

19 GENDER
BEGINNER

dedicated to those who work
to challenge, deconstruct
and redefine masculinity

you inspire me, fill me
with hope

I didn't fall in love with your gender

oh sure, i liked your sweet androgyny
but i fell i love with the mystery, the
shadowy shyness drawing me closer to
explain in 10 different ways why you
should want to meet my gaze

i fell madly in love with you and with
my obsession i was in love with intensity
and when you said to me that intensity
always carried pain i believed it could
be no other way

i never considered leaving because of
your gender

not even when you decided that it had to
change, that you couldn't live with the
woman's form i adored, that you'd make
your body home by taking testosterone,
transition complete passing as a man
on the street

i never considered leaving

not even when i was so confused, you had a support group but i was just a gender beginner clutching the borrowed copy of 'stone butch blues' i was trying to get through but the rape scenes made for difficult reading, feeding my worst fears:

i never tried to hide your gender
even though i didn't want heterosexual
privilege thrust upon me as your partner
every day, like an ill-fitting shirt i'd
already thrown away

i never tried to influence your choice
not even when another transman warned us
that testosterone would make it harder
for you to cry

and i didn't pity you
i was so proud of your courage and analysis
your willingness to pursue wholeness

i never considered leaving

not even when i felt isolated from the
queer community, i thought we were too
queer to belong, ostracized for being
gender resisters, and with you, i was
willing to be on the periphery

i was never ashamed of you

i revelled in your complexity you
body remolder with broadening shoulders
you Little Boy Trouble with sprouting
stubble

i didn't think that you oppressed me on
account of my gender

even when you objectified & fetishized
my femininity, ridiculing and rewarding
me for pink shirts and short skirts

i was never repelled by your changing
body

my sex drive died when your self hatred
spilled out your pores to stain the sheet;
i couldn't meet that loathing long
enough to remove clothing

i didn't cook for you as part of my duty
as your wife

i cooked when you wouldn't eat otherwise,
preferring to starve away tits and thighs

i didn't take care of you because of our genders

i took care of you because i loved you, because i'm a healer by instinct and i'm trained to relieve pain, because you were the sickest person i'd ever met, so stressed and depressed, because your whole body hurt when you rolled out of bed and when the voices in your head said that you were shit you believed it

i took care of you in the hospital
where they bathed you once in just under
a week where no one wanted to touch the
freak when you were frightened you'd die
and so was i

i cried all the time, but i thought
things were hard for us both due to our
rates of personal growth, dragging dying
love through another day-how brave

my friends didn't worry about your transition

they worried because they never saw me, and when they did, i was anxious and tired, only inspired about your upcoming surgery, which was going to change

everything.

i didn't stay for a year and a half
because i was having fun

i stayed because i was in love and
couldn't bear to move, because you said
that our lives would improve, then
slashed and said

i'll die without you

i didn't leave because i stopped loving
you

i left when i felt my grip slip off hope
when i saw that they'd removed only your
uterus, leaving you with a bellyful of
scars and cruelty, when i realized the
futility of loving someone else better
than myself

i'm not scared of you because you look,
walk and talk like a man

i'm scared because i left safety and
self respect behind, your screaming and
swearing tearing the fabric of my mind,
curled in a ball on the floor, begging

please
i
can't
take
anymore

i didn't wield my gender against you when
i went to the police

although i could have contrasted pretty
blonde hair and wide blue stare against
scowling transsexual stalker, milking
the victim role for maximum hype if i'd
been the type to play that way

i'm not angry about my girlfriend turning
into my boyfriend

i'm angry because you were best friend-
playmate-lover-husband-wife-life partner,
and sometimes i still miss you

i'm angry because you were child-patient-
responsibility-jailor-punisher-possessor-
stalker worst fucking nightmare, and it's
not fair, to still be waking throat frozen
in a scream from a dream that i never left
you

i'm angry because you forced me filled
me with your misery til i stretched and
stretched and now i'm etched with your
jagged red lines carving my insides

i don't think you're representative of
your gender

although i did, and i avoided other
transmen because i was scared of them i
bought the hormonal excuse, that you all
have a chemically induced loss of control,
that this is the price paid to be saved
from a gender hellhole

and i don't think you're isolated now
because of your gender

because i've found the gender resisters,
the gender breakers and the gender
remakers, the gender disbelievers and
the gender receivers, the gender healers
(they were there all along)

and i am still a gender beginner
and although i could've asked for a less
painful launching onto this gender
journey, i don't regret loving you.

i just want to be clear, here: i didn't
love you or leave you because of your
gender.

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P.S. Many, many thanks and kisses to
Gunsel.

