

Raw Vulva #2

May, 1993

the experimental issue

\$1.00



A few more words from the editor:

Whose pussys were those? or My oh my, my heavenly virginia: **Raw Vulva #2**, the 'zine for queer girl bicyclists continues. This is the **experimental issue** with a section dedicated to bike violence, more astrospeak, dyke biker of the month, and tons of other pithy thoughts about dykes, biking, and biking dykes. I received more contributions than I had the space to print. Due to a combination of time constraints (i.e. how many hours a day can I blow off work at work to work on Raw Vulva without getting fired) and physical limitations (unnaturally contorting my body in front of the computer screen so my boss can't tell what the hell I'm typing), **Raw Vulva** remains relatively small, twelve pages. Along the same techie vein, anyone out there keep weird hours, have Pagemaker smarts, extra time, and a want to work on a cool 'zine about lesbian bicyclists? I need you. Let me know; the **Raw Vulva** address is listed on the next page.

The couple of months between this issue and last issue have been strange; soldiers confessing their buttfucking predilections to the press and soft, white senators, and me, I find myself riding the elevator at work in a lusty

state - wondering what the Bay Area Career Woman ("Going up?") next to me is like under that tight fitting corporate skirt of hers! The question is: Why are gay soldiers and corporate dykes connected to raw vulva and bicycling in my mind? It's a spring thing. Matters of the flesh really matter now, and biking is one big, sweaty, hot, sensual experience. Pedalling puts you in that spring frame of mind (and body.) It's bikie heaven right now sisters! Ride on!

Thanks again to all the contributors, Jannine, Gussy, Dana, Harriet and her idea, and the Vulvettes on the cover (they take raw vulva to a deeper level entirely!)

I have to make a few corrections regarding the first issue. Monk of *My Femme Transformation* is Angela, ultimate femme. There's another girl biker out there whose name really is Monk, and although very cute, probably doesn't identify as femme. And she certainly didn't write the piece. I also incorrectly said that the San Francisco Bike Coalition sponsored the Critical Mass Rides. They don't. They're sponsored by no one.

Hold on to your helmets girls! **Raw Vulva #2** is gonna blow you off your bike seats!

Lizzy Bullets

editor

LETTERS

Dear Raw Vulva:

I read the last issue cover to cover and thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. Cartoons, articles, Astrocompatibility, everything was wonderful. I even called the women's bike store in New Hampshire that was talked about. This is not just another 'zine.

Anyway, here's my question. Where do I find a really cute, sexy girlfriend? No, only kidding. What I really want to know is where to ride in the city with a 16 month old passenger (baby-bike-seat, of course.) I used to be an avid cyclist but for the last sixteen months (make that nineteen months-I stopped biking when I was six months pregnant) I have felt unsafe riding on the streets with my precious cargo. I hate to wait until my son can ride a tricycle to get on my bike again. I also hate the idea of driving my bicycle somewhere just to ride it. Is there any hope? Please respond soon.
Sincerely,

Dyke with bike with baby with no place to go

Dear Dyke with Withs:

Hmm...I have to admit, kid stuff is not usually the sort of thing I am thinking about. But I can at least tell you about some really quiet (read: no traffic), interesting places to bike. The China Basin/Mission Rock is really deserted on the weekends. It's really industrial down there. I like that, maybe your son will too. The Golden Gate Bridge is open 24 hours to bicyclists now. There's usually not too much traffic during a late night ride over the bridge. Also check out **WOMBATS**, Women on Mountain Bikes and Tea Society. Their number is (415)459-0980. They are based in Marin, and although they aren't a specifically lesbian group, where there

is athletic activity, there are dykes. I'm sure you could hook up with other dyke mommies through them, or at least maybe they'd have more suggestions about where to ride.

Dear Raw Vulva:

Ride On!

I just caught the premier issue of your 'zine and I must say - congratulations on your fine publication. I am still in major drool condition over the two cover gals. (*Same here. Ed.*) I totally enjoyed the comics and the Astrocompatibility column by Camille. I am sorry that Dyke Biker of the Month Linda Catalano is down on road cyclists. Personally I am not into an US vs. THEM mentality. Speaking strictly about cycling, there are quite a few of us around who consider ourselves "bi".

I experience severe raw vulva after about forty five miles when my crotch has gone from numb to shrieking - especially since I wear labial jewelry and it often does not behave itself. After hours of studying Michael Jackson videos I've become very adept at making quick adjustments in public.

I am planning to share **Raw Vulva** with my biking buddies who I know will just fall out of their spandex shorts laughing.

Oh yeah - can I make a dedication to my best girlfriend, Ruth - who gave me her Klein just one year after she bought it (but never seemed to really like it) - you are the best blubberhead, I love you.

**Warmest regards and happy trails,
Elaine Manuele**

Dear Raw Vulva:

Let me share with you the joy I felt upon receiving the first issue of **Raw Vulva**, the joy of sisterhood and shared consciousness. Yes, I realized I am not alone with my raw vulva, and that there are many, many women and vulvas out there just like me and

mine.

For years I have been cycling alone, annoyed at the raw and dry irritation my boy's seat gives me. I had tried different shorts, different underwear, different seat positions, but I eventually concluded that it must be my own silent affliction. I never imagined there were seats out there especially designed for my vulva! I have been just too embarrassed to walk into the male dominated gear headed bike shops and say "Um, excuse me, my clit gets really sore when I ride, any suggestions?" You, **Raw Vulva**, can probably imagine what I feared as an answer.

Your 'zine does a valuable service in spreading the word and the consciousness of raw vulvas around the globe. Let me say since reading the first issue, I have kept an eye on what other women are riding on. Raw vulva and bicycle seats were the topics of conversation with every woman I rode next to on the last Critical Mass ride.

