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Living Doll

Plastic, weird, uncanny, and ugly are all words some may use to describe the way dolls are, yet I've always wanted to be one. Dolls (a term trans women are called) are usually portrayed as the prostitute who's there to prank someone. To make the person feel ashamed for liking a trans woman when they thought trans women are these men with over filled lips, an uncanny boxy hourglass figure, and inches of thick makeup to cover up their busted face. Personally, I think it's a look but it's still a stereotype which greatly sets back trans women. So many stereotypes and fantasies place trans women into a position of both victim and predator. We're either too soft or out to harm children. However, trans women are people who deserve the same amount of respect and decency as any other human. We have our own struggles. Trans women are women. Trans women shouldn't have to worry about passing. Most trans women aren't dangerous. Trans women are worth love and acceptance outside the realm of just lust.

Most say that dolls are fake and unnatural. Likewise, a lot of cis gendered people talk about trans women as if we're a trap, a way to trick men into dating us. However, we aren't fake or some trap. In my early years of transitioning, I was sitting on the edge of my brother's bed as his blue LED lights blared down onto me like a spotlight. He was at his desk, whatever video he was watching paused as we talked about our beliefs. Out of pure curiosity, I asked his opinion on if he or his friends would date a trans woman. When he said no, I didn't think much about it until he added that, "They aren't real women." My brain was simply short circuiting with my throat

suddenly turning dry. It was my natural instinct to bite back but I couldn't even stand to be in the presence of someone so close to me who just said that I wasn't real even though he knew about my new journey into transitioning. Thus, the night ended with me lazily laying on my bed. My gaze glued to the ceiling. I knew, with my entire being, that my transness was real. It wasn't some ploy to mess around with people. The trans women that helped me with my journey also had no intention of trapping men. Trans women aren't men cosplaying women. We're people who are forced to have tough, but still smooth, skin.

When it comes to picking out a doll, we always compare whether a Barbie is better than a Monster High ghoul. Checking the outfit, makeup, and the way they were molded. Trans women and men have to worry if they're passable cause if not, we're getting laughed at and or assaulted. Being passable is more than just wanting to fit into the stereotype of their gender. It's about if we can go out without caring about their appearance and still be recognized as our desired gender. As an illustration, whenever I leave my house, or even my room, I always consider if I look enough like a cis woman. Or I won't even interact with certain people, so they don't have the slightest chance of knowing that I'm trans. We also hide and cover certain parts of our body, which is known as tucking or binding. Another process that goes into not having people question your gender. All these methods and processes can put a mental and physical strain on a person's wellbeing. To this day, I still have the marks of when I would intensely tuck, and it's taken me years to undo the mental restrain. Trans women shouldn't have to pass to still be women. That being said, it will always remain true that trans women will have to do more transitioning than just societal.

If we don't pass, then we'll be considered a danger to society. Just like how dolls are labeled as haunted or scary. Both are considered predators to children; by those who deem trans women as men in cosplay. Though there are cases of Trans women being terrible, they do not

represent the mass. This “harm” that some fear doesn’t even have to be physical. For instance, me and one of my sisters were simply napping on her bed. But when the door swung open with a loud thud I instantly sat up. My tired gaze locking with my grandmother’s while she berated me in Hmong, my native language that I couldn’t speak. My now widened eyes stared at her in confusion before my sister finally stirred awake. “You are a boy! How could you do this to your mother?” is what my mother’s mother had apparently said to me. She was so scared I was going to harm her daughter, yet I never did anything to cause harm against her or my mother. The only person who seemed to understand that was my sister, I physically saw how she was the only person in that room that stood up for me. The majority of trans women seek to become their true selves and do not seek to harm others. Yet, many people of high status hold transphobic beliefs and aim to eliminate us as they deem it a mental illness and danger to children. Though many trans people have mental health issues, it has nothing to do with it stemming from our transness.

Of the many types of dolls, there are ones made specifically for pleasure and lust. This unfortunately extends to trans women as well, always just seen as a category on some lewd site. Or a way for a man to explore and experiment. However, trans women should be accepted and given love not just lust. As someone who has been a man’s experiment, it’s utterly dehumanizing. All the wasted energy and photos that will forever be imprinted into my mind. Any chance of a guy liking me was disappointing as they always left when they found out I was trans. Now, it’s not wrong to not date a trans woman as nuance exist. If it’s simple as just a disinterest, then that’s fine but not dating someone because of them being trans is where it gets troublesome. It’s worth noting that a lot of people equate a man dating a trans woman as him being gay. Not only is this harmful to trans women but it also paints being gay as shameful. In current day society, trans women still aren’t accepted and therefore the love given will be at a minimum. To change this would be to change the way children, especially boys, are raised. To

have gender and sexuality not be taboo allows for growth. It is rare to see a healthy relationship when it comes to trans women, but it does exist, and it should exist.

Trans women will always exist. Whether we have to worry about scrutiny or feeling shame will be dependent on the way society views us. People may always fear us and or outright not believe us, but all I wish from them is to allow us to peacefully live. As a trans woman, I've learned that it's important to maintain a level of grace and that blood doesn't equal family. I used to be and still sometimes am tired of having to understand. I had to understand that my grandmother was of the old generation. I had to understand that my brother grew up around people who didn't challenge his social views. I had to understand that guys my age weren't likely to see me as a "real" woman and I had to understand to be okay with all of that. There is some worth in understanding those who don't fit into your world of normal. So even if a trans woman is plastic, weird, uncanny, and ugly... let them be. Who knows there might even be more to them under their thick skin.