



5 poems

by

Jacklyn Henry

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

I know nothing of women. If you ever felt the necessity to sign-up for a course in self-improvement or consult a matchmaker, save your money, just read Jacklyn Henry. As a man, if you ever mistakenly thought you had the upper-hand, just read Jacklyn Henry. As a woman, if you have ever felt uncertain or alone, just read Jacklyn Henry. If you ever worried what was post and past prime...if you have ever longed or contrived to be desired... Having early-on been a subject of the TNR program (Trap, Neuter and Release), I'm at a loss to comment. In the interest of continuity, why not underscore your favorite quotes...take a look beyond her veil. (Spacing is poet's own.)

Five Stars

simplicity

light creeps through my hotel window
curtains pulled back
6th floor view of a snowy Denver morning
snowflakes drift lazily toward the ground

he snuggles into me, to my surprise
i had thought he left, as they always do

his morning excitement presses into me
he movements subtle, but longing
i push back, accepting his offer
it doesn't take long

in the shower he whispers into my ear:
stay, he says, *for the weekend, at least*
i say nothing, as i soap his chest,
as i kiss his perfect lips,
as i tease his desire

we sit together at a breakfast table
i nod to colleagues sharing the same hotel for the big meeting
they stare curiously at the man across from me
they titter and whisper,
but this shouldn't come as a surprise

he snatches my phone,
punches in his contact information

oh,

your name is Alexander,

how did i miss that?

we kiss salaciously at the lobby front door

he walks away, solemnly

i look at his contact, hit delete,

slip my phone into my pocket

small talk

there is an absence of light in the establishment i find myself in.
the drinks of strong and cheap. the bartender is cute and muscular,
in his tight tee shirt and tighter jeans.

there are six other men, between 30 and 52, and me, hiding in a corner booth.
the bartender brings me another drink. nods to man that bought me the drink.

i laugh. so old fashioned. so odd.

i stare up at the bartender. he shrugs, and walks back to his post.
my benefactor raises his glass, walks over, sits down, introduces himself
as Stan or Ted or something.

he keeps talking, he makes small talk,
i know what he wants, but he is evasive,
he moves closer, still talking, more
small talk, a little closer, another drink,

more small talk
more drinks

and then,

do you want to get out of here?

and i say,

no

for a change

sinister

i should be writing
instead of zipping up my pants,
lost in a memory
of something i never had or touched,
someone i could never be.

i should be writing
great poems
about this and that,
and the great whatever,
about discovery, celebration,
but i am still lonely,
i am still lost,
lost between heels
and high tops,
just another day.

some moments are enough
release
to quell the demons
to pretend being true
to silence the desire i hold in secret.

as i close down my browser,
i smooth out my blouse,
snap up my jeans into place,
turn the lights back on
and unlock the closet door.

old

time never slows
for the wicked & the old,
and i am aging
most disingenuously.

still in shadows,
still in a box,
hiding from
truth & pleasure,
& men with thick
shoulders, strong
arms & fat
damning lies
that rest
upon their lips.

i sit on the fringe
watching other guys
play house, trade secrets,
& whisper salaciously
into each other's souls
as i quell my shame
in the depths of porn,
cocaine &
late night TV.

shopping

sometimes i laugh
when i look in the mirror
when i paint my lips
polish my face

it's just neutral enough
to make other folks
wonder

i put my tightest jeans,
the ones with just enough lift,
ones that give me courage

i pull on a blouse, soft cotton pink,
my low-rise navy blue Keds fit just right

twenty minutes later
standing in front of
Victoria's Secret,
mid-morning
on a Wednesday,
trembling, nervous,
out with the wolves

i walk in

tall blonde sales clerk
says,

bello

and

how can i help you?

before i say another word
she takes me to carousel
filled with delicate things,
and says,

this is where i shop, honey

and

if you know what i mean?

and i do

THE POET SPEAKS:

What inspired your poems?

i no longer accept a traditional gender role. for years i identified straight, then bi, finally gay but in reality? i am transfeminine genderqueer. now if you met me walking down the street, none of these identities would come to mind. maybe gay, but defiantly not transfeminine. for many reasons i cannot present the way i feel, but in writing.

so, the inspiration of my poetry for the last several years is my realization that i am transfeminine and it is okay to be transfeminine and not need to present that way. dysphoria is internal for me and writing allows me to express my inner truth.

most of these poems are honest in feel but not always as much in narrative. in short, i take a real situation and insert my transfeminine representation. in simplicity i did hook up with a gut in Denver while on a business trip but did not outwardly express feminine in public. again, through writing, i can.

also, i can explore the feminization process.

What are your stylistic influences?

it's a mishmash of everything, really. from classic poetry to modern to beat to punk to pop music. i just take the bits and pieces i like and blend it together.

i get a lot of influence from music, mostly as mood and tone.

and, of course, being queer and rediscovering life through that lens is huge. i mean, the way i talk to people, especially men, is so different. the rhythm of feminine speech is so different. there are subtle influxes for sure.

Why is poetry important to you, to read and/or write?

poetry is important because of its form, the ability to bend and change meaning with words, to express something that may not be simply articulated. i love the form as it is short, but can be incredibly powerful. i enjoy the transgressive nature of poetry especially. i don't read it much but i write daily.

AUTHOR BIO: jacklyn henry (she/they) is a genderqueer writer based on the fringe of insanity, **los angeles**. when not struggling with traffic and ignorant people, jacklyn writes about gender and sexual authenticity. recent success has included, pink disco, cream scene carnival, flying dodo, horror sleaze trash, clockwise cat, SCAB magazine, and elsewhere.