

Token Trans

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10th grade

CHARACTERS:

INTERVIEWER-Any gender, any pronouns. The host of a political show. Tries to be centrist. Not a bigot per se, just ignorant and has no issue with treating trans people as less than human or exploiting them for the sake of the show. Only sees them as the means to a good story.

AVERY-Trans guy. He/him pronouns. He identifies as male but can fall anywhere in terms of gender expression and medical transition. He's not an activist or educator but has been forced into those roles.

TRANSLATOR-A mixture of Siri, Google Translate and every misinformed stereotype cis people have about trans people. A tool used by the INTERVIEWER. Presents as a girl “pretending” to be a guy (long hair tucked into baseball cap, ect.).

NOTES:

Ideally, AVERY should be played by a trans man or a trans masculine person. If one cannot be found, it's fine to use a nonbinary person or a cis man, just do not cast a cis woman in this part.

The TRANSLATOR pops up at increasingly frequent intervals. By the final reset, the TRANSLATOR remains on stage the entire time.

The TRANSLATOR is a distorted version of AVERY so feel free to reflect that with their costumes and any other elements. The TRANSLATOR should have a visual next to it, showing its settings to the audience.

The resets can be as simple or intense as you want. The important thing is that the only aspect not reset is AVERY.

There is canned laughter, applause, and other sound effects that play at certain intervals. They should sound fake/exaggerated (think Disney Channel).

Lights up on a studio with the INTERVIEWER preparing for their show, putting on makeup, tongue twisters, that sort of thing. AVERY wanders onto set, clearly confused.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, there you are! It's about to start!

AVERY

Sorry, what's about to start?

INTERVIEWER

No time for that, just sit in that chair over there!

AVERY

Okay? (He does this) Excuse me, what is-

INTERVIEWER

And we're back! Hello everyone and welcome! Today we have a very special guest to answer some of your burning questions about the transgendered craze sweeping the nation and for this transgender, here, to educate us. So, Avery, why don't you introduce yourself?

AVERY

(a deer in headlights)

I don't know where to start.

INTERVIEWER

You can start with your name.

AVERY

It's Avery.

INTERVIEWER

Your REAL name.

AVERY

Avery.

INTERVIEWER

So if I look on your birth certificate-

AVERY

Why should that matter?

INTERVIEWER pulls out a birth certificate and begins examining it. Audience oooh track plays

Is that my birth certificate? What the-? How did you get that?

INTERVIEWER

It says Arianna on here...

AVERY grabs it

AVERY

Okay fine. Arianna is my dead name. For all intents and purposes, my name is Avery.

The TRANSLATOR pops up out of nowhere, startling AVERY, and retreats after line

TRANSLATOR

Hi! My name is Arianna. Well, it used to be Arianna. But now my name is Avery. And this is my story.

Audience awwww track plays

AVERY

What IS that?

INTERVIEWER

Oh, that's our TRANSLator.

AVERY

What?

INTERVIEWER

For normal people.

AVERY

What?

INTERVIEWER

Well, we can't expect them to understand the transgenders. Not without a TRANSLation. It's just taking your words and translating them into how regular people would interpret them. It expedites the whole process. Pay it no mind. (beat) So since you're basically just a lesbian-

AVERY

No I'm not. I'm a man.

INTERVIEWER

So I take it you've had The Surgery?

Track of audience gasping

AVERY

Which one?

INTERVIEWER

You know. The Surgery.

AVERY

There are millions of surgeries available and like a dozen just for trans people.

INTERVIEWER

Well, what parts do you have, you know, down there?

AVERY

I don't want to talk about that.

TRANSLATOR

I don't want to talk about the genitals I have because I'm so prissy and sensitive. Sorry I'm such an inconvenience.

AVERY

That's not what I said.

INTERVIEWER

No, but that's what our audience hears. Like I said, pay it no mind.

AVERY

Fine! I haven't had The Surgery.

INTERVIEWER

So how can you say you're a boy if you don't have a penis?

AVERY

Because I am! I live as a man. I interact with everyone I meet as a man. Why should my genitals matter more than my identity and the life I live?

TRANSLATOR

I'm not a real boy but I wish I was. I just want to be normal!

Track plays of audience going awww.

AVERY

I am normal! Some boys are blond, some boys aren't. Some guys have a dick, some don't. And I'm broke. As much as I may want to, I literally can't afford to join the former category. Besides, some trans people don't even want "the surgery" and are fine with the body they have.

TRANSLATOR

I just hate myself so much! If you're sensing some discomfort from me now, or, you know, whenever, it has absolutely nothing to do with how you're treating me. It's just my self-hatred!

AVERY

I don't hate myself. Wanting the correct genitals is not the same as self-hatred. I don't hate myself or my genitals.

INTERVIEWER

Well if you're fine with the genitals you have, how are you different from a butch lesbian?

