

Southern Cross University

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She is a boy

Biographical note:

Virginia Barratt graduated from the creative writing program at Southern Cross University and is currently in the Honours program working on a play entitled *SLICE*, an experimental work dealing with self-cutting, skin and borders. She is a multimedia maker, a performer, an unrepentant feminist and has performed, lectured and exhibited all over the world. She lives an aspirational lifestyle of self-sufficiency and sustainability in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, in Australia. Among her publications are those in *Otis Rush* and *Slit* magazines, blogs and online journals and the 2012 anthology, *Banquet: a feast of new writing and arts by queer women*.

She is a boy. She is my boy. She is my boyfriend.

It hadn't occurred to me that I might find myself in a hetero-normative relationship again. Well, I guess that's kind of stretching definitions a little. There's nothing normative here. Still, my boy she is, of this there's no doubt. I'm really not sure what that makes me. I've always been fond of playing boy to my lovers, unless I've been out-boyed, which has happened once or twice. Yes, there was the skinny-legged one, all swagger and tough, all dust and boots. I had no chance. But this boy, my boy, my boyfriend, well she definitely feminises me. The bulge in her shiny dealer pants makes my tidy package seem delicate, not up to the task: a daisy, perhaps, in my pants!

In the early days, before her secret was out (how could she hide such a large secret?) I had my suspicions. She looked so good in a shirt and tie, so very good, especially wearing her stomper boots. What a tower of a girl! I would ride the elevator to the top of her legs from that place between the leather of her 16-hole steelcaps and the skin of her calves right up underneath her shorts. To the top, to the very top. The smooth ride up her calves was something, but the view from the top was what got me hooked on the ride. I would close my eyes for the ride. I loved to do that, in a café, in a park or on the bus. Take the ride to the top of her basketballer's legs, her cyclist's legs and imagine the slam dunk, or the pumping calves of my death-defying courier girl.

On the first morning of the first day I met her, legs slung over the back of a bench seat on the railway station concourse, wearing a smile so wide you could walk right on in, she gallantly carried my bags back from the train station to her home. On the first morning of the first day in the dappled light of her red room among the detritus of her fractured junkie life I lay on top of her, both of us fully clothed, her long stalks of legs encased in skinny grey cord. I wriggled my hand in, a tight fit, and felt with tingling delight a stomach all downy. Under her shirt I fingered the redgold hairs decorating her chest. I liked this uncommon furriness. It signalled a point of difference between us.

On the first morning of the first day, in delight and golden light, I took her in a fever of machisma. I liked to fuck, to penetrate an other. I was averse to bottoming and so I topped her despite her stature. I thought she was more woman than any girl I had ever been with. Maybe I was blinded by her milky skin, by her softness. Boys are all sinew and resistance. Girls are all curve and yield. Girls are made of milk. Girls make milk and I drowned in hers. This body of white was so unlike the bodies I had always held as mirrors to my own. Suddenly I wasn't fucking myself anymore, boy on boy. I felt liberated by the deep well of desire that sprang from a new place within as I opened myself to the possibility of difference.

I embraced this opening up of whole new worlds of body types to explore. She was my only drug and I breathed her in with the whole of my skin. I melted into her life, on a bloodstained mattress in a room artlessly strewn with her shameless old syringes. My lips became as red as her walls. In the morning and at night I got carpet burn as I slammed into her on the floor on a cliffhanger, white-knuckled ride, bloody and carnal, until the car wreck of our bodies creaked and groaned and out of control rolled

end over end. Twisted metal skins. On her bed I would watch the long stretch of her back crevassed centrally by her spine as she fell forward, fiery hair tumbling.

Over the edge.

Rough and tumble we were.

Harsh and rarely gentle.

In the morning and at night.

The days passed. I was meant to go and stay with friends, but with each setting of the sun I found myself in the red room with the creaking tree outside. Leaves blew in through the open doors and covered us like a forest floor. We'd go out to eat and sit in cafés where I'd play with her legs. She was funny. Recited lines from teenage comedies she'd seen hundreds of times. Made me laugh until I wet myself. As we walked along the streets of her neighbourhood saying hello to Steve, and to the old Mrs with the blind dog, and to the Koori girls and the methadone mums, she looked sideways at me and asked: *am I the most femme girl you've ever been out with?*

On the verge of saying yes, I found myself caught in a space with no words, walking beside a girl with no name. She had skin of porcelain and hair of orange and golden fire, tied up or messy falling all around. She had the curves of a woman. She had a preternatural beauty. And yet ...

Under the streetlights, in the wake of her question, we held onto each other's hands really tightly. A shimmering wave crossed her face and time held its breath as I caught a glimpse of her mutable face morphing between genders and identities. I was electrified by a thrill. She. He. My becoming boy becoming girl. I shivered and swayed in the tide of such changeling energy.

So there, in the wake, and on the verge of saying yes, I choked on the ready affirmative that was about to fall out of my mouth with such ease and so little thought and swallowed it.

The answer to what she was swirled around her head like a halo, an embryonic notion with wings, waiting to be birthed into the knowing