading on our trip home from Potlatch.

We didn't think we'd be able to afford it, but we found a decent plane ticket price for a Chicago-Eugene flight and were able to attend Potlatch any-

way. I'm glad we did it. It was great to have so much time to sit around and talk with Debbie and Jane. I enjoyed meeting Leslie What for the first time, and for the first time had a long conversation with Ian Hageman. We talked a bit with Tom Whitmore, Art Widner and D. Potter. But I was surprised to find so few other Intercourse members at the con. Isn't attendance at Potlatch required for all members of the apa? Scott and I intended to go up to Portland to visit our friend Bill Hoffman, but he came down with the flu bug, and we had to cancel so that he could rest. So we spent Monday exploring Eugene. Which was fun. I like that town, probably partly because its size is similar to Madison's. I like cities that are not too large to think about walking across. Also, even though the Midwestern winter hasn't exhausted us by a long shot, it was still pleasant to visit what felt like a tropical rainforest in the middle of January.

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It must have been really hard to type that heading, "Luke's Left." I'm so sorry you two weren't able to make it work, but quite relieved that you're going to stay close friends. As you say, the contrast between this breakup and the hard times you and Steve had, is staggering. Good luck to both you and Luke.

I admire the strength and courage that you exhibit both in dealing with emotional hard times and with how you share yourself and your care with sick and injured friends. It seems that ever since I've known you, your years have been punctuated with abrupt changes in schedule, as you've dropped everything and taken the time and energy to help friends in need. (The first time I remember was Ole and Neil Kvern's father . . . or was it their brother who was injured in a logging accident?) I wonder if some of the difficulty Luke had with your decision to care for Mary was a sort of guilty reaction. I'm not saying he deserved to have felt guilty at all, you understand. But I'm mentally putting myself in his position and wondering if your extravagantly generous offer to stay with Mary all that time, might have made me (if I were Mary's relative) feel as if — by comparison — it looked like I was sluffing off. . . .

Would Luke not have left if he hadn't had a "free" place to move, do you think?

Your description of the unsympathetic Father Guiandro made me think about the parish priest my mom talked to at the time my brother Rick came out

to the family. We all felt very grateful that mom's pastor happened to be a rather liberal man, since a priest who held firmly to the Church's official condemnation of homosexuality would have much worsened the situation in our family while my folks were trying to deal with Rick's revelation. It's hard when people invest a whole lot of respect in a *position* (rather than a person), so that — depending on who holds the position — they may receive supportive advice or not. Strict Catholics invest a lot of respect in the opinions of their priests and nuns and pope, but these folks are just people, after all, and the kind of effects they have on their parishioners varies accordingly. The same thing happens, of course, with teachers, military leaders, political leaders, psychiatrists, etc.: some people make assumptions about the validity of these folks' pronouncements based on the job they have, rather than the person they are.

I think you did well by Mary, too. Bravo.

I enthusiastically agree with your critique of Blanton's *Radical Honesty*, that laughter and tears are potentially just as effective in lowering stress levels as is anger. But I think that for some people any one of these tactics — anger, laughter, tears — might actually increase stress levels rather than calming them down. There is no universal behavior that will affect everyone the same way. To suggest that everyone needs to air their anger to feel better seems like much too general and sweeping a statement to me.

Glad to hear I'm not the only one who avoids debt even when it's obviously manageable (re your comments to Doug and Deb on money handling). Sometimes it feels as though I am the only person in my circle of acquaintances that uses only one credit card, (not counting the one joint card I hold with Scott), and keeps it compulsively paid-up. I remember being slightly frantic in the years after college because I had my student loan payments "hanging over my head." Compared to the load students take on these days, my debt was relatively low and ridiculously cheap — just slightly over \$2000 for 4 years of school at 3% interest rate. (In order to qualify for the National Student Defense rate, I had to promise not to overthrow the government during the term of my loan. Now that I'm paid up, of course, all bets are off.) Somehow I feel less uncomfortable with a house mortgage, maybe because my house payments are deducted automatically from my paycheck and deposited into Scott's and my joint account, and he takes care of paying the monthly installments. I've long

gotten used to my salary-after-deductions, and sometimes forget that I am indeed helping to pay off an enormous loan.

