

## Angel

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During our last session you asked me if I felt at home in my body - I didn't have an answer right then and there, but I thought about it really hard this week when I was at school. I watched how the guys in my homeroom class would interact with each other and how they would always know what to say, like clockwork. They just seemed so comfortable with themselves in a way that I never really felt. I look at myself in the mirror every day and I... I don't see a man. The world sees me as that, but I don't. If I'm being honest, I think gender is weird. Why do I have to fit within this box simply because of what's between my leg? Everyone keeps telling me I'm only 17 and treats me as if I don't know anything but I know who I am and who I am isn't a boy, or a man, or a... "bro". I don't really think of my gender as anything - it's not something that can be easily identifiable like "boy" or "girl" - it's beyond that. My gender is like the cosmos, constantly shifting and never stagnate, with stars that shine so bright, no matter how far away they seem, and if you look up, you just might catch one twinkling in the sky. I just wish other people could understand this. Instead, the total opposite happens. Let me give you an example. I'll be sitting in 5th bell English with these guys who you can tell are totally straight because they can't dress at all- no style. They'll try and ask me questions just to mess with me

*\*Imitates different classmates\**

*"Angel, let me ask you - are your parents cool with you being a fag?"*

*"Hey Angel, I heard De'Von has a crush on you"*

*"So are you like one of them transgenders or something?"*

"Eff off" is what I want to say. Instead, I just roll my eyes and wait for it to pass. When things like that happen, I'm reminded I can never have peace in the same way that straight people can. I have to constantly be on my guard around the guys at my school. To them, I'm a target; to them, I'm prey. I came out as queer in middle school, but I wasn't the one who was scared, it was everyone around me. The moment I stepped out that closet, who I liked suddenly became something inappropriate. Instead of hiding it, I embraced who I was, and I learned very quickly people didn't like that. I got called a faggot, fruity, a queen and I found out quickly that my existence wasn't welcomed by my peers. So, if I had to answer your question right now standing here, I would say "No" because it's hard to feel comfortable in your body when people give you a reason not to. Since then, I've learned how to deal. I just tune it out by listening to music. Right now, one of my favorite albums is Adele's **19**. Her voice is unlike anything else. I mean, imagine being able to hit those notes like that. Every time I hear **"Make You Feel My Love"** I get chills down my spine.



The Educational Theatre Association was awarded an ARI Community Arts Projects grant by the Ohio Arts Council to complete this work in the spring of 2022, under a project known as "Finding Voice".



For a while now, music has become my escape. Sometimes things get to be way too much for me to handle and I just need a moment to breathe where I can tune everything out. That's where **Spotify** became a godsend in a way. I could go from listening to Adele to sitting in my feelings as Frank Ocean croons away. I just love how music can speak to the soul. I'm sure that sounds corny but I really do mean it. I'm not. like, coming out again or anything, I just figured this was worth mentioning. I haven't told my family yet because to be honest, I'm not sure how to bring it up considering our history. Though one thing's for certain, where I was when I first discovered my queerness isn't where I'm at now.



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