



OTHER

Lewis Figun Westbrook

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Sometimes I worry my trans identity is just my asexual identity being afraid of the sexualization of women

1.

Use button downs like the walls to a castle all straight down cliffs and jagged edges. You are hiding skin underneath clothes like treasure locked under a dragon. The dragon confuses looks with challenges and everyone wants a taste of gold.

Hide the queen in a tower with no windows because if you can't see her then no one else can.

2.

Use body hair like barriers, added defenses to a fortress, you are waiting for an attack, so terrified because you keep seeing blood stained flags in bookmarked articles. Utah woman slaughtered utah woman raped utah woman are prey. Everyone sees you as utah woman.

College party kings getting drunk on wine and feeling they own everything including the ground beneath your feet. They own your body.

3.

Use hair gel like a crown, feel true happiness when someone calls you king. You are not like the kings before who own something. You don't even own your euphoria most days. It depends on what everyone sees. You hope your reflection in the crown will be golden boy. Then, you can call yourself a knight. Then you can protect the lady stuck in your tower, maybe even add a window.

Your crown might look so good paired with a flat chest and crop top tees.

4.

Use your preferred pronouns like a sword. Make sure everyone knows that you have pulled that sword from the ground and carry it with you everywhere. Point out that you don't count as a girl when a math teacher asks everyone to find the percent of women in the class, but also when someone asks how many boys are on your team say 'four if you count me.' Like a double edged sword and you keep catching your own skin at the end of swings.

You don't want them to think of you as a woman but you don't want women to be afraid of you like you are afraid of men.

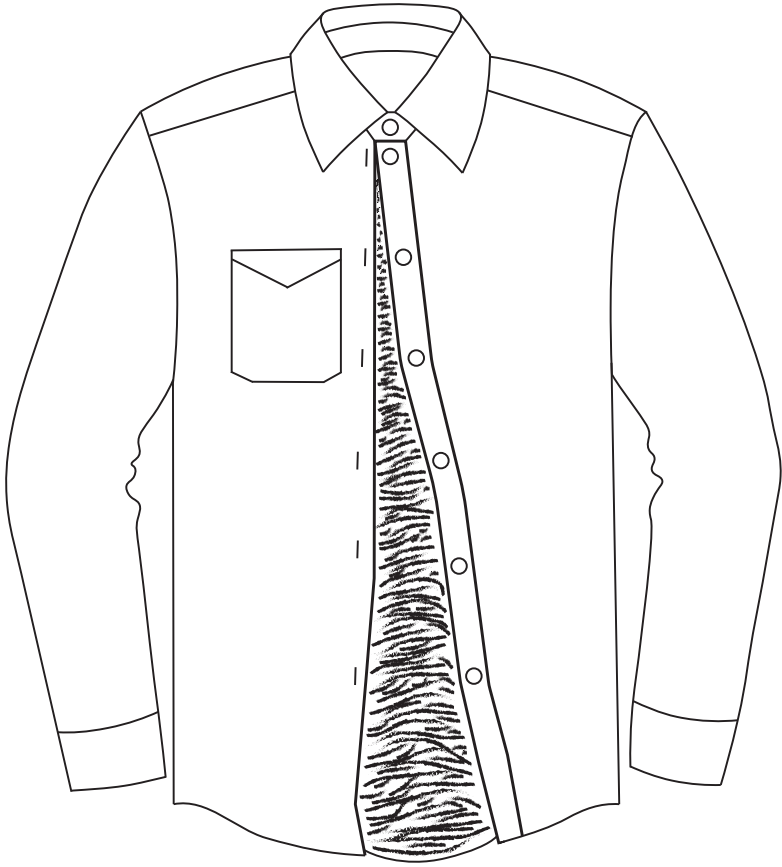
5.

Use labels like titles and keep earning new ones. Duke / genderqueer / Prince / transmasculine / King / grey gender / emperor / genderfluid. Pretend they mean you know what you are doing, pretend that having a word for it means everyone has to respect it and then deadname yourself when you do something wrong.

Avoid thinking too hard about whether you actually earned them. Avoid thinking too much about gender dysphoria cause what if that's not actually what you are feeling. What if this is just I dislike my body and the way I can so easily imagine men holding it in their hands and teeth.

6.