Re your comment to Doug (and his comment to Arthur), you agreed that many of the so-called models of monogamy in our culture are "productively invalid," as per your example, *The Honeymooners*. Unfortunately, I don't think it makes much difference if the pervasive models offered by our society for human behaviors are healthy or not. We all tend to repeat familiar patterns drawn from our childhood experience or cultural exposure. We seem most comfortable when we are repeating, and least comfortable when carefully considering and rethinking the potential effects of our behavior. I sometimes wonder, for example, how many rituals of romance (much less specific coupling rules), would be spontaneously enacted between two people who were never exposed to models of modern romance. Not many, I bet.

I think that even the most conscious and conscientious people alive have vast areas in their thinking and behavior that operate more or less on automatic. I'm not referring to instinctual behavior, but to behavior modeled after past experiences, observations, and rehearsals. On the other hand, the most conscious and conscientious people have *other* chunks of their lives in which they carefully do not follow models. When they make choices in those parts of their lives that clash with the way the majority of other people act, we call those choices radical. To my mind, the more we make conscious choices, the better — whether those choices result in behavior that matches or clashes with behavior exhibited by the majority around us. A couple that consciously chooses monogamy is significantly different in my mind than a couple that is monogamous because that's what god and family and country expect of them, but not significantly different from a non-monogamous group of lovers that also chose their lifestyle in a conscious and careful manner.

Like you, I've never regretted for a minute getting "fixed." My mood in the afternoon after I came out of anesthesia, was buoyant, to say the least. I was cracking jokes all afternoon and giggling uncontrollably every once in a while. The notion that all women should/need/want to give birth, to me, is one of those mostly-unquestioned models of human behavior.

Well, I sure hope you eventually get to buy that apartment complex of your dreams, because I want to

be around interesting, smart people for my whole life, and retirement in a place like that would be the ideal in my mind. As long as it was close to a library or a bookstore.

What did you mean by having a menopause symptom that feels like “a peculiar type of bad concentration?” I thought of the angry circles my mind sometimes gets dragged into during the day or two before my period. (It’s not bad and I can easily avoid most of the nasty repercussions when I recognize what’s happening.) I get really pissed over some little thing; my mind won’t let it go, and if I don’t restrain myself I can sometimes say something really hurtful to anyone that gets in my way. (“Don’t deal with this now. If it still seems serious tomorrow, say or do something then,” I tell myself.) Is that what you mean?

I know there are a lot of medically reasonable conditions that are best treated with Viagra, but I also wonder if there aren’t a lot of men taking it because a guy can’t be *too* virile. The enormous amount for Viagra purchase in the military budget makes me wonder.

Re your comment to Pamela, I too became almost headache-free after quitting caffeine. I used to get infrequent but fairly bad migraines. The worst happened to me one week when I had the flu and was drinking a lot of orange juice. I didn’t notice that I wasn’t drinking my normal quota of 6 or 7 cans of diet coke every day. The migraine that hit me lasted two days, made me sick to my stomach and confined to a bed in a dark room for most of it. Ever since then, I’ve been afraid of caffeine, afraid of risking that headache again. I do drink cokes and tea occasionally, but haven’t had a bad headache in two years or more.

© Jim Hudson

For a year or so after college, I felt a little like Pete seems to feel. I’d graduated from college with high grades, but felt embarrassed by the fact that I seemed to have majored in the wrong thing, finding out too late that I didn’t want to continue in Geography, and so I decided not to go on in graduate school. I worked lots of temporary, low-paying jobs that I mostly preferred not to talk about with friends and family. When people asked me what I was doing, I would more often talk about what I hoped to do in the future and most of that talk felt like bullshit. Some of my insecurity was intensified by the fact that I had an exceptional brother only two years younger than myself.

Rick won every scholarship possible; he traveled around the world on a science scholarship, he lived in Germany for a whole summer on a German language scholarship, and attended Stanford with all his expenses paid on another scholarship. I’d been really poor through all my whole college years and there I was with no career goals in mind and what to me looked like an enormous school loan debt, with what I imagined were unattainable parental expectations. But you know, they were my expectations, not my parents’, and I eventually had to discover that for myself. For me the turning point was getting involved with the publication of *Janus*. That’s when I started feeling confident about my abilities and excited about where my interests — if I actually followed them — would take me. My parents were less thrilled with what I thought were concrete accomplishments than those bullshit plans I’d been spouting, and I realized that my own standards were enough and good for me. I imagine that you won’t be able to convince Pete that your expectations are only to see him happy. He will have to discover for himself that the unrealistic expectations that make him unhappy are those he imposes on himself. I think that you will probably do better than my parents did, however, in appreciating less financially remunerative interests if he develops them and encouraging him in following his heart’s desire when he finds it.

I liked your simple explanation for your monogamous heterosexual lifestyle. Once examined, I think most peoples’ choices comes down to a fairly simple lists of needs and preferences.