AVERY

Because a butch lesbian is still a woman. I'm a man.

INTERVIEWER

But it says on-

AVERY

Again with the birth certificate? It's just a piece of paper. Are you going to accuse me of pretending to no longer be eight pounds and three ounces as well?

INTERVIEWER

But if it's so important to you that you're seen as a boy, why does it still say female on your birth certificate?

AVERY

Legally changing your gender is a difficult, sometimes impossible, process depending on where you live. I can't change it until I have certification that I've "fully medically transitioned" and besides, if I change it, I could lose insurance coverage.

TRANSLATOR

I want you to see me as a boy but I'm not going to take the steps available to me to transition because I'm just confused and/or want attention.

AVERY

That's just patently false. If I could snap my fingers and have the correct genitals and birth certificate right now I would, but we live in a world uninhabitable for people like me. The steps I take or don't take depend on a plethora of things outside my control and are no one's business but mine.

TRANSLATOR

Pity me! You guys, my life is so hard, and I love to play the victim.

AVERY

That's not what I'm saying! I don't want cis people's pity; I want them to acknowledge this is a shitty system and help me fix it.

INTERVIEWER

Cut!

(Reset begins and takes place during following exchange)

You're upset. What's the problem?

AVERY

The problem is that thing putting words in my mouth.

INTERVIEWER

It's not. It's just you can't expect our audience to comprehend whatever it is you're saying about your "alternative lifestyle." Understanding takes work.

AVERY

Well, why does all the work have to fall on me?

INTERVIEWER

You have to educate us. That's your job. That's what you signed up for when you decided to live this life. It may be unfair but you can't expect your audience to research or learn on their own. If you want acceptance, you have to put in the work.

AVERY

I don't want this.

INTERVIEWER

But you're helping!

AVERY

It feels like I'm doing more harm than good.

INTERVIEWER

I assure you that's not the case. But here, if it makes you feel better, I'll change the settings.

INTERVIEWER does this, changing it from
Cis-speak to Cis-sensitive

Now it'll translate your words into something a little easier on the ears of normal people instead of how they'd interpret you.

AVERY

Normal?

Reset ends

INTERVIEWER

Let's start again. Avery, tell us about your decision to go from girl to boy.

AVERY

I didn't decide to be a guy.

INTERVIEWER

But biologically-

AVERY

Biologically I have xx chromosomes. But does that really matter? When people interact with me, they aren't thinking about my chromosomes or genitals. They interact with me as a guy and think of me as a guy, regardless of biology. And I'm a trans man, key word being man. Transgender is just an adjective.

TRANSLATOR

I'm a girl who just wants to be a boy.

(Audience oooohh of understanding track plays

AVERY

No!

TRANSLATOR

I'm a boy trapped in a girl's body.

AVERY

I mean, I guess that's better?

TRANSLATOR

Don't worry! I'm not like other transes. I'm not easily offended. You can treat me like less than human and I'll apologize to you!

Applause track

AVERY

That's not even close to what I said! I mean, yeah, I do tend to apologize for existing because I have to in order to survive. I have to apologize when I correct people and remain polite when people ask about my genitals because I'm terrified that if I react like a normal person, it'll end up getting me killed.

TRANSLATOR

You guys, I know I'm not a real boy. But all I want is to be seen as one.

Awww track

INTERVIEWER

You poor thing, you're just a confused little boy trapped in the wrong body.

TRANSLATOR

Yes exactly. I just hate that I'm making you uncomfortable. Thank you for your sympathy. I know it can't be easy to sympathize with a freak like me.

AVERY

Why do I need to act like I'm less than human for you to sympathize?

INTERVIEWER

Aaaanyway. you're a boy.

AVERY

Yes! Thank you.

INTERVIEWER

So you must like girls.

AVERY

No! I mean, some trans guys do but personally I don't. Just because I'm a boy doesn't necessarily mean I'm straight.

TRANSLATOR

Yes. I like girls because I'm a boy and boys like girls.

INTERVIEWER

So, then how does it, uh, work, you know, in the bedroom?

AVERY gives a blank look

How do you have sex?

Track of hooting plays

AVERY

What the-? (He catches himself and attempts to calm himself) Would you ask this to anyone else?

TRANSLATOR

I'm not really comfortable answering that question.

AVERY

Yeah, no shit.

INTERVIEWER

There's no need for that.

AVERY

Sorry. (beat) Can we please talk about something else? Something less personal?

INTERVIEWER

Sure. Let's discuss pronouns.

AVERY

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

How am I expected to keep up? There are so many of them and I never know what to call people anymore. I remember when we used to just have tomboys and sissies. It's pretty hard for us normal people to keep up with.

AVERY

Hard for YOU?

TRANSLATOR

I know. You're right, it can be hard-

AVERY

Hard to what? Show people basic human respect?