Fall asleep on your stomach, you'll finally feel like you fit all flat and sleek... and without targets



Dapper Cowboy

I let my thumbs slip underneath my belt loop and lean against walls
I call this outfit dapper cowboy and my voice suddenly feels husky
I don't speak though because now I'm the kind of person who sits in the corner
of a bar

And lets the girl go up to him

I'm the main character in a movie, brooding

Trying so desperately not to save the world

And especially not fall in love at the same time

I fail at both in fantasy

Indiana Jones without the rugged beard

Toeing the line between dad and daddy

Both soft and rugged

So then I go home and pull off my vest

You can now see that my shirt has not been ironed in years

A line right across the bump on my chest

I still feel quiet even alone

Unbutton my shirt slowly

There's a binder underneath holding

All the knowledge

I am different now

Stripping changing the channel

I am immortal and a man

I have just had sex

I am twenty something

My hair is held together by sweat

It falls over my eye and I say

'Thanks for that'

I am about to button it back up

Start too

Grab a tie to wrap around my neck

A new accessory a new show

I have just made out with Rory Gilmore

And it's time to go back out

Join the party

We have been caught by parents

I have an annoyingly hot half grin and my teeth are fangs

I resist the urge to bite

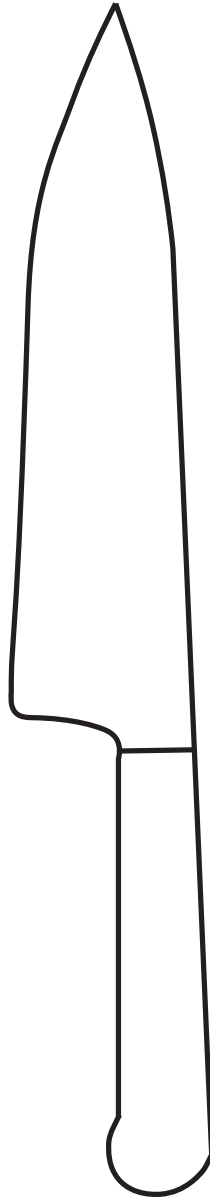
Too strong to steal a lovers blood

The tie around my neck is a lasso

I have caught myself
The boots on my feet are not dirty enough
Not lived in
The v neck of my binder feels normal
Like something I could see on tv
I am on tv
A man and no one doubts it
A well dressed, confident, rarely spoken man
Played by a messily put together, self conscious, always speaking gay
My shirt is undone
Next comes my pants
And for the first time I am standing up to pee
With a zip
Hangs just around my thighs
This is important
They slip a little more
And I am a women
Getting ready for bed
With hairy legs, unwanted
Then the binder
I always try to do that last
Become an octopus
Hold too many limbs
I am flowing through water
Unable to keep myself
together put on my pajamas
So I can sleep
And then do the whole thing over again
Remember to find the channel you just
Have to step in front of the mirror
And turn your eyes on

2. Tools

Take an ice cream scoop to my insides,
Pull out the linings that ache
That belong to someone else
They are shaking, buzzing
Like nothing I've seen before
Take a knife to my throat
Remove the bile trying to escape
The things choking me
From inside and
The ones holding tight.
Take a peeler to my skin
It's become mountainous
With studs and trees
A forest waiting to be burnt
Take a weed cutter to my lungs
Teach them all over again
How to breathe
They seem to have forgotten
Take an ice pick to my chin
Curve a closed mouth
One that traps echoes inside
Curve it so it can not break
Take a hammer to my shoulder
For it trembles so much
It might as well be in pieces
To move as it does
Take a crane to my chest
The weight bearing down
Can no longer be held up
The lumps feel pointless
The crushing endless
Take the tools
The ones that break
Before they mend
And do as you will
Take it all
So I can take peace



LDS Lesson Thirty-five

Do you remember that lesson in primary class? Where they take their hand, hold it up for inspection and say ‘this is your spirit. You lived like this up in heaven, but now you are down on earth and you can’t just be a spirit. You need a body.’

So they hold up a glove. ‘This is your body,’ they say. ‘Empty like this it doesn’t move. That’s where your spirit comes in. When you are born you are gifted with a body.’

They slip on the glove. Wiggle their fingers.

‘Now your spirit and body are fused. You have control over the body. And when you die,’

They take off the glove.

‘Your spirit separated from the body. It will become lifeless.’

The glove drops to the floor.

‘But your spirit will never die. Instead it will go to where all the separated spirits go.’

And the finger points up. To the something up there. I would raise my hand and ask, ‘but what if the glove is the wrong size? What if it doesn’t fit?’ No one ever had an answer.

My mother used to say, ‘I was supposed to be born with red hair and green eyes’ so she got contacts and red dye until her hair went grey. Do you remember hearing about perfection up in heaven? How we will be made whole? Will my mother get her red hair and green eyes? Will I get a glove tailored to me, with a flat chest and hips that are straight? Will I get a glove with bigger fit and stronger arms?

