

Jay Edwards

My form of protest goes largely unseen. It presents itself in the form of dollar store men's perfume, men's deodorant that "works better than the women stuff," and hair gel that doesn't hold as well as it smells. Not to mention the chest compressor that's been made of an old dance leotard and two third grade 'bras.' My masculinity is disguised as laziness. Too lazy to dress nice, too lazy to shave my legs, too lazy to care about gender norms. What I've done is far from lazy. Is it lazy to send emails to school teachers from another account to protect them from being read by my parent? Is it lazy to hide a girlfriend from your parent because you wanted to know if all females repelled you or just yourself? Is it lazy to only ask out a boy because you wanted to feel like a gay man even when you were viewed as female?

Maybe so. Maybe my trials have all been for naught. It certainly feels that way when a comment about getting nicer (read: male-er) underwear turns into a fight about how I can't be a lesbian. (I couldn't be a lesbian even if I wanted, so it's easy to swallow my tongue and agree.) I certainly feel lazy when a slip up allows my parent to see my Real Name replacing my deadname on my computer. I've grown better at lying. "It's not because I feel crushed when I see her name listed on my work, it's because I accidentally installed a word replacer and put a bird name as a joke!" It's all for a chuckle. My existence is a joke.

To be fair, it did start as a joke, a Dungeons and Dragons game gone wrong. You can be anyone you want to be! I just wanted to be a man. Name after name, idea after idea I landed upon Jay Glæpur. Glæpur, stolen from a children's show villain (for the *panache*, you can't say Glæpur without sounding absolutely glamorous) and Jay, the best way I could name my character "bird" without sounding too pretentious. Jay Glæpur, my quiet, confident orc. Jay Edwards, me, a boisterous, confused human. The game fell through, the name did not. Taken as an online handle, Jay (and my newfound identity) bloomed into something larger.

The internet turned to writing turned to real life. "I'm uhhhh, you know like Billy Tipton and your sister and," invoking my teacher's inference skills when I was unable to speak my

mind. "Call me Jay," I say to another teacher, invoking Melville's gay paeon for help. "Oh hey, by the way, I'm trans," I invoke my own strength. I've learned enough confidence to fake it for my own sake.

With each person I tell, my protest starts to become visible. I start to become visible. My identity glistens in the light I cast upon it. My protest will be seen by all who view me, and someday I'll be the teacher, the friend, the parent that allows another youth to be visible in the light. I will be glorious.