

**1.**

I am squatting behind a bush at a Hipcamp in the Colorado desert hoping none of the surrounding neighbors can see my bare ass. The piss hits the hard ground and splatters against my legs as the wind whips my face.

**2.**

I am in college, trying to time my hour and a half commute from Brooklyn to Harlem with the time I need to use the bathroom before class. Every day I find myself running up the big hill to campus, bursting to the seams, and showing up five minutes late because I had to piss first. If I'm magically running early I'll use the single gender neutral restroom that's in a completely different building, but if I'm late I have to use the women's. Usually the only gender neutral bathroom on campus, won after a student campaign, smells terrible because it's also where everyone goes to take a shit.

**3.**

I walk into a rest stop off an Alabama interstate. Outside it is just starting to thunderstorm. A policeman stands behind a counter directly between the men's room and the women's room. I walk towards the women's room and he tells me I am going the wrong way. I look at him and stare and he apologizes as I go into the bathroom. I use the term gender policing a lot but have never seen it be so literal.

**4.**

Two of my coworkers at the nonprofit I work at hang gender neutral restroom signs over the gendered bathrooms. The office is quiet and there's never more than one person in the bathrooms anyway, although there's also a private bathroom in the back of the office where someone keeps not flushing the toilet.

Apparently the office manager, who happens to also be actively enrolled in one of the most conservative fundamentalist Christian universities in the country, tells them it was fine. But then someone somewhere has an issue - maybe her, maybe someone else. My coworkers get in trouble.

Leadership asks for feedback from everyone because people are upset so I tell them, as the only trans person out of 90+ staff, they should keep them gender neutral with urinal and non-urinal signs and tell people to do a better job of flushing the toilet. I say this nicely and send them links to articles on how gendered bathrooms increase violence against trans people while simultaneously doing absolutely nothing to protect cis people from each other.

They invent something called a “bathroom audit” and start using the term “bathroom justice” and say that they can’t make them gender neutral because they aren’t allowed to also alter them to make them wheelchair accessible. Apparently they will now offer free menstrual products or something and that is their “bathroom justice.”

Several months later they implement my suggestion and replaced the men’s room sign with a gender neutral sign, and maybe also the women’s but I can’t remember. The office manager I don’t like gets the credit, not the queer coworkers who were reprimanded and not me.

## **6.**

My doctor tells me my thyroid levels are abnormal. I have no idea what this means. I don’t know if I have fatigue because I’m busy all the time and have nothing else to compare it to, I don’t know if my hair is dry and falling out because I bleach it anyway, and I know I’ve gained weight but I also just spent a summer eating all the barbeque and American Deli combo meals in the city of Atlanta.

The medication she gives me makes me start feeling better immediately. It also doubles the amount that I piss between waking up and afternoon. And I already pissed a lot, the product of waking up with 2 to 3 large cups of black tea. Every time I leave my house I have to have a bathroom plan.

## **7.**

I pee against a huge boulder next to a hiking trail with my piss funnel, the kind that has to be situated perfectly against the edge of your urethra or it will spill. I hear two women coming up the trail and it is too late, they have already seen me. I pull my pants up and apologize profusely, they giggle as they tell me that it’s fine.

A few hours later I remember that I have tattoos on my ass cheeks and wonder if they saw them. The next day they ask me what my name is and tell me my friends behind me told them to say hi. Two days later we finish the trail at the same time after nearly 300 miles of backpacking. We take each other’s picture and I learn that they are best friends from rural Pennsylvania.

## **8.**

At my first office job I arrive at 10am each day and have to piss every 30 minutes until well after noon. I disguise my trips to the office with other tasks, with gossip, with anything to obscure how desperately I have to go and how often. I wonder if my coworkers think I am sick or trying to slack off or just that I have a problem, which I guess I do. Every time I hold it until I am in tremendous pain and then make the long trek pass everyone else’s office (I am in a corner cubicle) to the restroom.

**9.**

I'm at a campground in Texas and four older women who look like lesbians but aren't walk in as I am leaving. I move to the adjoining shower room and start getting undressed as I hear them talking about how they couldn't tell if I was a boy or a girl. They start fantasizing about strip searching me so that they see what genitals I have and they say if I attacked them they would run away and then find sticks and fight me with them. I wonder what I could have possibly done to inspire such violent fantasies in a bunch of old southern ladies.

In turn I fantasize about throwing dog shit into their campsite or fighting them with sticks back or telling them that they are too ugly to get me naked and that one of them is even more butch than I am. But I know the law is on their side not mine and anything I do will have an equal and opposite consequence.

**10.**

At Christmas Dinner our family friend, who's a building inspector, tells us about a time he was out shopping with his daughter and she had to use the bathroom. They walked into a clothing store and he asked where the bathroom was, and when they told him they didn't have a public bathroom he threatened to shut them down. This was when I learned that Virginia law requires every business to have a bathroom that's at least open to customers. Now that I live in Virginia every other state gives me anxiety because I never know whether a gas station, store, or restaurant will have a place to piss.

**11.**

I'm very young and out somewhere with my dad. We both have to use the restroom, and he takes me to the men's room because he said it's okay to take a child to the wrong restroom if they're with the parent. I wonder if what restroom you use matters at all if the rules can be so easily broken.