

The Act

I perform every day.
From sunrise to sunset, still
I mustn't quit even while sleeping.
All must be carefully coordinated
in accordance with the Act.

I wake up and put on my costume:
a black shirt and some drab shorts
but I dress and meet the morning,

“How are you?” They ask.
“I'm fine, how are you?”

“Oh, and so and so
and la dee da.”

All the while I nod along,
I am performing well.
They do not suspect a Thing.

That Thing is beneath the Act,
so far beneath even I do not know
what lies so deep.

It scares me in my sleep.

Act One has finished for the day,
but Act Two is harsher in this play
for it is School that scares me greatly
should one figure
or blink suspicion
it was over.

Math and Science are comfort classes
difficult still,
but their problems have answers.
Very keen on keeping sane,
I scratched at the chance for a simple answer.

Was I born wrong? Was my brain wrong?
What equation explains the persuasion
that I myself am not what they say I am?

English and PE are troubling times
the latter requires boyiness extreme.

Slapping asses and Axe Spray,
I choke under the weight of masculinity
so beyond my understanding. I hide and slink by.

English troubles me because of how freeing it is,
to see a problem and have a million answers
all correct, all nodding along
with words that flowed like songs.
I feel freer here, freer to *be* – which was dangerous.
Did you forget the Act?

Clearing my throat,
I argue Political Masculinity
to Mask my Proclivity
for free expression.
Thanks, Repression.

Thanks, dad. Who nods when I tell him
how guns are a man's right
and socialism is barbarism.

Thanks, mom. Who reminds me
to keep being
the normal child.

My grades are high
and my parents satisfied.
So, should I be satisfied?

The finale, Act Three
is about me
keeping that Thing in the dark.

I slip off my costume and climb into bed,
thinking thoughts that rack my head.

Who was I? Where am I going?
And will I perform my whole life?

Will I ever be free?
Free to write like I'm singing
in harmony with myself.

Sleep takes, I gather the strength
to continue performing tomorrow.
Shrugging off dreams of a deeper self in me.