

Molly Made Me Deconstruct My Masculinity

Best of Poetry

Tanner Léon

I

Bette's table is familiar and grungy.
On top of it sit lines of magic;
there's a rolled-up dollar bill
nuzzled between my index and thumb.
It only burned a little bit
in the exciting kind of way.

I became a sunflower.

My seeds of socialization fell away,
replaced by an enveloped sense of euphoria.
I saw the beauty in the men around me.
It was only a little gay;
moreover, it was human.

It felt only natural to embrace strangers
while we talked.
After all,
it was a party.

I forgot what it meant to be uncomfortable,
to be afraid.

II

Our love is being repressed
and we're content
with the lack
of that realization.

Men, can we hug?
Men, can we touch?
We're so afraid of our own sexuality
that bumping your friend's leg in public

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feels like an awkward TV interview:
and we're so afraid of interviews:

every question is a challenge
that demands
just to layer another bandage
insecurities.

I pop off this pride
that hides

See, my masculinity
always felt like
a drunken stepfather
watching, waiting
for when I slipped up
so he could start wailing.
It never felt like part of my equation.

Realistically,
masculinity was more the unknown variable
I was solving for
at the top of the fraction.

Yet, I was always
stuck at the bottom,
separated by a bar built by

faggot pussy and bitch
with promises that solving for the common denominator
would earn me my manhood.

I still don't know what manhood is,
but I've come to realize:

it takes a hell of a lot more strength
to cry, than it does to lift weights.

It takes more bravery to love,
than to destroy.

There's more power in holding hands

than there is in pulling yourself up.

III

This is for all the boys who will go home
and cry tonight because
they were told boys don't cry
and did it anyways.

This is for the years she'll spend
trying to uncover
what's been buried deep inside,
because bottling things up
is for body builders.

This is for the man afraid to admit
that he wants to be held
like he was when he was a baby.
Everyone does.
Our weakness makes us human.

IV

As for how the night concluded,
well,
I ended up kissing two friends of mine.
They were guys...
and we're still friends.

And looking back,
I've never felt more comfortable.