Recently I have been shopping everywhere for that perfect girl-seat, and let me tell you, most of the boys in the shops around town don't really have a clue about women's bike seats. Do tell me, **Raw Vulva**, are there any women working in bike shops in San

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**Love Bicycling?
Then Submit to
Raw Vulva!**

**Send comments, letters,
other writings, cartoons,
or whatever else to:**

**Raw Vulva
842 Folsom, Box 233
San Francisco, CA
94107**

More Bike Friendly Places compiled by Lenora, Max, and Lara

Here's a further list of bike friendly spots in San Francisco:

The Strand (movie theater) - Market Street near the Civic Center. Friendly is not the word, they were more concerned about my bike than I was. When the woman selling tickets saw me swinging my bike helmet, she urged me to bring my bike inside instead of leaving it locked to a meter on Market. They let you put it in a little alleyway between the theatre and the next door building. You can lock it to the chainlink fence.

Intersection for the Arts - Valencia between 16th and 15th. I went there for a clarinet concert, and followed two serious mountainbikers (saddlebags, etc.) in; if I hadn't seen them taking their bikes in I would have locked mine on the street. The guy said pleasantly, "You can put your bike on the third floor," indicating the stairs. Actually, it wasn't that bad a

climb, and you know your bike's totally safe. The other bikers and I agreed that they ought to have the concerts on the third floor and store bikes on the first.

UCSF Medical School/ Dental Clinic. Bike accessible on the Parnassus side. I don't go here often, but I made the unfortunate mistake of being a pelvic model at UCSF for some extra money. I let sweaty, pimply, brace wearing eighteen year old boys stick their hands in my pussy - simulating pap smears and doing bi-manuals. The experience sucked, the money was good, and I found out the place is bike friendly. The dental clinic also lets you bring your bike in. Good policy, scary place.

Red Dora's Bearded Lady - 14th Street at Guerro. Fun dyke cafe/ performance space. You can put your bike in the backyard.

Cole Street Hardware - (a handy piece of knowledge for the butch readership) Cole Street in Cole Valley

Cafe 101 - Carl Street at Cole

The Inner Sunset Community Foodstore - 20th Ave. at Irvine. They don't let you bring your bike in but they have sturdy bike racks outside

Kinko's Copies - Market Street at Duboce

Donington Park - corner of 19th Street and Folsom. A rather bike and woman friendly Mission pub with great English beers on tap. Watch out for Friday evenings though - all the meatheads from PG&E and the adjacent firehouse slither across the street to flex their "muscle."

Val 21/Valencia Whole Foods - Valencia Street at 21st. The owners here are definitely pro-bike and pro-dyke. They'll let you wheel your cycle into either establishment (they're located next door to each other) and in the restaurant, on a non-busy night, they might even store it downstairs while you devour their tasty wares.

Elbo Room - Valencia between 17th and 18th Sts. If it's early and you cruise in with a big smile and "of course I'm bringing my bike in with

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THINGS I HAVE CARRIED ON MY BIKE.



1. VACUUM CLEANER.
\$30.00 AT SALVATION
ARMY. TWO BUNGEE CORDS.



2. MICROWAVE OVEN. NEVER WORKED PROPERLY
AGAIN. TWO BUNGER CORDS, ONE HAND.



3. PEOPLE (AT LEAST THREE).

NO BUNGEE CORDS.
MUCH PERSUASION

Why I Bike

You know, life can be a real kick in the pants, and it can also be a plain ol' kick. Somewhere between getting kicked and getting kicked, I put together this magazine. Why bother? Hasn't everyone already seen it, done it, heard it, been there, blah, blah, blah? Probably. But sister girl bikers, I love biking so much I get inspired to put together a tangible expression of my affinity for the two wheels. For this issue I decided to answer the very basic and obvious question: Why I Bike?

Because it makes me feel so alive. I remember one beautiful summer evening, my housemate came home from her dance class, and sat in the front room with me. The sun was setting and the color of the sky was so incredible, it almost made me feel like crying. And she said, "This is it, this is it." I said I know this is it but I still feel like I can't get at it; it's always just outside of my reach so when everybody else is living, I'm watching and I don't know how to get in the thick of it." She pointed to the sky on the other side of the window and said, "Let's bike into it then." We biked to the top of Potrero Hill, and we were right there, living. Ever since then, biking has taken on this vibrancy and intensity, so when I bike, I'm sweating and singing, and enjoying my body and the sights and the feel of whatever neighborhood's around me.

I bike because I sometimes have charmed bike rides on my beloved bike, Storm. I had one last New Year's Eve. I worked until 5:00 P.M. and when I left, my building was empty. The financial district was empty, too, and to me, that's the only time when the financial district actually has a feeling to it - lonely and sort of spooky. I didn't want to go home right away so I biked up Market Street.

I stopped off at a liquor store to buy batteries for my bike light. (I left the other ones in my vibrator.) The women in front of me in line were getting ready for the night, buying beer and cigarettes. I was sort of infected with their celebratory spirit - even though they did seem a little tense, and so I bought a cheap beer, too, and drank it as I started biking up to Twin Peaks.

God, the ride to the top was fucking beautiful. The carlights and streetlights were making the rain glitter, so I felt like I was being showered with really cold, soft, sparkly confetti. I don't know if it was the pace I rode at or the weather or the scenery or if it was just a magic bike ride, but somehow that bike ride kept me up all night. I was up when the sun rose on the first day of the new year.

I bike because I like going to parties on Saturday night and staying as late as I want because I don't need to catch a bus or a ride with anyone.

I like stopping off for a late night latte with other girl bikers or by myself.

