

*Clockable:*  
*A Manifesto.*

- 1) Clock: *transitive. slang* (originally *U.S.*). To watch, observe, look at (a person or thing); to take notice of, become aware of; to recognize, register.

You've seen her. You know her. She hangs out exclusively at bathrooms and Olympic games.

Ever since your sister made it explicit that you needed to get your own place, you have moved in with your boyfriend's Italian-American family. His parents are kind but of course don't *know*. In three months of Roman Catholicism, it has taken seven razor heads, two bottles of full coverage foundation, and a floodgate of micellar water to help you keep stubble at bay. His mother, who takes out the bathroom bins, asks over dinner once if you have a history of anorexia. You tell her that you do not, which seems to worry her. Over another dinner, she asks you if you believe in abortion, and although you insist that you are pro-life, this if anything makes her look ill. Over another, what begins as a recent controversy over sex-ed class moves quickly into an invitation for everyone, particularly you, to share freely about their own birth control. Here, it clicks. When your boyfriend, who is a frequent sufferer of nosebleeds, asks two days later why on earth you would buy tampons, you tell him to shut up and stick it up his nose. This utterly mystifies him, but he complies. That night, you dispose of the blood-soaked tampon in the bathroom bin. His mother's inexplicable new joviality towards you means that the tampon is to become a monthly ritual.

Woman walks out of the supermarket, slightly broader than usual, significantly taller. *Is she?* Between the seconds of door and pavement, you see. *She is.*

By now, you have carefully rehearsed your part in the extended reading of *Little Red Riding Hood* that you play fortnightly with your nail tech. She always goes first. *Why, what big feet you have!*

The woman who referred you to the group had emphasized that it was *inclusive*. Therapy, it seems, always happens in semicircles. On arrival, a woman with full knowledge of her welcoming asks you nicely if you would care to sit. Everyone talks as if they know one another rather intimately, but your presence has dislodged the flow of habit. Perhaps as a response to this, the woman lines each of you up for names and pronouns the way they shot the Romanov children,

humanely. Despite everyone saying *she/her*, you can't help but feel you said it wrong.

You swore Tinder dates were a thing of the past, but somehow you are yet again on one. More specifically, you are late for one. You have already had 'the chat' and he has no problem with 'that kind of thing,' only he is 'a little new to it all.' When he sees you he looks sudden, as if he has just remembered that he left the oven on. As it turns out, he is actually rather tired, so how about instead of eating out you both go back to his and order takeout?

Walking down the street, you meet eyes. *Obviously she is*. She meets your eye too. *Obviously you are*. She almost smiles, a lost but long-familiar body. You don't exchange words, although there is nothing and everything to say. One of those helpless interactions where stumbling language already knows her predestination, it would be like falling in love again.

- 2) Clock on: *intransitive. colloquial (chiefly British)*. To become aware of something, to catch on *to*; to realize or recognize something

Your eyebrow lady informs you that she has just started getting into Rupaul's Drag Race. She insists that Valentina should have won, really, given she was a fan favourite, as you look passively into her nostril hairs. She asks if you'd ever consider auditioning, and you tell her that, actually, you have never seen Rupaul's Drag Race. Based on her facial expression, this seems to be an affront to her worldview.

On the phone, the receptionist kept calling you sir. You make a same-day appointment, and she informs you she can squeeze you in if you wait an hour. When you arrive she does not recognise you, then begins to look profusely apologetic.

*Straight but open-minded. Trans women are women*. It's a match! He is pretty, and self-styles as a Marxist. What he proposes is to take you out for a meal, and tell you how beautiful he thinks you are. For once, it is happening. When you meet, it is almost worrying how normal things go, and you can't stop wondering if other people know. For some reason, it is spoiled if they know. At the restaurant, you talk about the class struggle and the architectural merits of Stalinism, but what you're really talking about is sex. On the third date, you finally ask what it is that he is looking for. What he wants, he tells you, is just for this to be a validating experience for you.

No matter what you wear, you keep getting told that you 'slay'  
and 'look fierce.'

The seat on the ticket said A32, although you actually only agreed to go see the panto anyway because your friend's boyfriend is in it. In the queue at the auditorium, a little girl tugs at her mother's sleeve and is ferociously pointing at you.

*Mummy, it's the dame!*

Her mother turns crimson. On the way out of the auditorium, she apologises for her daughter's behaviour.

You sit down for dinner to meet your partner's family. They're more than happy to have you, the kind of people who have always prided themselves on being tolerant. Between hospitable servings of smiles and gravy, your partner's mother finally turns to you and asks, *Just so we don't get anything wrong, what are your pronouns?*

Online there is a certain transgender YouTuber who has amassed a following for ridiculing other, more burgeoning transgender women for their hysterical political beliefs. Her video thumbnails, which you secretly rather enjoy, typically consist of:

- 1) Her, with Instagram model impossibility;
- 2) An unsavoury, mannish looking cross-dresser.