INTERVIEWER

Yes! You should sympathize more with us. We have it hard too! We could offend one of you and you might be mean. You people are so sensitive and easily offended. Anything could set you off!

TRANSLATOR

Yes. I know. It can be hard for cis people too. We all have our struggles.

Audience applause track

AVERY

Well boohoo. I'm sorry trans people make you uncomfy. Maybe I'd be more sympathetic if your people stopped killing so many of mine.

INTERVIEWER

Now that's just unfair! Not all cis people-

AVERY

Yeah, I know! So STOP ASKING ME TO SPEAK FOR THE ENTIRE TRANS COMMUNITY DAMMIT!

TRANSLATOR

You're so right. I cannot thank you enough for this platform to educate and inform.

INTERVIEWER

CUT!

Reset begins and goes on during following exchange

Why are you being so aggressive? I get you're angry-

AVERY

You think? Could you please turn that thing off?

INTERVIEWER

I think you need to remember you're representing every trans person. Which representation would you prefer? You, the angry and self-righteous transgender, or the polite and docile TRANSLATOR?

AVERY

I shouldn't have to be subservient to be treated like a human being.

INTERVIEWER

Well that's just hurtful. This is why so many people don't associate with the transgenders. I'm giving you a platform, aren't I? Most shows would refuse to have someone like you on. Talk like this alienates your allies you know.

AVERY
(after a beat)

What do you want to know?

INTERVIEWER

Just you know, talk about yourself. Tell your story. Just start from the beginning.

Reset ends. Unbeknownst to AVERY, the INTERVIEWER dials up the TRANSLATOR to SNART, or anti-trans, to actively sabotage him. Throughout this exchange, AVERY is growing progressively angrier and more frustrated, while TRANSLATOR grows closer and louder, drowning him out and forcing him to compete for audience attention.

AVERY

I'm Avery. Let's start there.

TRANSLATOR

My real name is Arianna but I go by Avery.

AVERY

I'm a trans man.

TRANSLATOR

I'm a boy trapped in a girl's body.

AVERY

I use he/him pronouns

TRANSLATOR

If it's not too much trouble-

AVERY

I didn't really figure out something was wrong until middle school when my dysphoria went from zero to a hundred because of puberty.

TRANSLATOR

I always knew I was a boy from birth because that's how gender works. I played with boy toys and all my friends were boys. I hated pink, dresses, and girly things. In middle school, all the other girls liked makeup and wanted boyfriends. I just wanted to be a boy.

AVERY

I didn't want to be a boy! I was one. I just wanted society to recognize me as one.

TRANSLATOR

I just wanted to be a REAL BOY.

This sets off AVERY who begins talking rapid fire, overlapping with the TRANSLATOR. The two compete for the audience's attention.

TRANSLATOR

(Simultaneously)

As long as I can remember I didn't feel right. The way I looked in the mirror didn't match the way I felt on the inside. I tried. I tried to be Arianna. I would pray about it every night when I went to bed. But every day I would wake up and I was still me. I felt like I was lying to everyone I ever met. I was not the good girl they all thought they knew. So one night at dinner I told my mom to stop calling me Arianna and I would really like it if she called me Avery. You don't need to be afraid of me, I promise! I'm just like you! I just want to be normal.

AVERY

(Simultaneously)

In middle school I also gained access to the internet and was exposed to the LGBT community. After discovering that being transgender was a thing, I came out to everyone. I was lucky enough to still have a family after that, I started binding my chest and started testosterone and saving up for top surgery. I didn't WANT to be a boy; I WAS a boy! I don't hate myself! I love myself but it can be really hard to be myself when people like you only sympathize after I'm thoroughly dehumanized and paint me as a monster if I refuse to be your inferior! I'm PROUD of who I am!

AVERY realizes everyone is paying attention to him now and heard the last of his outburst

AVERY

Well I am. I'm proud of who I am and I don't need validation from you (To INTERVIEWER) or you (to audience) or any other cis person.

AVERY turns off the TRANSLATOR. It powers down. He addresses the INTERVIEWER

Now let's take it from the top, shall we?

The INTERVIEWER is too shell shocked to stop him

I'm transgender. Clearly you all know that by now. But it really shouldn't be the the first thing you learn about me. It influences every aspect of me but it's also only a small part of my personality. I love music that anyone with a modicum of taste despises, I'm obsessed with Harry Potter like to an unhealthy degree and I love writing and reading horror stories. I cannot stand messes and I need to eat something sweet every day. And I'm stupidly, insanely in love with my boyfriend even though he can drive me crazy. I could give less of a shit if you think I'm normal or a freak. I'm a person. I'm imperfect even though I'm constantly asked to be more than that since I'm expected to speak for my entire community. I love myself even when I suck, even though this society tells me not to. I'm a person and dammit, I deserve to be treated like one. (Beat) Cut!

(Blackout. End of play)