

Boys will be boys

[Life, Adolescence](#)



September 8th, 2015. It was the first day of high school, and my hands trembled as I rushed up the stairs to my biology class. As I settled in, the teacher collected the summer homework, only to realize that two nameless assignments had been handed to her. She walked around the room again, questioning only the girls if the homeworks belonged to them. It was after one of the students claimed her homework that I suddenly realized; I had also probably forgotten to write my name.

" Excuse me, miss. I think that last homework without a name may be mine."

She walked over to my desk—row four, seat five— asking for my verification.

" Yes, this is mine. I'm so sorry."

For a few seconds, the teacher observed me skeptically, unable to believe that the gentleman in front of her could have such neat, curly handwriting.

Thinking back, I've always found myself to be quite different from others. Unlike most boys I knew, I enjoyed drawing Disney characters and going to Operas. I even joined my school band and learned to play the piano, flute, and clarinet. I never considered my interests as masculine or feminine, they simply made up who I was.

Yet, when I shared my hobbies and interests, my friends would always be shocked to learn that I enjoyed many of the things they considered " feminine." Growing up, I've always played with toys of medical equipment, hoping that one day I would actually use them as a nurse or pediatrician. Upon telling my friends, they would laugh and say " You... a nurse or

pediatrician? But you're a man, and that's such a lady's job. You should be a surgeon or something." This stumped me. Maybe they're right, I supposed. I was led to believe that men and women should each commit to doing what they are respectively fit to do.

The ridicule of my femininity followed me into high school, forcing me to confront my comfort zone and adapt to a new environment. Thus, as I came home from school, I browsed through the internet, searching for "how to write like a man", and attempting to emulate standard "male" writing. Writing in this messy manner was difficult; it certainly wasn't something I felt accustomed to. Incidentally, as my mother walked in and witnessed the unusual scribbles on my homework, she was bemused to what she had seen.

"Oh gosh, Zhen! Whose homework is that?"

"Mom, calm down. It's mine. I'm just trying to write like other guys."

"Jeez no! Why are you doing this? You don't have to be like everyone else. You are your own person."

Though I struggled to understand her, I learned that my mother was right. My handwriting, despite it being viewed as ladylike, made me no less of a man. I decided that my handwriting would no longer be a tool of embarrassment, and I made it my goal to embrace my qualities and use them to exceed others' expectations.

My feminine traits contribute to my strength and individuality. Even with these traits, I am capable of performing the so called "masculine" tasks. Whether it be building a desk from raw wood, or repairing mechanical appliances, I am capable, even if I also enjoy shopping, dancing, and keeping up with fashion.

In being able to accomplish both the delicate and crude tasks, I am at an advantage. My feminine traits are neither problematic nor burdensome- instead, they reward me with a vast range of interests and skills that turned into my passions and a more diverse group of friends. I have learned to grow out of stereotypes dictated by society and be comfortable with my own character. To date, though my views of myself have changed for the better, my handwriting and passion to pursue my medical studies have stayed the same.