

coffee pretty much as I choose. Yet, I am considered queer in a men's or women's bathroom: too feminine to be a man, too masculine to be a woman. There is no escape from the contradiction.

As the seasons change, autumn mourns the end of a period of summer struggle, just when I'm getting the hang of it!

In winter, once I'm covered by a coat, I could argue that I'm a woman 'til I'm blue in the face. It gets me nowhere. In winter I lose ground. Territory liberated in the summer often is overturned by bigotry in the winter. It is a time of rest for jangled nerves. As long as I do not argue that I'm a woman, I am treated more like a human being.

Spring is the time of greatest tension: the coming off of coats time. And not slowly, gradually the way emotions would require, but the way weather comes—full of surprise. Then each store, each route must be reexamined before the fresh challenge of summer: women's or men's clothing, to wear a bra or not. This is the time of year no restaurant will serve me without insult. I remember to keep moving

at all costs, to ignore petty discourtesy on the street and avoid waiting for trains with groups of young men getting high and looking for fun.

I am well-known in my neighborhood. The neighborhood children help to bridge the gap between the adults and myself.

I look out my window to see what the situation on the street is.

As far as I can see are tenements. Some abandoned, some lived in—the difference is slight: bright pieces of cloth tacked up over windows. Sprawling vacant lots with wildly growing weeds and chickens and dogs running in them. I can hear the whistles from the garment sweatshops on each block but I cannot see them.

Some streets are safer than others. I set a bearing each morning, taking into account how I am dressed. The difference of a block or two can mean dodging stones thrown at me by teenagers.

I feed the plants and myself before leaving for work. I look out the window, I look down to the street corner. Beyond that, I can see no further what the day will hold.