I didn’t even know what to call it at first. Dysphoria wasn’t in my vocabulary. But I remember the first day arm hair felt wrong on my body because my arms were wrong, were feminine

I remember the day I stopped wearing tights, and the day jeans turned to sweatpants

I remember falling in love with high rise jeans and how it stole my curves

I remember wearing a hat every second I could to escape buns and ponytails

I remember falling in love with button downs and that top button

I remember my mother bringing home an underlayer shirt with a neck so big it didn’t even cover my bra and how the two seconds I have it on before I can grab a shirt or sweatshirt to cover it are torture

I remember the first day I learned about a binder and decided I couldn’t get one

Cause it’s my glove right and it’s not the wrong color just the wrong size

And getting top surgery is very different than dying your hair red

**THE
BOOK
OF
A LETTER**

Tied To a Balloon

Chapter 1

- 1 I call it begging most days, I start it like a letter.
- 2 Dear God Father Mother Brother Sister.
- 3 Dear Friend Family Enemy.
- 4 Dear Person People Love.
- 5 Dear Life Living Death.
- 6 Dear slow your breathing, do not fall to your knees.
- 7 I am not standing, not even folding my arms.
- 8 There is no altar no sacrifice unless you count pride.
- 9 I tell myself I am strong I do not need you.
- 10 You being all powerful.
- 11 You being a promise to never stray.
- 12 I do not need you.

Chapter 2

- 1 I once read a story about a boy who wrote you a letter tied to a balloon.
- 2 My father used to make me burn my letters to Santa Claus because the flames carried it in the wind.
- 3 ashes go far.

Chapter 3

- 1 Please forgive me father if you are there, if you do care.
- 2 For wanting to be something everyone tells me is wrong.
- 3 For being wrong.
- 4 I always wondered what the forbidden fruit tastes like.
- 5 Like he/him pronouns or getting to say I'm gay.
- 6 If it somehow tastes like freedom.
- 7 I asked so many times for signs.
- 8 for pillars of flame and salt mounds.
- 9 Asked so many times as I continued living like I knew you.
- 10 I don't know.
- 11 Because I don't know if you are there or if a God can even be kind.
- 12 I want you to be.

Chapter 4

- 1 It's been a long time since I've been happy, and didn't you say that men are that they might have joy.
- 2 Can't I just be a man for today then?

3 Didn't you say Eve came from Adam's rib so am I not almost a man already.

4 A broken rib of one, a broken bit of one.

5 I grew from one, but it must not have been enough.

6 Didn't you strike down tans to represent dirt.

7 Don't I pass enough for you?

8 Didn't you say that he who is perfect cast the first stone.

9 My whole life has been climbing boulders left by sinners.

10 And didn't Paul change his name from Saul after a vision and someone calling him for the first time.

12 him.

Chapter 5

1 So, what do you say? Will you tell me if my perfection in heaven, my cleansing comes with free top surgery and everyone using my preferred name.

2 I mean God can't be a birth name, so why do I have to go by mine?

Chapter 6

1 There's supposed to be that special ending with prayers that just appears.

2 It's called truth and faith and knowing blindly.

3 I've always been afraid of the leap.

4 Used to jump from RV to roof, RV to roof, RV to roof.

5 and every time my feet stutter first.

6 And that step onto planes still feels huge like it did when my tiny feet could slip through and my parents carried me across.

7 I am waiting for you to carry me across.

8 or I will carry myself

Chapter 7

1 So this poem will end with a thunderclap.

2 Cause my voice is growing.

3 Until I get a sign to stop, I'm gonna keep going, okay?

4 I'll change my name.

5 One day I'll say I'm not pronoun indifferent.

6 that my gender is not simply in the eyes of the beholder.

7 Maybe then I'll write you a letter.

8 Tie it to a balloon and all.

9 burn the string so I can't hold back.

10 so I guess let me know if you get it sometime god.

Translated by Lewis Figun Westbrook

A live name

I'm not even sure anymore

It's not that I hate my deadname / Or even the way it fits on me

It's that I hate the way your eyes light up when you hear it / Like you've finally figured it out

You hear [deadname] / And I become a girl / Who just hasn't gotten into makeup yet / Or doesn't get lost in silly teenage dreams

You hear [deadname] / And I'm brave / For cutting my hair off / For knowing myself / For not following society's rules

You hear [deadname] / And suddenly we are on top of a hill / Covered in snow / And you are two boys

Who don't believe my name is [deadname] / And I want to ask why / You tell me it is cause I am not a girl / Not with my short hair