I bike because I like to explore the city at any time, **because** sometimes

I like to go slow to enjoy the scenery, **because I** love speeding up and down hills and **because I** can sing as loud as I want on my bike

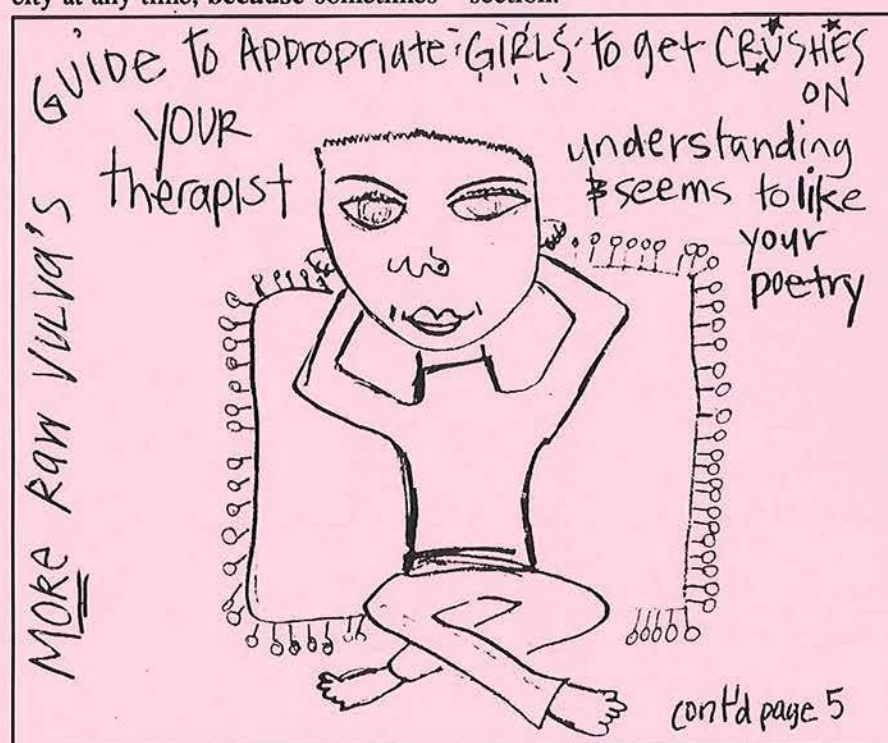
I bike because it's prime day-dreaming time. I have a very active fantasy life and many of my best fantasies start on that beautiful bike of mine.

And I bike because sometimes I wake up feeling awful, and I just can't imagine feeling good again. And maybe on that day I'll give up coffee, and so I'll start getting a big headache on top of it all. But then I'll bike to work and the rush from biking takes over and I do feel better.

Because I love the night. When I go to sleep, it scares me, but when I am awake in it, I love it. And biking is one way for me to explore the night and be relatively safe.

And if you bike you can ask other girls to go on midnight bike rides with you.

I bike because I love playing the game where you try to maintain balance on your bike without touching your feet to the ground - when you're stopped at a red light or a busy intersection.



Astrocompatibility

by Camille

The basic layout of Camille's column is one sign's perspective on a pairing with all of the other twelve signs. This issue's featured sign is Taurus.

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I've heard Taurus linked with all twelve signs at one time or another. And why not? We are ruled by Venus, planet 'o love. Taureans in love (our natural state) are committed - domestic - sensual - stubborn - generous - uncommunicative about feelings - easygoing. Oh yes, we're also most likely to write an encyclopedia titled Great Meals I Have Had.

Taurus w/Aries (Shoot First and Ask No Questions): She'll push you - you hate that. But she can also lead you to get more done. (Don't tell her that, though. She'll gloat for years.) And you'll certainly know your power to remain unmoved. She'll also occasionally get you out of the house. Sex is GREAT! She exaggerates heavily. And always has a new project that is absolutely IT - the ticket, this week that is.

Taurus w/Taurus (Bumpersticker: I'd Rather Be Sleeping): You'll hardly ever get out of the house, but then, who needs anything outside the house? You'll save money. You'll buy nice stuff but the house will look ransacked every few weeks since you're both lazy as sin. And decadent. But it is nice to be with someone who appreciates silence and who you can actually lean on - and won't break. You'll each be slow but you'll also get somewhere with your lives.

Taurus w/Gemini ("Grounding, what's grounding?"): You're going to want to kill her. I haven't met a Taurus who doesn't want to shake a Gemini. Flighty. Gives you twelve opinions, none of them what she really thinks. (If she ever believes anything!) Never gets down to business. Great at parties but leave 'em there. Oh yeah - they're promiscuous as hell (until settled - but who knows when that'll happen)

Taurus w/Cancer (Rollercoasters R'US): A true fascination lies be-

tween these signs - 'cuz they don't understand each other one bit. She's moody, bitchy, and completely unpredictable - should fascinate you for hours. Of course, till she aims her bitchy sights on you. She'll apologize 1/3 as often as she should for taking out on you her current emotional state. She'll take two hours telling you it's the way you left the top off the toothpaste which shows your utter disregard for her. "You just don't understand me," and she's right, you don't. But then, neither does she.

Taurus w/Leo ("Walking on water? I'm not into petty parlour tricks."): She definitely has her opinions and many in complete opposition to you. You have the patience to stroke her ego. And she's great in bed. But if you ever wanted the limelight, give it up now. They are loyal, (they have to be - fans are in short supply.) It's a good match, but she'll act as if you're the one getting the bargain. Nod knowingly and remember: she lucked

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RAW VULVA'S GUIDE TO GIRLS TO GET CRUSHIES* on cont'd



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Bike Violence

Accidents will happen...

I get into a *lot* of accidents on my bike. One a week, one every two weeks. The modern day automobile is out to get me. I have the scars to prove it. It scares me in retrospect. For example, if I am lying in bed and I go over the accidents or near accidents (they count as violence, too, sisters!) that happened to me that day, I enter a state of shock. Am I *fucking crazy*? Me on my little bike flying through yellow lights at major intersections, racing *gigantic* MUNI buses to the intersection before cutting them off (as if I could really cut them off???)!! However, "in retrospect" is not the way I usually experience getting killed. I react at the moment of occurrence, and rather than making me embrace life, these near death experiences make me want to kill somebody. What's a gal to do but dedicate a special section in her 'zine to Bike Violence! (Of course!) Here are a few tales of a-mazing collisions with cars, strange walkers, and yes, even the natural elements.

Leonora's shuddering stories of BIKE VIOLENCE:

The most sinister experience I had was one sunny summer afternoon when I was biking home from work. I noticed a man standing between two parked cars, as if waiting for an opportune moment to cross the street. As I neared, he looked at me with a smile on his face. Suddenly he stepped forward and kicked the front wheel on my bike, trying to knock it out from under me. I swerved dangerously, but did not fall. Quite shaken, I swore at him. This marked one of the first times I swore in public.

