

# Shit Girls Say



Hey Girlfriend,

Sunday

Welcome home! The cats are happy and well fed—the plants too!—and all is well in The Lesbian Mansion. Trimming their claws provided the month's only drama: Camille went completely limp but Sandra put up quite a fight—though nothing a little Bactine can't fix ;) It was great to get away from my roommates for a while and make myself comfortable in your glorious pad. I spent many a night curled up in front of the fireplace, making my way through your amazing library. Reading through our cherished classics, from *A Bridge Called My Back* to *For Lesbians Only*, the *SCUM Manifesto* to *A Cyborg Manifesto*, brought me back to the early years of our friendship. Remember that ill-fated trip to see Ani DiFranco in Vermont? Or trying to make sense of Cixous in that fourth-year feminist theory seminar? The good old days of Edgy Women at Studio 303, and our matching Riot Grrrl haircuts? (What is Kathleen Hanna up to these days?)

I'm so happy we found each other. In my mind, developing a queer identity requires walking a circuitous path: certain objects or figures seem to speak one's queer feelings and offer comfort, but in a mysterious language that defies clear articulation. Self-understanding is like a trail of breadcrumbs: secret desires, strange emotions, moments of initiation and deep wordless knowing. For some queer kids, messy feelings cluster around same-sex desire, while for me and many others they manifested more in a keenly felt, taboo cross-gender affinity, which ripened into a potent urge to subvert and betray the male sex and its privileges. Mine was a childhood of intense girl-identification: socializing almost exclusively with the fairer sex, as well as being mistaken for a member of it; dressing in drag and dancing like Madonna; inventing female alter-egos—mine was named "Lisa," probably after my beloved Lisa Simpson, and she loved to wear bracelets—and identifying with the TV girl-heroes I spent way too much time indoors with—Punky Brewster, Darlene Conner, Wednesday Addams, even good old Velma from *Scooby-Doo*.

Growing up, the space of the printed page, like the space of the screen, increasingly became a field for imagining bodies and identities beyond those we were taught were fixed and immutable. When I discovered women's and feminist writing—fiction, non-fiction, theory, philosophy—it offered a blueprint for gender liberation that would free us all from the life sentence of biological determinism. The rigid rules of our male bodies collapsed like paper tigers in the face of feminist and queer theories of social construction and performance. The words of a Shulamith Firestone, an Audre Lorde or a Judith Butler—you know, that other "shit girls say": the entire corpus of feminist thought—proved potent enough to transform this girl-identified lad into a full-blown feminist-identified faggot. So what if I wasn't invited to Kat's moon circle, and a certain iconic lesbian authoress who shall remain nameless refused eye contact with me at her book launch?

Gay male culture typically feeds on—even vampirizes—women and their words, with shared feelings of suffering, (understandably) a key touchstone for identification and empathy. Make what you will of the prevailing dynamics between women and gay men: I can't pretend that there are any clean and easy answers to what we make of each other and each other's voices. Written primarily for women readers, the trove of feminist books, zines, music and artworks that we discovered together in Women's Studies at Concordia—the same ones I just pored over in your apartment!—travelled their idiosyncratic, circuitous paths to wind up in the hands of a curious boy like me. Taking over my and other dudes' hearts and minds, they transformed us into allies and drove us to undermine the tyranny of masculine domination however and wherever we can. In some ways, I see us as carrying on the legacy of our elders in the AIDS activist movement of not so long ago: fags and dykes who united and shared skills and strategies to fight a plague that threatened them all. Individually and societally, what does it mean for a queer male identity to be forged in the intellectual and affective furnaces of feminism?

I feel like I've rambled on long enough, I don't want to take up too much space here :)  
Against the dictatorship of biological determinism,  
For self-fashioning and fabulation,

Your Forever Lezbro











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