Now me wants to tell you you are right / But it's not because of my short hair / Past me wanted to pull down my pants / Cause that's what gender is, right? My name

Is the most feminine thing about me

So the simple solution would be to go by Ray Right / Short and androgynous

I'm not a Ray / Ray is an old dude with a camera / Ray is golden sunshine / Ray is deadly and has the word gun after it / Ray is an animal that travels the bottom of the ocean and stings you / I am not Ray, I'm neither deadly nor sunshine, not a camera or an old dude, and I don't travel the bottom of the ocean

So something else then / Like the beginning of a last name / West short for Westbrook / But I'm not a direction or a destination / I will not tell you where to go / or sit pretty in the same place / You can't expect me to stay the same / When I am as fluid as my name

Should be something else entirely / Miles like the famous youtuber and distance / Alex like the character in a childhood show about wizards and a dozen

of my friends / Ollie like a million trans people I look up to / Charlie like the other million trans people I look up to / Mike like the frat boys in my least favourite shows / Luke like the guy I convinced myself I had a crush on when all I wanted was to be him and have a chest as flat as his and be good at sports and...

It's all feels like a story

A lie I am telling myself and others / We all know it's a lie / But we listen anyway

So something already mine / Like Lewis my middle name / The Maiden name I got from my grandmother / That sits between [deadname] and Westbrook already / Just take a knife and cut off the beginning

Erasure history / And childhood / And wearing dresses because my friends did / And holding onto to hope every time I put one on that this once it'll look all right on me, that'll it will finally feel like my size / And family

And...

Don't tell my family / They know / seen it on name tags and heard it in stories / But dad still makes jokes / Whenever anyone calls asking for Lewis / who's that? / And mom only ever uses / 'Lewis' in [deadname] Lewis / She started trying the slip of they only around a child not hers /

Mom stared at me once / As I lifted my shirt / Up around my shoulders / She stared and I was no longer me / But a frail girl, someone's prey / I told her to stop looking / And she said / 'don't do that if you don't want me to look' / Her eyes were mirrors I didn't want to look into / And it was my fault they were even pointed at me / my fault the reaction to [deadname] even started to bug me / My fault / Because I fell in love with the name in the first place / And everyone is using it like a dagger to pin me down

Erasure poem of snow white: A mirrors pronouns

[I stood in front of the mirror]

a queen her she she her she herself, she a little daughter her queen She she she

She she stood and said:

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who is--

To this the mirror answered

huntsman him, Kill her. huntsman He his huntsman huntsman he his heart, he
would not kill her.

He

My name is mirror,

Mirror, on the wall,

Who is--

It answered:

my queen, queen, she

mirror did not lie

she her, alive. she she could kill her.

Coloring her disguised

In this disguise

They were

They saw

They lifted

Then she began to breathe

Came back to life.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who is--

The mirror answered once again:

You, my queen,

she disguised herself, taking form

You specimen of beauty you are they

They suspected

They examined

They scarcely

Told them

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,

Who is--

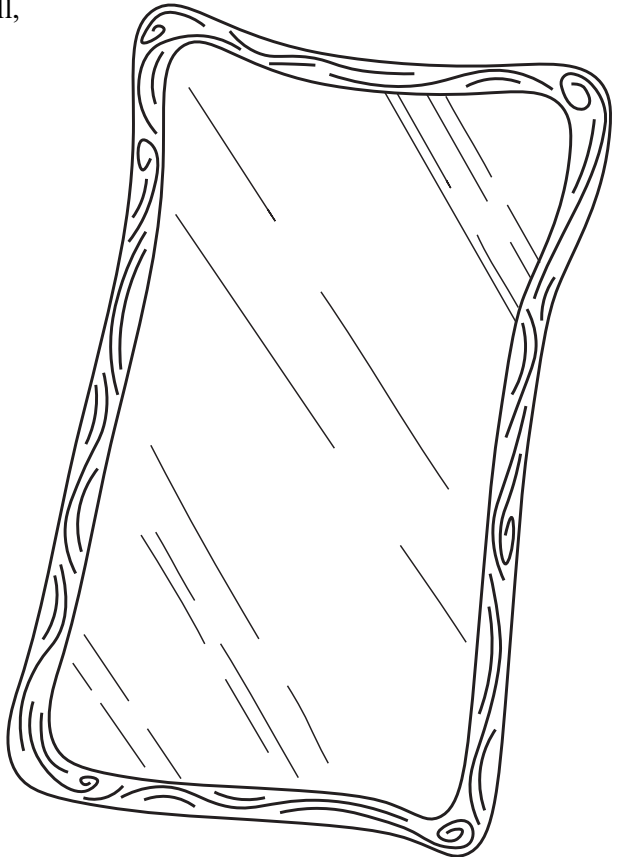
The mirror answered:

my queen it is still you.

