

Being Called Ma'am on More than One Occasion

by Warren Brinegar

Should I pull it out and show them, or let them wonder
if I am the ugliest girl they've ever seen?
Usually they correct themselves,
having called a man with longer-than-average hair
a ma'am—a slight turn of consonance
some players try to volley, tongues hitting nets
as *ma'amna*, some sort of half-man,
half-woman. A word perhaps used to describe
those dynamic people on the Internet. Suddenly, pulling it out
doesn't seem to convincing. These days,
even the prettiest girls get one. Short of sewing bags
to my chest, growing long hair was my way
of being more ma'am than man.
I concede I've never thought it until just now.
How ridiculous: a man growing long his hair
to be more woman.
Thank God I wasn't thinking that.
But every time someone calls me ma'am,
I sit in a crowded room
with others like me, the sex I've only known
as sex. My legs together, I pick nervously at lint
and wonder if I'm better looking than every other female
in the room. This is just a guy-who's-been-misidentified-
as-a-girl's idea of what goes on
in a room of crowded women, if one even exists.
I don't mean disrespect and would actually like to know
what, exactly, does happen in this room, but long hair
only goes so far. So I wonder if those ma'amns out there,
those Internet robber barons
know something they're not telling us?
What is it like to play both harpsichord
and electric guitar simultaneously?
But I figure we'll never get anything but
TOTALLY LIVE AND STEAMY SEX SHOWS!!!
from them, those womenmen
who must know so much about
all of us. My second concession
comes in the fact I've never understood women
or men or those in between. I'm convinced
when they were handing out sex parts,
I simply grabbed the one that was easiest to handle.