I hope I’m not part of the rules-without-compassion, anti-esteem backlash group. But I do like the idea of schools making an effort to praise exceptional work in different ways than simply praising good effort. I remember a couple times being disconcerted in high school or college when I got a good grade for what I knew was a fairly mediocre job. In classes that I didn’t feel a lot of intrinsic interest in the subject and where I got good grades for minimum effort, I tended to do the least expected of me. The high school class that had the biggest effect on my work and my expectations of myself was a history class in which the teacher shocked those of us who had grown used to coasting through and getting good grades regardless. He gave us all Ds or worse on our first essay exam. After that experience, I listened very carefully to him as to what he expected and never took for granted that I could ace a paper or exam just by showing up in class or patching together a paper or studying the night

before. It seems to me that kids capable of above-average work need to be praised when they produce it, and not praised when they obviously do less than they are capable of.

You're right, I think, in your comment to Arthur about the self-maximizing nature of bureaucracies, and specifically about the growth of the prison bureaucracy here in Wisconsin and California (and most other states). But I fear there's something even more sinister about the growing prison bureaucracy than its tendency to increase its own power and number of employees by way of encouraging society's fear of criminals. It seems to me that capitalistic societies have never really gotten rid of the economic need for slaves. We've stopped calling cheap, abused workers slaves, but we've never gotten over the need for a cheap, practically imprisoned and powerless labor force. Before labor reforms were instated in the 30s, workers in company towns, sweatshops and migrant workers functioned economically much like pre-civil war slaves did within the U.S. economy. In spite of labor reforms, some of those abuses continue to this day, but the majority of workers employed by sweatshops and company towns are located in third world countries. Wherever they are located, modern industry claims it must have access to workers employed for sub-living wages — by force, if necessary — in order to survive in the international economy. I think the next source for slaves will be in our own country. Maybe the rising standard of living in many third-world countries are warning industry owners that they can no longer count on an unlimited number of slave laborers outside U.S. borders. Or maybe it's just a coincidental juxtaposition of societal fears and industry requirements. But I think inmates in this country's prisons will soon become a major component of the industrial workforce. They will work, basically, for free, or at least at minimal expense to their owners. All discipline problems will be legally addressed with force. No prisoner will need to be provided with means to support a family, nor the time to spend with a family; they can be stripped of their rights to maintain relationships outside of prison walls. They can be moved to different sites and used for different functions — all of which will be totally dictated by current needs of industry. We're already seeing the use of prison populations here in Wisconsin to supplement factory workers in some industries. We're already seeing prisoners being moved to more convenient prisons, sometimes far out of state, without respect to that prison's proximity to any indi-

vidual prisoner's family. It used to be that contact with family was considered of primary importance to the rehabilitation of a criminal. But rehabilitation in prisons is no longer a goal. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if the length of prison sentences eventually gets tied into the current industrial needs for workers in any given point of time. That is, when more workers are needed, judges will be encouraged (or maybe even required by law) to hand out longer, sentences. We've already seen the beginning of legally mandated sentences; it would be fairly easy to set those mandates according to economic necessity. And when "law-abiding" taxpaying citizens get sick of the huge portion of their taxes going toward the building and maintenance of prisons, I bet it won't be hard for politicians to get a bill passed to require prisoners to work for whatever industry signs up to "support" the institution. Labor unions may protest, but once established, prison populations will provide the most effective scab labor force that ever existed.

© Kimberly Cline

Re your comment to Elise, I too was thinking about "confrontative" as one of my descriptive terms of people's styles. "Diplomatic" is a good word for the middle term, but I don't know if I would use "cowed" for the opposite of confrontative. As a diplomatic-confrontative sort, I see the other extreme on this spectrum as someone who actively avoids confrontations, not necessarily because they are cowardly, but because confrontations feel worse to these people than any potentially good thing that might result from confrontations. The value, to me, of a non-confronter on my team, is that I am forced to evaluate risks and potential of a decision to argue, refuse, go over the head of, or otherwise confront another person or institution. Sometimes, it's *not* worth it, and that's a good thing to consider. The disadvantage, to me, of having one or more non-confronters on my team is that — once the roles are established (we all complain; I take action) — it sometimes feels unfair if I take all the flack for an action we all agree is necessary. I find myself in that position occasionally.