Another time I was waiting at an intersection, a huge busy intersection

with a dozen different lights for each direction and for turns, etc. I was on the sidewalk, edging off it because my light was next. There was a taxi perpendicular to me, waiting to turn. Though I was perfectly visible to the taxi, it slid forward and slid into me, not hard enough to knock me over, but hard enough to bruise my knee. I looked at the driver in astonishment. He smiled back at me, as if to say, gee, I ran into you, how silly of me. I was bothered all afternoon, thinking about how he'd done it for no good reason, just out of habit of jockeying with the rest of traffic for the best position, and regarding bikers as inconsequential obstructions.

In comparison, the one really serious accident I had, running into an opening car door, falling off my bike and breaking my collarbone, seems much more benign. I was in a great deal of pain, but I was also surrounded by a crowd of solicitous strangers, who called an ambulance, asked me repeatedly if I was cold (a sign of shock), found my glasses (which had flown off my face) and best of all, locked up my bike, so I was able to retrieve it a couple days later (IT was scarcely damaged at all). Then later I got a check from the insurance company, paid off my debts and went to New York to visit my friends. So on the whole I don't have bad memories of that accident. Then I say to myself, that's totally sick, you were severely handicapped for several weeks, unable to ride for several months, your collarbone will stick out in a funny way for the rest of your life, and you're grateful for the crumbs the insurance company threw to you, as if a gift, you lapped them up because you were dead broke and it sounded like a lot. You forget the basic injustice of the police report, which said

the accident's fault lay primarily with the biker, because you were trying to pass on the right side of the car. So in a way the broken collarbone accident was really the creepiest one of all. Nothing to do about anything of them really. Just bike on, a little more distrustful every day, hoping for a deserted street.

Carson's harrowing accounts of

BIKE VIOLENCE-ugh! I hate being the object of cars' violence towards bikes. It makes me such a misanthrope. The first accident I had was after a really exhausting soccer game. I had been up all night working the graveyard shift at my then job. And the game was way the hell out in the Sunset District. By the time the game was over, I was out of it. So I was sleepily pedalling home when a lower back cramp jolted my memory. "oh my god!" I remembered. "my tampon! it's been in for hours! I have to take it out or I'll be electrocuted and my clothes will be a bloody mess!" I careened through the open door of the next cafe and raced into the bathroom. In the bathroom stall I discovered that when I had inserted the tampon, one of those tricky little o.b.'s without an applicator, I forgot to unravel the string. And now the fucking thing was stuck. I struggled with it for about fifteen minutes, and emerged from the bathroom sweaty, pissed, and panicky. That damn tampon wouldn't budge! I had always wondered about the "stuck tampon/garlic/gerbil phenomena." In the past I had harshly and unsympathetically judged those with objects lodged in their various orifices. And now here it was happening to me! I got back on my bike. I was unable to think clearly. In fact I was unable to think.

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Dyke Biker Of the Month

Sharon Lum is Dyke Biker of the Month. She's a little more formal about bicycling than I am i.e. she enters organized rides, she's the women's outreach coordinator for Different Spokes, she wears proper bike garb, etc. And admittedly, I wasn't sure if she was Raw Vulva material. But was I wrong! The girl is a raw vulva queen!

Raw Vulva: So Sharon, you commute to work, right?

Sharon Lum: Yeah, I commute everyday, rain or shine. I work for IBM, but I wear jeans and a blouse. Lots of people commute on their bikes. In my old department no one would ever dream of taking their bike to work. In fact, there was a couple in that other department who worked in the same building, yet they took separate cars to work, just in case one needed to go to another building in the middle of the day.

RV: Car enthusiasts, a rare breed! Do you commute on that bike? (A racing bike)

SL: I commute on a touring bike. I have three bikes. I have a racing bike, a touring bike, and a mountain bike. But I get attached to my racing bike. That's the one I spend most of my time on.

RV: That bike looks brand new (*It is red and sparkly.*)

SL: It's five years old. I just did an overhaul on it.

RV: Where did you learn that?

SL: Mainly through books. Actually a friend and I are taking a bike maintenance class up in Ashland, the one that all the bike shop guys go to. I've been learning through trial and error. Both of us have dreams of opening our own bike shop, and I kinda wanna make it a place to hang out - so it's gonna be a bike shop, catering mostly to short people, with accessories, and a bakery on the side.

RV: Do you think your ability to change a flat is a gage of whether or not you're mechanically inclined?

SL: I don't know, probably.

RV: How long does it take you to change a flat?

SL: Depends, if I can find the hole I don't even take the wheel off.

RV: Wow! (*very impressed*) So, you're the women's outreach coordinator for Different Spokes?

SL: Yeah, Different Spokes is a gay and lesbian bike club for gays, dykes, bi's and their friends.

RV: And transgender?

SL: And transgender. Anybody who wants to ride with us basically.

RV: What do you do as women's outreach coordinator?

SL: Anything I want to get girls to join the club. The reason I joined a bike club is to be social, so I make the rides I lead very social. It is hard to talk while you're riding. You only hear 1/2 of the conversation. So we do something after the rides I lead - go to my house or go out.

RV: No sex at the bike stops?

SL: No actual sex, but we talk about sex a lot.

RV: Is Different Spokes gonna be in the [Gay] Parade?

SL: No, there's not enough interest.

RV: At some point, we should have the real dykes on bikes contingent. Do you get raw vulva?

SL: Yeah, right after I get off the bike especially if I've ridden for a while. Makes it real hard to pee.

RV: Do you have any solutions for raw vulva?

SL: Well, it's only right after I get off my bike and I pee, that it's sore. So don't pee right after you stop riding. I've been riding seriously for ten years so my crotch is pretty calloused

RV: Do you keep track of how many miles you ride?

