

Max Oliver Delsohn

The Aim

If one more person asks me what my pronouns are, I'm gonna fuckin' scream. Scream bloody murder, my mother used to call it, I'll scream like *that*, and you'll all be sorry you ever learned you were supposed to ask the question in the first place. Who taught you to relate to me, eh? A video on BuzzFeed?

Old bald men insist my name is Maxine. Or no, they're asking, surprised, Max? Just Max? Not Maxine, or something like that? Just Max, tight-lipped Max, in khakis and a Banana Republic button-up that won't fit, my look long before I got the hang of dressing. Just Max, and they hired me like that. Deal with it.

I'm a concierge at a luxury condo downtown. There's a button underneath the desk that automatically opens the front door. My desk is positioned so I'm always looking straight ahead but with an entrance to either side, building my peripheral vision, one eye on the elevator and one eye on that damn door. Ready to greet, ready to push then greet, how's-your-day and all smiles. Somebody makes a joke about how I should wear a fez. He's in war paint, back from a football game. Good point, Paul.

Rich, married Democrats flash their eyes as they talk, until they're stumbling over it, She, h-he, what is it again, darling? What in God's name is your preferred pronoun, again? The wife's wearing pearls, so, Pearls, I tell her. My preferred pronoun is pearls.

J. Alfred Prufrock, in the year 2016, is a customer service worker measuring his life in forced grins.

There's one lady who's always rushing out and on the phone; the janitor says, She never stops to say hello. She's got big teeth and she uses 'em. Sunday afternoon and she's a little drunk at 6pm, home from shopping, with her friends. Push, greet the hyenas. Suddenly one's crying and laughing, pointing: How old is this boy? Twelve? They're letting twelve-year-olds work here now?

Another friend chimes in, Dana, that is *so* rude. Dana looks at me, bored. I'm sorry. I'm seriously sorry. Dana chews gum as she says it, says it about three more times.

It's okay, I laugh, sputter, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay. And honestly, it is. All smiles.

All smiles.

I try to quit that night but the President of The Board wants to see me. It's him and the rich wife from before, I guess she's on the board, too. Conveniently, she seems to have left the pearls at home.

We understand there was an incident, Mr. President begins gravely, and he tries to get me to tell him who did the deed but I won't, I'm not selling out the rushed lady, even if I have no love for her process. They want me to stay, because Tyler quit yesterday and I work well and am quiet and kind, they love that. The wife reiterates, People love you at The Gladwell. I'm constantly hearing, We love Max, he's—. I eye her. Did she think I'd forgotten? *Pearls* is part of the family.

I change my pronouns on Facebook approximately once a day, so the folks who're trying to keep up with me just can't. I'm thinking about issuing a Facebook PSA, that all well-meaning friends and family of Just Max should look at me, really look. Do you see a woman? Then that's fine, I'm a woman, I've been a woman for years now. Do you see a man? Then I'm your chap, your lad, your good boy ready for action. No? How about they, ze, pearls, I really do like pearls, I think pearls was a good one.

What I mean to say is I hate you for pretending that you want a way in. Because I want a way out. Way out.

MAX DELSOHN is a transgender writer living in Seattle, WA. His work can be found in *CutBank* and Seattle University's *Fragments*. He can be found doing readings around Seattle and working at Hugo House, a nonprofit for writers.