Quietly, you're thankful that you're not *one of them*.

At the bus stop, a man's eagerness to speak with you takes you away from your book. He asks you if you know when the next bus is arriving, despite both of you being surrounded by timetables. Your response is forgettable, but his eyes change.  
*Oh god!* he smiles, *Sorry mate.*

As part of your new job, you waste hours attached to a telephone wheedling disinterested strangers into financial contributions to good causes. On one phone call, you notice that your benefactor's voice sounds familiar, but unplaceable. You fly a groaning joke about identity politics, as lonely ships out in black water cry out with flares. She admits to what you suspected, or hoped, and the finances don't matter. Instead, she ventures to call you a crossdresser, and you inform her that the pot may be calling the kettle black. You savour the call howling down the line long into your overtime about such banal crusades as bathrooms.

Your boyfriend tells you once that he's always found your body very fascinating.

- 3) Clock: *transitive. slang* (originally *Australian*). To punch or hit (a person), esp. in the face

The bed of an unnameable stranger. You're on top – good girl.  
Clothes are still on, because of decency. Or maybe it's being  
sexy. You can never remember which.  
*You must be so wet right now.*  
*I said, you must be so wet right now.*  
*Unless you've got a raging hard-on, 'cus you're a shemale!*  
He laughs. Looks at you, doesn't understand why you aren't  
laughing too. You realise you had better leave quickly.

You and your best friend stumble towards Bethlehem in size  
ten stilettos after lying all night about your shoe size. Only size  
eight, you said to him, as if trying to communicate that it isn't  
gay if you fit a woman's shoe. Like Cinderella. You can't stop  
thinking about the way the Arab guy at the kebab shop winked  
at you, like you were the hottest woman he'd ever seen. But  
your friend is speaking too loud, it makes people see her.  
Someone on the street asks if she's a bloke. At times like this  
you never know how to laugh. Always, your mother has told  
you to just laugh. You see her too, but differently. Like you're  
not looking at your friend, but a hideous and sudden stranger.  
The way you see a homeless man who is only approaching you  
for a light.

It is late enough now for the conviction that your sleeplessness  
has been orchestrated by a vindictive pillow. Wikipedia pages  
have bested you, offering furtive glimpses into lives you could  
take, unknowable cities and alma matters as an ersatz destiny.  
You are confronted with a famous transgender writer, and you  
feel like she has beaten you. Somehow, personally. In this, you  
think, there is only one relief - she's clockable.

Your friend assured you that he's going to be a match, just  
trust her and she'll set you up. You deserve someone nice, she  
told you, emphatically grasping your hand, so just leave it to  
her. After preparing an hour for the date that might make you  
feel real, you arrive at the co-ordinates of your meeting, which  
happens to be a gay bar. When you call out your date's name,  
a nervously skinny man looks up from the retreat of his  
smartphone, who too is wearing makeup.

Your friends told you that the best kind of bra you can get to  
start out with is an Angel Bra, what they did not tell you is that  
an Angel Bra is intended for twelve year olds. The girl behind  
the counter at Marks and Spencer's is closer to twelve than  
you'll ever be, and you have replayed the vision of how she  
would grin as you choke on the polite refusal for a bag. This is  
why you have brought a friend along with you, who goes to

buy the bra for you. Over some inexplicable laughter, you hear  
your friend say, *No- no! Not for me - for her!*

Anthropomorphic Measurements – an Intuitive Visualization.  
Maintained by Hannah Bast, the findings of an American 1988  
anthropomorphic study conducted on two-thousand, two-  
hundred and eight women and one-thousand, seven-hundred  
and seventy-four men are neatly recorded and archived on the  
University of Freiburg’s website. What the University offers is  
blank spaces for you to compare your own measurements  
against the statistical data. Whether the University of Freiburg  
intends this or not, this website is mostly used by transgender  
women. A friend of yours who showed you the site has  
decided to give up transitioning, as there is no hope they will  
ever pass.

People are changing trains. At the doors the crowd gets thick  
like a ripe blister, swelling and bursting onto the easy  
platform. You discharge, caught up in a vision of a tall woman  
and the flow. Disarmed, you let her eyes take your eyes the  
way your feet are being led by other feet. It is for her you let  
your body buckle forward, hoping by chance that commuters  
might motion like fishes swimming backwards and lead  
yourself back into her. Losing her now, she is something  
special, the celestial kind of body that gives destiny  
coordinates, and you hope that doesn’t sound creepy. You  
don’t really mean it in a lesbian way. It must be her that swims  
singularly (you’ve always needed crowds), because your  
bodies are at one another. And you don’t know how to tell  
someone else that you’d like to become them, so you let her  
speak first, different but not uglier up close, the kind of  
woman a mother might call striking. She’s red – she’s been  
catching up to you, to tell you that she really likes your outfit.  
And, face to face, for both of you it is at that moment, you  
realize.