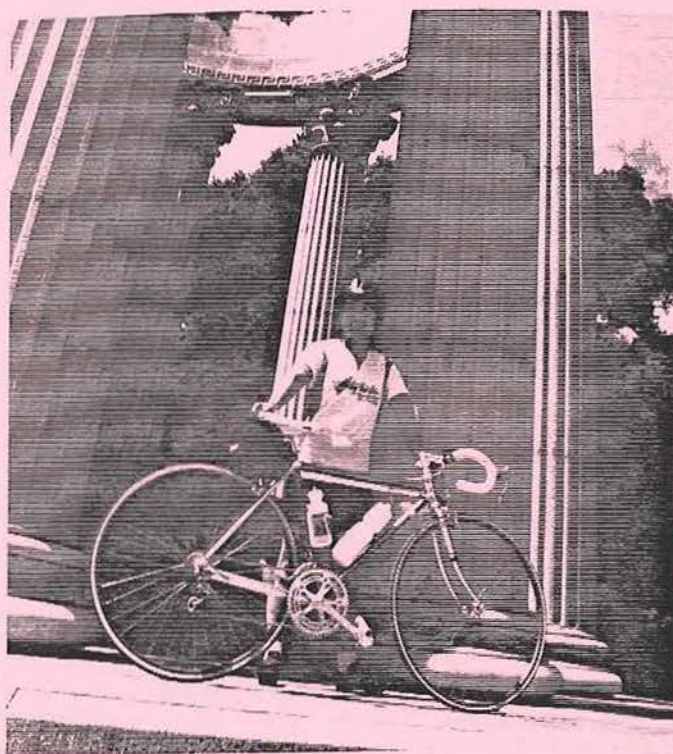
SL: Yes. I ride between 35 miles to 100 miles on the weekends. I keep a training diary, how much I ride, what I eat. It's really especially for Century rides (100 miles). I can see what worked and didn't work. I love taking data.

RV: Aah, a data pig.

SL: Yeah, I have a computer, but I don't use it. I have an index card file - color coded that I use.

RV: Computers are the worst. They suck you in, and then in the middle of something really important, they turn on you. Do you think biking is gonna be the wave of the future?

SL: I hope so. Recreationally more and more people are doing it, and that's a start.



Sharon Lum and her bike

Bike Violence continued

My mind wasn't on the road. And you guessed it! Right in the middle of toxic shock hysteria, a door slammed into me and sent me flying over the front of my bike. I landed right on my elbow. I lay sprawled on the street and the woman who hit me launched into this helpless number, hands covering her gaping mouth, repeating over and over "oh my god." The thing is, she didn't help me to my feet or even pick up my bike and dust it off. Was I supposed to feel sorry for her? I didn't. I felt sorry for myself. I limped to my bike and rode on, blood dripping from my elbow, to the nice girls at Women's Needs Center, where they put a bandaid on my elbow, cooed over me, and helped me extract my tampon.

I had an accident during the rainy season. A car hit me on Market Street at night across from Cafe du Nord. My front tire got all bent out of shape. And my wrist hurt and my thigh was entirely purple with this really hideous bruise. The guy who hit me - what a meanie! He had been drinking and was really indignant when I wanted to see his license. He said, "Why should *I* show you my license, I'm not asking to see *yours*." Well, I thought it was pretty obvious that I wasn't driving a car. And so our exchange came to a very tense halt, when, like magic, a bunch of bike messengers swarmed around us. They stood there and when the guy kept hedging about giving me his info, the messengers would all start badgering him. It was great I got all his info, and the messengers gave me all these tips about legal issues and their names and numbers in case I needed witnesses. Th final outcome wasn't good; my wrist has never been the same and Mr. Weiner (that really is his name,

appropriately enough) didn't pay for any medical bills, but he did pay for the tire at least. I wish the accident hadn't happened, of course. I do have to say that I am elated in hindsight at the way those bikers came over and supported me.

**Linda Catalano on
Mundane Violence Against
Cyclists:**

Theft, vandalism, accidents. These are indisputably violent situations that cyclists must endure or be lucky enough to avoid throughout their cycling careers. These are horrible, terrible, violating, nasty, ugly, and costly problems to deal with. But in my view of the world of cycling and cycling challenges, they are on the extreme end of the violence spectrum. I have had the good fortune thus far in my cycling career to not have had much experience with these annoying and dangerous problems. (My bike was stolen once, and recovered, needing only minor repairs; the only accidents I've had occurred when I was a baby biker and usually involved impact with bushes, hedges or other foliage; the vandalism demanded a retail price of \$2.50, and made my ride home one late night a little more strenuous than usual - I couldn't sit.) However, as a daily rider of the commuter genre, I have become sensitive to the mundane, the workaday, the banal violence that is carried out against bicyclists by the weather, the roads, and of course, by our friends (NOT!) the motorists.