Interesting question that you posed to Steve about how we "remember" painful interactions. I know I'm capable of crystal clear recollections of traumatic moments. About 20 years ago, a friend and I came to an end of our friendship. This woman and I had edited a fanzine together for many years. We had lots of personal and professional differences and we

confronted one another with all of it within a one week period. It was a pretty traumatic time for both of us. She invited me to lunch and presented me with a list of complaints she had against me. It was a long list and it took her the whole lunch for her to go over them and expand upon them. I'm a confrontative sort of person, but I can listen pretty well too. So I listened carefully. I had to go to work at that point, and so we had to interrupt the discussion. Later, I wrote down what I remembered of what she had said and drew up my own list of problems as I saw them. Since the discussion was obviously destined to dissolve Jan's and my partnership, (and also because I didn't trust her to accurately report our discussion to others), I asked that Part 2 be held with a small group of other people who worked on *Janus*. She agreed. The first thing I did was to summarize the complaints she had made against me and was amazed that she complemented my recollection. It was a symptom of how badly matched we were as friends that I thought the very things she disliked about me obviously exposed her jealousy and vindictiveness to others. I was amazed that she was pleased that I was able to recount what she'd said. And in the back of my mind I recognized my mind's tendency to imprint audio and visual memories of events during especially emotional moments. A week later, I was still able to quote her exactly. (The rest of this story is rather immaterial to the point I am making here, but I'll finish it anyway: I made my points, there were a whole lot of fireworks. She said she'd assumed that since I hadn't argued with her at lunch that it meant that I didn't have any complaints against her and that I agreed with her point of view. She felt betrayed. We decided to dissolve our partnership. The rest of the people who worked on the fanzine chose to work with me on a new fanzine.)

On the other hand, I often embroider stories about inconsequential events in my life in the interests of telling a better story....

I love your phrase, "housemate mindmeld." I can identify.

Yes, high school warps a lot of kids when it comes to their enjoyment of sports by teaching that there is only one way to be physically active and that is to compete against others. Of course, high school also warps kids' enjoyment of literature and art and mathematics by similarly blocking multiple entries into enjoyment of these fields. I'm glad to hear that you threw off the high school rules for doing sports and found your own reasons for joy. I know what you

mean about the "hour-long orgasm" that comes with intense physical activity. When I swim regularly and intensely, or after a long, hard bike ride, the very pleasurable sense of exhaustion matches perfectly with what I feel like after sex. I don't know if I'd compare the *doing* of sex with the swimming or biking though.

Re your comment to Karen about lottery dreams.... My lottery dreams involves a long list of repairs and improvements on Scott's and my house, including an underground lap pool, and an enlarged studio where I would work at computer graphics projects. Also extensive travel. But my dreams, more and more often, have also started to include a substantial amount of philanthropy. For a while, I was dreaming about setting up a company to produce RU-434 (or what number is it? Sorry, I'm bad with numbers. The morning-after pill), that would not be vulnerable to pressure from the right wing religious nuts. Lately, I've more frequently thought about setting up a publishing/distributing company that would cater to writers rather than big profit margins, and would distribute books to independent bookstores at affordable rates, and which would not sell out to a giant corporation.

Those lottery dreams and a rash of large, philanthropic gifts reported in the newspapers lately have led me to a Theory. You know how people who grew up during the depression frequently cite that experience as one of their defining learning experiences? They say, "I am the way I am because I grew up during the depression, when none of us could assume we'd have enough money to buy a loaf of bread the next day." Well, I started to think about what cultural experience may affect *me and my generation* in a similarly powerful way. How did our experiences in the 60s and 70s affect the way we behave? Well, we've been living with all the boomer propaganda for a long time; most of it suggesting that we are all self-centered and selfish, and very very silly. But in my mind, one of the defining revelations we took out of the anti-war and civil rights marches, and the consciousness raising groups of the 60s and 70s was the conviction that we could change the world. That what we do in our personal lives has an impact upon the rest of the world. That wealth and power are inextricably linked to responsibility. And I notice the huge gifts being made by people of my generation to rebuild parts of the inner city, to subsidize the United Nations, to subsidize drug treatment facilities, to build ecologically responsible communities. Have you noticed some

of these stories in the newspapers lately? My sister has a friend who made a huge amount of money in the computer industry and she is now spending most of it in Russia to train entrepreneurs there how to manage businesses without reliance on the Mafia. I've got this theory that the generation that grew up in the 60s and 70s are going to involve themselves in amazing philanthropic activities. Not only because of the wealth accumulated by this group of people, but because of the attitudes we learned in our youth. I think the people who work on and contribute to the Tiptree Award might be counted in this trend. Well, it's a Theory.

