

Pride

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I am not a witch.

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I'm not a machine either, though there are people who would call me one or the other.

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I don't remember being born, but I have had to learn to live despite that. I know that there are others like me, but if they are like me, they are trying to stay hidden. I was born into a life not that different from your own, though now I am something else. I move about in your world, trying to be a part of it even though I am not.

Citation Link

I get around on legs that, at first glance, don't seem that different from yours. They are different. The bones and angles inside them move and shift where yours would be still and solid. At times they hold me as straight as you, but at other angles, they move like water.

Despite this, my legs don't work any better than yours. They are legs. The pavement, steps and doorways that thread the paths of your world aren't made for my legs, they are made for yours. I had to learn the difference. In doing so, I learned how all legs work. So now I know how your legs work too. I might know them better than you, because I had no choice but to learn.

There's a furnace in my left arm. It is hidden, but it is there. It does not burn or make smoke the way a conventional fire does. This was something else I had to learn. Now I know about combustion, the how and why of things that burn.

As far as I could ascertain, my plumage doesn't help me fly. But I needed to learn enough about birds to be sure.

If all this study has taught me anything- apart from ornithology, chemistry, metallurgy, geology, mycology and nuclear physics, it's that you take your movements in this world for granted. You walk through life leaving trails of information and experimental data. None of the things I learned are secrets, they are all there for you to know should you ask. Some of you know these things already. Some of you use this knowledge every day. Some of you use it to survive.

There was a woman who loved me for my feathers, there was a man who loved me for my many teeth, someone else loved me because I was secret.

The feathers woman just wanted a bird. but one that was capable of telling her it was grateful for the attention. I am no bird. The secret person only wanted something because it wasn't allowed. I do not wish to be a secret, and would spread my feathers in the daylight if I could.

The teeth man isn't alive anymore.

The feathers woman told me I was beautiful, but how could she know? She only understood birds, and I am not one. I have not seen anyone else like myself, not close enough to be sure. How would I know if I were beautiful, or ugly, for that matter? I manage to pass as one of you most of the time, but I do not properly resemble you. There is too much flesh here, too many shapes that are something else. I may never know what is proper for me, if I never meet someone like myself. So I may never know if I'm beautiful. Or a monster. Some of you may call me that, but you can't be sure any more than I can.

There isn't much I can share while I have to hide. While others like me hide, we cannot know each other. What I sometimes consider joy is often strange, even to me.

When it is quiet, and when there is no one to hear, I cannot help but call out in my secret voice that I dare not use when you are around. I only hope that one day someone like me will turn out to be hidden nearby enough to tell me that I am actually singing.

How long do my kind live for? Hopefully until tomorrow, at least.

Author

Winter Alva Chua has been an out queer person since the previous millenium, and has produced published fiction and journalism since the 1980s in various genres of writing and parts of the world. Her current work explores the intersections of experience between race and queerness that many of us are living through.

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