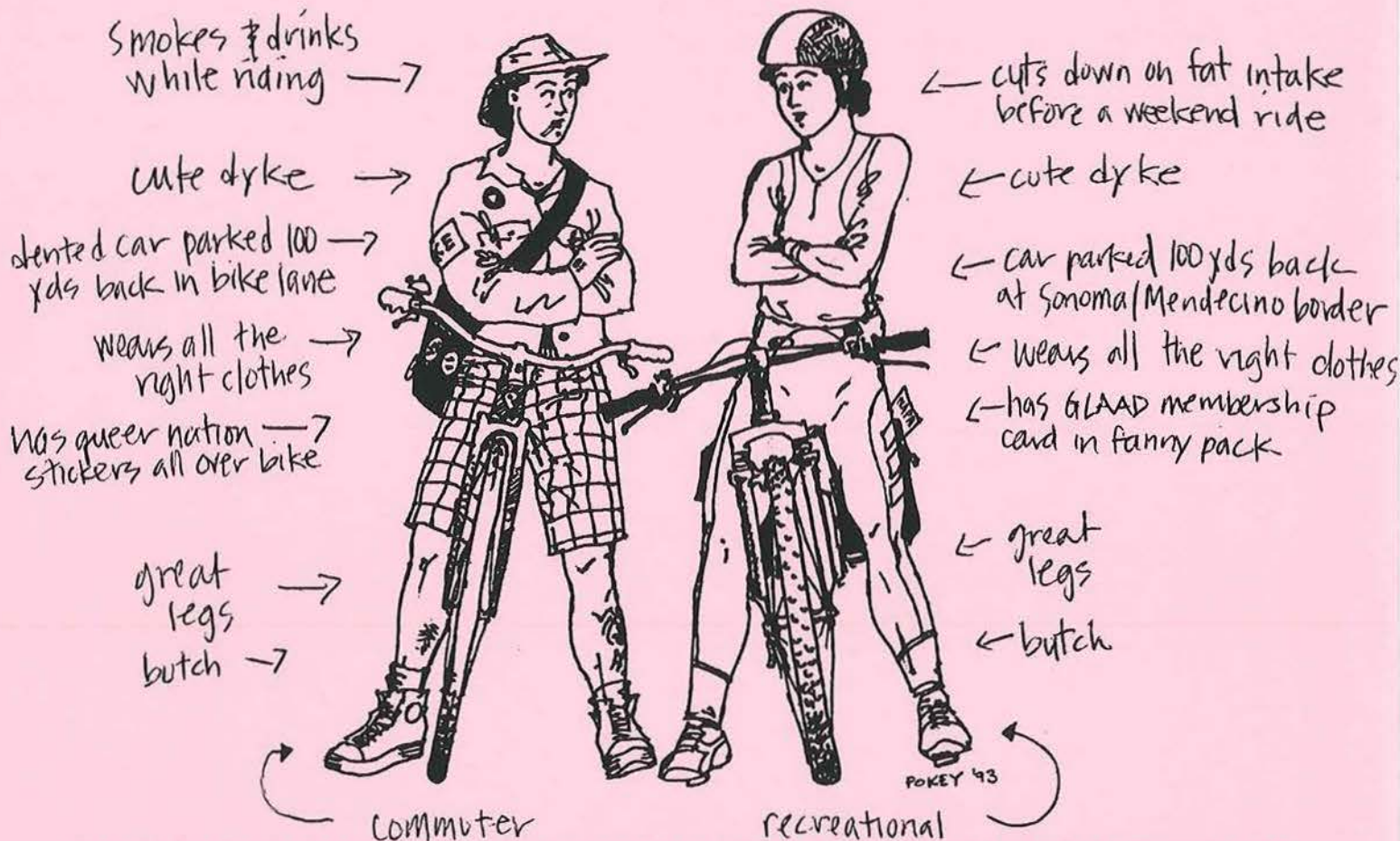
We are lucky, in San Francisco, to live in a generally bicycling-friendly climate, meteorologically. We usually have about eight or nine months out of the year where biking is manageable, if not purely enjoyable. However, there are a couple weather elements that I consider downright violent towards bikers. Rain is my worst enemy. I really think that rain

is every biker's worst enemy, too, but if it's not, I don't want to force it on you. There is nothing I hate more than riding my bike in the rain. I wear glasses, so even if I didn't mind being drenched and sweaty and procuring a line of mud and gunk up my back, I'd still be pissed about not being able to see the road or anything that is sure to be on it. Mud and gunk can be easily avoided by installing either a bike rack or a pair of fenders on the bike. Fine. Both are on my wish list. A rain suit, including pants, is probably a good investment, but really, what a pain. Expensive, restricting, hot. They might be on my wish list, if I could find any for less than \$50.00. Anyway, let's say you manage somehow to stay dry during the rainy season, and you don't have to worry about your glasses getting messed up. There's still a severe visibility problem going on in the road. Motorists, who never especially want to see us, have an easier time not seeing us in the rain. Here's a nightmare scenario: your brake pads are wet, you can't see, and you're hydroplaning on oil-slicked street. Then, to avoid some boob who's driving like he's the only one on the road, you swerve, skid, and ... wipe-out! Very, very bad. So you're injured, embarrassed, angry, and it's raining to boot. Rain is violent against bikers.

Wind is my other pet-peeve weather element. It can whip up at any minute, and usually does when you're going up-hill. Maybe I have a lot of trouble with wind because I'm small. That wind just pushes me all over the road. It is difficult to keep control of the bike when battling a fierce wind. This is a serious safety concern! You could be trekking along at a nice clip, when suddenly, out of nowhere, a dusty gust of cold air grabs your front tire, and you find yourself either riding up the curb, smacking into parked cars, or being forced into ferocious

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Who is the right girl for you? The commuter or the recreational cyclist?



Bike Violence continued traffic.

Another thing about wind that is frustrating is that it can really slow your progress, up-hill or down. And after I've worked my way up a big hill, I want to enjoy my well-deserved coast down the other side graced by speed. I don't want any pesky wind getting in my way. That can almost be as bad as hitting a traffic light midway. Wind is bad.

Most of the violence that is committed against cyclists can be avoided. Certainly the crummy roads we put up with are one of the most violent of all challenges that cyclists confront daily. I cannot even believe the condition of some of the roads in this city. How is cycling ever supposed to be taken seriously as an alternative to drive cars when you need to be encased by metal just to survive the

journey to work, back home, doing errands? The problem is circular in nature. Nobody thinks bicycling or bicyclists are important, so nothing gets done to make it a valid alternative to automobile traffic. And since bicycling can be such an unpleasant experience in the city, due to crummy roads and a lack of consciousness on the part of motorists to the reality of bicycle traffic, people give up on it and drive cars instead. Since people aren't out on the roads on bikes in droves, the cars can ignore us, and the city politicians can ignore us and our needs. The April 27, 1993 issue of the Tubular Times tells us that the "city of San Francisco is due to receive approximately \$450,00 for development of pedestrian and bicycle projects...but these funds are slated by city officials to be diverted to

MUNI." (call SF Bike Coalition for more information at 751-BIKE) For Heaven's sake! This is terrilby violent against cyclists. This single issue involves most of the violence carried out against cyclists at the hands of humans. It makes some of us want to quit cycling. For me, that would be a kind of psychic death. Bicycling is spiritual in nature for me. Don't I have a constitutional right to freedom of religion? We consent as members of this nation to allow all kinds of spiritual expression. MY basic human rights are being denied here! That's usually considered a form of **VIOLENCE**, no?

I guess we can't really do anything about the weather, no matter how violent it gets against cyclists. I am very hot-headed about this issue, but
continued on page 12

How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle

by Frances E. Willard

a review by Beth Verdekal

Well, my sister bicyclists if you thought you were a revolutionary type gal, the exception, then think again. 100 years ago, there was an out of shape, never been married 53 year old (but she had a lifelong female companion - a friend we're told) who was given a bike by an English friend and decided that it was her duty to learn to ride. So began her three month struggle to conquer her "steed." All practices together, her training took 22 hours by her calculations. She suffered only minor bruises and wrote a book urging other woman to do the same. Uh, bike riding that is.

