

Transphobmagoria

Pace the perimeter of your four-by-four concrete floor, running your hands along the bars. Find the bar with a small crack. You may need to run your hand over the warm metal until you locate that abrasion you found seven years ago. Once you feel the sharp edge, continue to pick at it like you sometimes do the boils on your face, puss dribbling over your cheek. Increase the pressure of your finger over the spec. Be persistent. You need to get to the inside. Once you finally start bleeding, lift your hand up and let the blood form streams down your arm. Wait for them to dry. Step to the center of the space, and fold your legs, one over the other. Close your eyes. You've done this before. Take a breath. Then two. Inhale smoke. Cough. Then stop breathing. Stop. Stop. Start again. Let the smoke from the open window sting your eyes. Breathe as much as you need to now. Feel your consciousness abandon your body. The shape remains amorphous, and you can't forget to consider your audience or you'll just lose it completely. It changes daily, but if you're not sure what to go with, fall back on the basics.

Pick an obvious gender.

Nothing ambiguous. You could go ambiguous, and very rarely you should, but most of the time your form will just crumple up again. Classically beautiful.



If you go with a woman: something skinny, big breasts, wide hips, and comically large eyes (refer to the Barbie doll you never got as a kid). Going for a man (which you almost always should except in a few choice circumstances, like the time you were driving without your license because you got raped after the parade in San Francisco seven years ago. He took your wallet and a cop pulled you over on the 5 and wanted to give you a ticket while globs of something sticky and white were still drying in dribbles down your leg. It was paying that ticket or rent, and whichever you paid you were fucked, but none of that would have happened if you hadn't been a woman in the first place, so ignore this entire parenthetical): you need to be strong, lots of muscles but not too bulky, tall, imposing, but not so imposing you scare ladies away. Don't worry about your voice. No one hears it.

Once you form, the rest is downhill. Go to college. Doesn't matter how. Drive with your friend who always smells like his pit stains look. Comment on the orange sky. Ignore his question. The sun seems so far away, so dim through the ashy windshield. He almost yells. Promise you'll text him later about the party tonight. You won't. You know your avatar won't last that long. Say anything he needs you to.

Flirt with that pretty girl at the front of the class. Make sure you're a man when you do. Remember the day when the decision came down from the Supreme Court, how she twirled her hair with her lead-stained index finger



and looked right at you, how you forgot and flirted with her when you were a pretty little girl with long blonde hair and glasses, how she smiled back and tried to talk to you after class. You know she means it, so stop screwing it up by meaning it back.

Tell everyone you're going to the library, but go to the drug store on the corner instead. The polluted air is making you hyperventilate. It's the smoke. See the pudgy teen about a pack of Marlboros you wanted yesterday. Count the acne scars on his face while he contemplates the effort involved in calling his fifty-year-old manager back from lunch just to comply with the law.

After about a minute, start tapping your foot and pursing your lips. You're not actually impatient. Watch his fingers drum on the counter in time with your foot. Give up and leave. You don't have much time left.

Visit your mother.

Walk in the door and say hi from a few feet away. Don't hug her. Try to answer all her questions in a dozen words or less. When are you going to settle down? Stuff the rest of the snickerdoodle in your mouth, as quickly as you can.

Leave.

Drag your feet along the sidewalk. You don't need to lift them high, just enough to take that next step. Notice your fingers blur together into a blob, a blob that flows like mercury creeping up your shoulder. Your entire right arm becomes fluid, dribbling in your wake.



Start running.

Pieces of you flying in all directions. Some of your fingernails embed into the local McDonalds that some mother is suing for negligence. A glob of your shoulder sticks in the shiny, blonde hair of a five-year-old girl holding her mother's hand. It creates a snarl in her braid. Arrive at your house, almost completely dissolved.

Flames lick the foundation.

Dribbling saliva is smoke floating away. Open your eyes and let yourself disappear. Stand up inside the bars again. Cracks. Fissures. Abrasions. Pock marks getting more by the day. Metal weakening, orange with heat. Pick at the bars. Chip away. Just a little bit more. Even if it burns your thick, dainty hands.

