

From Alice, with Love  
by Kaylee Croston

To whom it may concern,

*~From Alice, with love*

I've concluded every letter these hands of mine have scribbled down the same. People tell me, at times that sending notes through postal service has grown obsolete. There's a good chance that I'm pretentious for saying so, but I happen to hold handwritten letters in higher sentimental regard than emails or anything else of that sort. I can think of no medium more fitting for my confession.

I'm writing to inform you that I've unintentionally involved you in my plights against personal identity. *~From Alice, with love*, was my signature, nothing more. Alice never was. I'm going to apologize, but before I do, I'm going to clarify that I am not apologetic for who I am, just for the time it took me to come clean.

After all of this, I have enough nerve remaining to beg you not to take this all personally. In this case, there was no first to know. Closeness was not a factor for me. Each of my friends were weighted the same. All who knew me, knew messy blonde hair flaring just below my shoulders. You knew sincere brown eyes, traced sloppily with dark eyeliner. You knew smooth, shadowless skin. You knew long legs and red lipstick.

That is the vessel I've been steering. More accurately, I'd call it a costume. New age media has been trying to sell the message that appearances are superficial. I subscribe to an opposing belief. What's superficial is the standard society raises it's children to hold their appearances to. Appearances themselves are not altogether pointless. The veil between our internal selves and external is as thin as we let it be. It's our choice, as humans, to express. We can paint our souls on our skin if we choose to. Or, on the other hand, we can lock the truth of us behind expectations others have set. I was born into the latter. I came by my deception honestly. The opportunity to change my mind never presented itself because I never made my mind up in the first place. The world knew me as Alice before I had the chance to be real with them.

Everything I described before, will gradually fade. The me that I was before today is echoes away from who I'm going to be tomorrow. Someday, every living cell in this body once called Alice, will be dead. No sentence has ever felt so liberating.

I had my own concerns over telling the truth, concerns I'm sure I have in common with many of you who read this. Then I thought on it, nurtured my confidence in the decision. Because, while physicality is a great deal of our images on one another, the importance ends at self expression control and development of first impressions. Alice was a pretty girl, but she was skin deep. If an author were to write me into a book and described the parts of her that have nothing to do with me at all, it would not be a stale book, unworthy of the time it takes to read it. All of those features made up a shell, a fancy mask, nothing else. I am not her, but I am her crooked smile. I am her stolen side glances at the boy pretending not to notice. I am the breath in her asthma ridden lungs. I am the side of Alice the mirror could barely show. You know me still, reader, I'm the same person in an unfamiliar body.

Many of you will continue to disapprove, and I forgive you in advance. I've long since become comfortable with the existence of doubt. I've felt hate for myself so deep that it taught

me not to fear yours. No negativity can burn like that produced within, trust me, I know this. Throw your stones, naysayers, I've built kingdoms out of the bricks I used to pelt myself with.

The day I stop struggling with self image will be a victorious and surprising one. Until then, I am learning to appreciate who I am. I thought throughout my childhood that I was *just a kid* and it was unfair that I had to deal with such mature emotions. If I could go back, I'd tell myself that there's no such thing as being "just a kid". From birth, I was a daughter, a granddaughter, and a sister. I was already, also, all I would ever be. Perhaps, I would be a mother someday. I was a future winner of my schools 2011 citizenship award. I was the past incarnation of my high schools first female varsity football player.

At least, this is what everybody else saw. I was pressured with the responsibility of being the only one who knew me completely. The perspective others have on me is not something I'm willing to let be formed by assumptions anymore.

I am no longer the only one that knows. I am a son, a grandson, and a brother. If I were to ever have children, they would call me dad. And while earning a spot on the team was an exciting step for small town feminism, I detest their ability to see my gender before my talent. They saw me as a female nose guard. They saw me as a female.

Despite cringing my way through that situation, I have no regrets as far as correcting my pronouns. I've found that running in circles traced down by your brain gets you nowhere. You'll be happier to follow your heart. I hold the pen with shaking hands while I tell the story I've kept inside. But the flitting muscle in my chest cheers me on.

The moments I felt like my world crashed down around me tended to turn to songs on a sad mixed tape that was soon promoted to the repetitive soundtrack to my life. It was the countless peers of mine poking fun at strangers who practiced gender ambiguity. It was my therapist addressing all subjects regarding gender confusion as unhealthy. It was the conservative boy my fool's heart accidentally started beating for droning on about his religious and political views, obviously damning everything that I secretly was. It was the media representing us like we're few and far between, like in entertainment our only purpose was comic relief to their precious heteronormativity. It was my parents, who puzzled me debate after debate, trying to convince me my life is somehow worth less because my gender does not match the sex I was born with. They argued the lack of validity in transgender people, never thinking they could be so blatantly bigoted towards someone they both helped raised. My defenses were dismissed because it was I, they claimed, that knew nothing of the world.

I don't think about that now. I separate most of my worries into two groups. There are things that I can control and things that I cannot. My parents have made their feelings on my people abundantly clear. I'm prepared to be denied the hormones necessary to complete my ultimate transition. I stand tall with high hopes though, as I've been wrong before. For example, my mother instructed me that I was not to cut my hair. I followed her rule and committed to the idea that it was simply something that I could not control. That was until this morning, when I seized the kitchen scissors and disobeyed my mother.

My desire to be myself outweighed the risk of any punishment she could deliver.

I guess that's what it boils down to. The fear of living out my life as the wrong person became greater than the reservations that forced me into the closet in the first place.

It still required a great deal of patience to collect the strength to write this letter. I know, if necessary, I can stand alone on my own two feet. I accept the odds that love might be a difficult road, I reject the ideal that I don't deserve love because of who I am.

Even as I write this, I'll admit I'm a little unsure. This is not to say I will change my mind, I'm certainly a boy and I always have been. But I don't think you can ever be fully calm in changing your life. I know this is what's best for me but when diving all the way in, it's in my nature to be cautious. It's almost a sort of Stockholm syndrome, leading a life eternally confined by this strange prison wouldn't be as rewarding, but it would be something like restful.

No.

I've spent too much time feeling like a teenage tragedy, a lost cause. I don't want to hate who I am anymore. I'll take that step with everything I have, I'll dive in completely if it means I can be happy. *I deserve to be happy.*

It's time for me to leave Alice behind; I don't want to forget her. I don't want to be bitter over the way she made me feel. What I want is to position her in the past where she belongs. The name itself came from the child who tumbled into a dysphoric wonderland. In a way, I identify with the namesake my parents passed on to me. When I wake up in the morning and pull a dress over my head, I'm shoved into a solid wall of gender dysphoria. But there was no white rabbit, just pronouns that turn my tummy upside down and empty phrases like “man trapped in a woman's body.” I am not. I am a boy through and through. I am a boy that's been presenting myself with the mask of a female for the past seventeen years. I can feel it becoming more opaque every progressing moment.

I'm ready to take it off now. I'm ready for you all to see me as I am.

~~From Alice, with love~~

Sincerely,

Jacob