Her section of the book gives us a first hand view of what she was up against in her struggle for more independence via the bicycle. Though restraints against women are still with us today, in her time they were more severe. An example of the type of information she gives us: Corsettes were so binding women were prevented from exercise because their lungs couldn't take in enough air due to their constriction. Toward the end of her story, she has to field a few objections to women exercising made by people, including doctors of the day. I caught myself guffawing outloud during several points and counterpoints aghast that such rhetoric was necessary just because a woman wanted to ride a bike. The stifling environment a woman was raised in causes my modern eye to frown at Victorians and the many houses built in this city as a tribute to that,

thankfully, bygone era. But back to the book.

There are two other major parts to the book that revolve around Frances Willard's story. The introduction gives the reader a too brief description of Frances Willard's life and career. I learned a few interesting facts regarding the Women's Temperance Movement that I had skeptically viewed previously, but now understand as financial maneuvering (read the book and see what I mean.)

The last segment of the book gives (a once again, too brief) history of women and their bicycles. One picture alone in this section alone is worth the price of the book. It's a painting of a jubilant Victorian woman riding a bike with "no hands." The nerve! It also discusses the bike's integral part in loosening women's dressing codes, literally and figuratively. And it discusses some of the drastic steps women would have to take to prevent their skirts from blowing up to, gasp! show their ankles. (One method to keep this from happening was to sew weights in their skirts!)

So there you have it, a book review/sales attempt to get all of you to read it. Check the library, check the bookstores. It's by Francis E. Willard and called How I Learned to Ride the Bike. In my search for another book I ran across a chain that promised if I just knew the book's title, they could order it. They are B. Dalton's Bookseller (408)246-6760.

This book will give you power through knowledge, make you laugh, make you mad and provide you with tons of trivia to use as a weapon against misogynists. And it's a good conversation starter.

RAW VULVA'S GUIDE TO GIRLS TO GET CRUSHES ON CONT'D



Mahketplace Mahtha Goes Shopping

After my rave review of the Women's Wheel, Inc. catalog last month, (*Mahtha's piece appeared in Raw Vulva #1. Ed.*) I decided that I had to follow-up with some hard core FACTS based on my experience. What good are great descriptions on paper if the gear doesn't perform??? So I went on a shopping spree! I decided to try Terry Precision's cushy bicycle seat with the nose cut out and some of the spiffy clothes - a pair of seamless shorts, a bib and a few other miscellaneous items. Do they make a difference in my riding comfort and joy? You bet your sweet ass they do! As soon as I got the saddle, I put it on my trusty mountain bike and have been loving its cradling comfort. Don't get me wrong, it's not like sit-

ting on a pillow, but my tush doesn't get sore any more no matter how long or bumpy the ride. Ahhh! That was \$35.00 well spent.

I didn't go all out on the shorts. I just found the least expensive ones in the catalog by Aero Tech to try them out. They are as advertised - totally seamless, soft (from the four way stretch Supplex Lycra) and definitely more modern than the standard bike short. In fact, I am wearing them now under my black mini. And hey, they're even comfortable to wear while cycling! The shorts don't bind, chafe or cut into my crotch like boys' cycling shorts.

My biggest splurge was the "Bike to the Beach" bib also by Aero Tech. I haven't had a chance to test it out, but it's unconditionally guaranteed for biking, running, swimming, or any other multi-element sport. To top it

off, it's just plain sexy with cutout ovals on the sides, a scoop neck with a little black bow in the center and a mesh T-back. I can't wait to go for a ride in it, and when I do, I hope to be seen!

I think I've found the place I'm going to turn to for my cycling needs. They are nice and friendly over the phone. The person who took my order even recognized my name from the review I wrote and sent to them (it's posted in their office!) Give 'em a call at 1-800-785-7433 and ask for a catalog.

Next issue: Mahketplace Mahtha checks out SF bike stores for their womyn-friendliness factor.

Remember the Critical Mass Rides the last Friday of every month. Meet at the foot of Market (at the Embarcadero) at 5:00 p.m. Ride at 5:30 p.m.

Ⓢ viva la vulva Ⓢ

Bike Friendly continued

me attitude", they usually let it slide. **Clothes Contact** - Valencia/16th. A great thrift store with cheap, cheap clothes, some at by the pound prices. They don't necessarily have a bike policy, but they've never kicked me or mine out.

Truly Mediterranean - 16th at Valencia makes truly divine falafels. They are a tiny eatery; you probably couldn't even fit your bike in there if you tried, but if you poke your nose (and fork) in the front door, they will come out, take your order and hand deliver to your bike when it's ready! **La Taqueria** - Mission at 25th Street. The best damn burritos in town (I swear!) and if the owner sees you arrive in saddle, he'll take your order from the outside counter so you can keep tabs on your beloved steed.

Slow Club - Hampshire/Mariposa. Fine food, funky environs, and under non-jam-packed conditions, they'll let you tuck your bike into the back hall-

way. Live acoustic guitar and hand saw groove on Wednesday nights.

T.A.M. - Taber alley near 3rd/Bryant. A local indoor marketplace for fledgling fashion mongers. They congregate every Saturday with a couple of DJ's and funky kids. Bikes are very welcome.

Staggi's Liquors - 16th/Mission. The cheapest elixirs in the Mission with a decent selection of beer. As long as you're careful about where you lean your bike (i.e. not up against an array of delicately poised bottles), you can bring in your bike, grab a bottle of wine, strap it to your rack, and ride off into the sunset.

City Hall - I know this is hard to believe but there is one guard who'll let you bring your bike in and leave it by his desk.

