

# delayed response

by mary frances platt

**Y**ou tell me how soft I've become. Thin small you has no fear of the loudness of fat disabled me. Because you understand the strong and gentle of me, because you have ridden my rage at ableism numerous times before, and because I love you I can tell you now of the hurt I feel when "lesbian occupied" space excludes me.

**P**ublic figure activist me would address the intent of segregation of people with and without disabilities via architectural barriers. She would not often address the sad humiliated, deeply pained part that dies just a little more each time a lover, friend, or family member chose to live in or occupy a space that my wheels will never maneuver.

**S**weet woman, it's not only you who forbids me entry into your life through steep stepped architecture, narrow doors and inaccessible attitudes. It's all the dykes who attend the 30 plus potlucks which meet monthly at an ever changing inaccessible home. It's the N.L.C. Wednesday night bowling league. The sporadic guacamole and iced tea party at a co-workers house. It's all the lesbians who won't ever ask for a date because I could never get to their bed. It's being the last kid picked for the kickball game. The 5 year old who never got to visit Peggy at her house. The lonely girl child who was too different to be liked. It's the pain of the politics of ableism, exclusion, and denial of entry.

**I**t has been so hard to stay strong these past few months. My heart and body have been weakened by the constant targeting, trashing, and invalidation of walking privileged lesbian co-workers and friends. So difficult to celebrate the essence of me while being a solitary voice in a lesbian organization that refuses to recognize ableism beyond the provision of services. So difficult to be a ground breaker. To be the first coordinator, the first wheelie dykes have interacted with. To be one of the few who defies segregation, infantilization, and medicalization of people with disabilities.

**Y**our pondering/process about choosing a new home for yourself and your decision whether to exclude or welcome me into your life came at a time when my "ground breaking" work had left me raw, hurting, oozing.

**S**o, I was quiet with you on the phone. I was patient and understanding, and afterwards quite numb. "But can't we just meet at your house?," you said. Would you deny me the richness of knowing what hangs on your walls? How your sheets feel against my thighs? What smells permeate your kitchen? How the trees frame your window? What creaks the house will offer as two women make love? Would you feel you knew me if you were denied access to the rhythms of my life as they ebb and flow within the walls that surround me?