

The Kind of Man I Am at the DMV by Stacey Waite (2013)

"Mommy, that man is a girl," says the little boy
pointing his finger, like a narrow spotlight,
targeting the center of my back, his kid-hand
learning to assert what he sees, his kid-hand
learning the failure of gender's tidy little
story about itself. I try not to look at him

because, yes that man is a girl. I, man, am a girl.
I am the kind of man who is a girl and because
the kind of man I am is patient with children
I try not to hear the meanness in his voice,
his boy voice that sounds like a girl voice
because his boy voice is young and pitched high
like the tent in his pants will be years later
because he will grow to be the kind of man
who is a man, or so his mother thinks.

His mother snatches his finger from the air,
of course he's not, she says, pulling him
back to his seat, what number does it say we are?
she says to her boy, bringing his attention
to numbers, to counting and its solid sense.

But he has earrings, the boy complains
now sounding desperate like he's been
the boy who cries wolf, like he's been
the hub of disbelief before, but this time
he knows he is oh so right. The kind
of man I am is a girl, the kind of man
I am is push-ups on the basement
floor, is chest bound tight against himself,
is thick gripping hands to the wheel
when the kind of man I am drives away
from the boy who will become a boy
except for now while he's still a girl voice,
a girl face, a hairless arm, a powerless hand.
That boy is a girl that man who is a girl
thinks to himself, as he pulls of out of the lot,
his girl eyes shining in the Midwest sun.