City Libraries are so UNbike friendly, it makes me paranoid. What harm does a bike leaning against a wall do, I wonder. None. Which is what I absolutely detest about UNbike

friendly places. There's no reason to be UNbike friendly. It's just more of the same vapid unthinking pop culture. Bicyclists challenge one of the staples of mainstream Americana - the car, and apparently no one wants to question the value of anything as sacred as the car - (it's right up there with t.v. you know.) I think the fear of questioning cars, t.v., the way you treat your kids, etc. has something to do with the outcome; a lot of people would realize that they have been seriously duped. Does anyone really freely choose to be a slave to a car or the Monday night sitcom line - up?

*But enough, except to the cranky store owner who shrieks anytime a bike is near his door, I say: **Watch out for bicycle takeover, it's gonna be really fun!!!***

For more Raw Vulva, send \$1.00 plus two stamps to:
Raw Vulva
842 Folsom, Box 233
San Francisco, CA 94107

Letters continued

Francisco? I am tired of watching boys blushing describe the physics of the latest Avocet seat...

Thank you again for helping my clitoris and I realize that we are not alone in our struggle for comfort. Raw Vulvas of the world, unite! After all, it is not just a velorution, it is a vulvarution too!

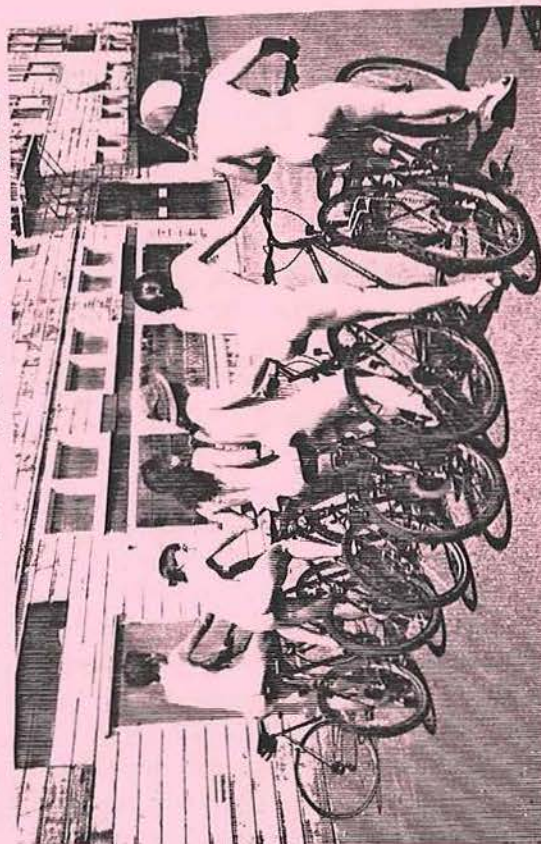
Best regards,
Claire Mc.

Dear Claire:

Did I really *help* your clitoris?? Help is not usually the verb that comes to my mind when speaking of clitorises... but you had a question about girl bike workers. They are out there. Girls work at Valencia Cyclery, Start to Finish on 2nd Street, and the Free Wheel.

Bike Violence continued

to no avail. I think I should buy a rainsuit, and spend my energy fixing problems that I have a chance at putting a dent into. Luckily, in a way, our worst enemies are people. People who cut us off at intersections, open car doors in front of us, stop suddenly in the middle of the road to attempt parallel parking, drive too far in the right and who refuse to use indicator lights. I honestly don't know if, as a cyclist, I would have much impact demanding better driving skills of our motorists. But people tend to take notice if you're loud enough, or big enough, or obnoxious enough, they might even become reasonable and take your point of view in to consideration. Bikers bash back! Complain about the road! Use the road! Be in the *middle* of the road. Cars can just wait a minute.



behind

Astro continued

out! (No bias, of course.)

Taurus w/Virgo (Neurotics Anonymous): In this case, she's definitely getting the better deal. You ground her out and calm her down. You like being needed. You'll have a clean house. You'll also live in whiny hell. Yeah - go ahead - she appreciates you. But remember, Virgos exist primarily to make the rest of us feel better about our faults. **Taurus w/Libra** ("There's a problem? Excuse me, I think I hear my train."): Conflict resolution with a Libra is really difficult since she's gone as soon as you mention a problem. Great hosts. You like her aesthetic sense. But she's still an air sign - Flake Delight. Also same warning as last month - who knows what goes on in the mind of a Libra.

Taurus w/Scorpio ("I can't help it - it's in my nature."): Your polar opposite. Seriously secretive and paranoid. Very sexy. You can withstand her anger too, but why should you have to? You're not so good at making the first move or recognizing interest. Won't be a problem with a Scorpio. Clearly a journey of transformation - you'll be transformed or you'll transform yourself into the next relationship. Almost everyone has a scar somewhere from a Scorpio.

Taurus w/Sagittarius (Tigger): I think this is a great match. (I'm biased.) Very different but in all the right ways. She's flexible, fiery, fun, and loves to go out. She'll talk for hours, cheer you up, tell you silly jokes, and the **Truth**. She's not a game player and she can commit. She's

also smart but hates traditional schools. Biggest problem: she doesn't like traditional status or security, and you do. **Taurus w/Capricorn** (Capitalism in Action): I'd say Capricorns are seen as leaders because we live in Corporate America. She's secretive. There'll be lots of silence, uncomfortable silence. She cares about status big time. Her ethics are questionable. Good Capricorns are neat - they can actually take all that grounding and start great projects. And you'll know which kind she is early on. You can make serious money in business with her. They can also be endearingly neurotic and introverted. But I'd just say no.

Taurus w/Aquarius (Individique): Not usually good news. You don't like air signs: they put ideas above real life realities. At least she has opinions and they don't change when the wind does. But she's a complete individual and she'll say things that are going to embarrass the hell out of you. Also, you feel she can't really back up her idealistic visions. And you're right.

Taurus w/Pisces (Psychic CoDependents): Good Match! You won't take advantage of her. And you don't arbitrarily blow up. She's sweet, bouncy, outgoing, and occasionally bad-tempered. She's just so...adjustable. You'll always be on the deficit side of need provider - she's not good at letting people help and expects you to be the mind reader she is. But she's not psychotic.

Bias of the Columnist: Taurus-Sun, Aquarius-Moon, Scorpio-Rising. (Found out I was born 20 minutes later.)