When heard

the mirror saying this,

she shall die
shouted
poisoned outside
Beautiful,
anyone would want it. But anyone would die.
Coloring face,
disguised
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is--
It finally answered:
A prince he He
golden he
he he him him
The prince his
But then stumbled, and she opened her eyes,
she
her wife she her beautiful she
Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is dead



What my mother tells me about my body

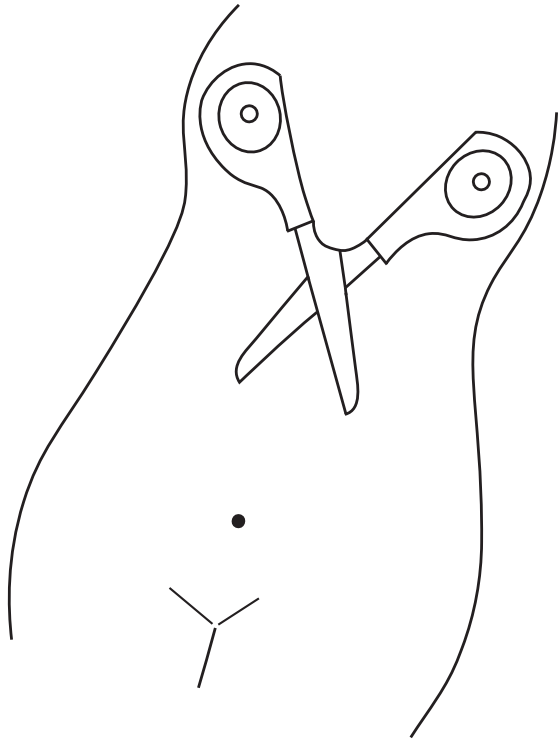
My mom grabs hair in hand and makes me stand in front of a mirror
There beautiful, she says
I want to tell her that I do not recognize my face / that my skin feels like part
of the hair / out of my control
I want to tell her that there a haunted woman looking back at me
Instead I ask her to take the pony tail out / she decides a bun is better for me
anyway

She asks me if I am paper / I've always wanted to tell her yes /
It takes her an hour to yell at me about the pen on my arm
skin not paper / blood not ink /
I would take legos to my skin as a child /
And call it a tattoo / like body counts / everyone I mimicked who killed part of
me in return / the holes dug into my skin are temporary
I want to tell her that she is the one holding the pen / has been / and she keeps
/ pretty / scrawling / curvy / in what she wants / girl / me to be / feminine /
purse / fitted clothes / pulled back hair / her body counts /
It was never temporary
I scrub the ink with soap / the one with a smell I do not like / and pray it goes
away quick

She tells me that every women hates half of their body / this is why I hide
behind jeans and shorts that reach my knees
I want to tell her my chest is different
She tells me that no one likes their boobs / if they are big you wish for small /
if they are small you wish for big
What does it mean when you wish for none?
My mom and the nice lady at the store tell me I could be a bra model / and I
think about it / think about how in just a bra it feels almost okay /
the way my shoulders drift up with their eyes so I look strong like wonder
woman /
I want to tell her that we should return them / see most days my shoulders
slack and there is nothing strong about me
I'm afraid she will just tell me we got the wrong size / make me go and stand
in front of a mirror all over again /
Some days I miss the fantasy of being a woman

I come home from college / new name / new me / and new jeans
Everyday she looks at them with disguised / rejects every piece

I introduce myself as Lewis / so she calls me [deadname] Lewis / she does not understand how that is worse than just [deadname]
I say I am trans / and she says sweetheart you don't need labels just be you / but she has been putting me in boxes since the day I was born / because you means [deadname] and is just as much a label as trans, but only one feels wrong
I say look at my new jeans / and she tells me they do not fit / she means they are too loose for a proper lady to wear /
I've never heard her say something like that to her husband or other sons / and I can not help but feel I can never be her son / not with my hair pulled back and this paper blank skin and this chest /
Mom I'm tired of wearing the marks of your thoughts on my body /
Maybe one day I will tattoo Lewis Figun Westbrook on my collarbone / a pair of scissors behind my ear / and cut along the line dots across the scars on my chest / Mom, one day I will be more me than you





Lewis Figun Westbrook (He/They) is a comedian first as it is a defense mechanism appropriate for any setting, and a writer second as it is a defense mechanism best saved for time alone in a room where they can cry all they want. They love puns, pretending they can do the sports and talking to people. Even though all of those things make them nervous.

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