Your confusion of the word Polyamory with Pollyannory inspired a brief image of a very bizarre cartoon in my mind, Pollyanna arriving at an orgy, seriously overdressed.

© Elizabeth Fox

Re your comment to Elise, I'm a lot like you when it comes to preferring to concentrate on the task at hand, rather than the plan for the next year. That's one reason I decided not to try freelancing. I would always be concentrating obsessively on finishing a project and once it was done, suddenly realize (panic!), that I hadn't arranged for the next job and the rent is due... On the other hand, I find that when I begin a project, doing an outline or planning out my strategy for doing it, is the best way to dive into work and get my creative juices flowing. If I don't at least mentally divide up a big task into smaller, do-able portions, I can feel intimidated about starting it at all. So at times, I am like you — impatient to do work rather than talking about it. At other times, though, I'm the person that says, hold on a minute. What needs to be done and what are our deadlines?

© Debbie Notkin

I hope the bad microeconomics project is done. How goes the Cogito job with Alan? I find your comments scary, on how poker has become an issue between you and Alan. I've seen a few relationships among distant relatives go really badly because of one partner's addiction to gambling. You haven't suggested you think there is any danger of addiction for Alan, but my mind keeps slipping to that remembered scenario.

Thanks for the lovely details of your Europe trip. I recently saw a friend's photos from her trip to Barcelona. What a fantastical city! I thought a couple times that it seemed almost other-worldly. Your side-trip to Irun reminded me of my sister, Julie's side-trip a few months ago, to St. Emillion in the South of France. She was also traveling at the same time you were. She continued to Italy, Greece, Turkey, Bali, and New Zealand. But like you, she decided to get off the train in France at a non-touristy stop. Unfortunately, she chose an extremely off-the-beaten-path place to get off the train at midnight. The station at St. Emillion (which she chose because of her memories of the good wine produced in that region) is several miles away from the town. She had to hike down a dirt road in the middle of the night and was luckily picked up by two women — a mother and daughter — who were the only English-speakers in town. They helped her find a place to stay for the night. That's a fairly typical Julie story. Her email sign-off is "Leap, and a net will appear." Amazingly it always seems to appear for her.

Elise's question about whether or not we negotiate our needs and wants downward before articulating them, continues to nag me. I certainly do this sometimes, and I can see the obvious reason why it's a bad thing. You ask for less than you need and therefore get less than you need, and then feel you've compromised yourself, while the person who gives you what you want thinks they've satisfied you. Yes, yes. But on the other hand, thinking clearly about what one wants sometimes leads to a realization that one has fewer needs than wants and the negotiation that follows can therefore run a lot more smoothly. To me, the key is being clear about what would be nice, and what is necessary, and being willing to give in when the nice things clash with someone else's necessities. This sort of negotiation seems to be the key part of what I enjoy about Scott's and my accommodations. The negotiations on necessities should all be done out in the open, but pre-negotiation for nice stuff inside works OK with me.

© Kerry Ellis

I'm really glad you contacted the police department about Dean and that the officer spoke to him. I hope the cessation of strange phone calls is a sign that he's given up. What an incredibly scary situation!

© Lisa Hirsch

Congratulations to Donna for being a finalist for the fellowship! I hope she won the grant.

I admire your description (in a comment to Karen) of your path to a less conflict-adverse person. I like your understanding of the concepts of Strength and Independence.

I've also noticed the use of the term "girlfriend" among lesbians, but that doesn't make me any more comfortable about using it in a heterosexual context. The assumptions active with heterosexual references are completely absent when it is used among lesbians. I have only the foggiest conception of why this is so, but it seems very real to me. The word changes meaning dramatically in context. Between a woman and a man, "girlfriend" implies ownership, diminution, and an adolescent relationship. Between two women, the word carries a sense of ironic humor, an acknowledgment that the word's assumptions apply to both or neither person and thus the sense of

ownership is defused. It becomes an affectionate *mutual* term.

© Guy Thomas

What an incredibly powerful zine, Guy! Fine writing and steel hard honesty. It must have taken a lot of courage to write "My Day in San Francisco." I really appreciate the fact that you shared it with us. You've seen people at their best and worst, haven't you? Images of the unexpected kindness of the folks in the Tenderloin and the Nordstrom worker have stayed with me since I read your zine a few weeks ago, as have your description of your harrowing journey through limiting physical changes. I'm sorry that it has so often been a lonely journey.

I hope that you will someday be able to go to Amsterdam. I will not think less of you. I will think only that you are more honest about your needs than many of us.