

Transitory

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A seven-year-old girl cuts her hair like a boy and, for the first time since expressing suicidal tendencies, she feels elated. At school, a guest instructor calls her a boy. Her classmates offer correction, but the girl doesn't mind. She embraces her identity as a "tomboy." Her friends play out hypotheticals of what names they would take if they were the opposite gender, and she feels more connected to her "boy" name than she ever did to her "true" name.

But she isn't a boy! She wants big breasts and to start her period! Sure, she plays video games and wears boy clothes, but she also plays with dolls.

Five years later, she realizes that gender is more complicated than that. They watch videos of male ballet dancers, always taking centre stage, and they want to be like them. They find joy in painting their nails. They don't seem to fit neatly into binary gender norms and they are so, so confused about what they wish to embody.

He begins to identify as gender-apatetic, going by masculine pronouns. He'd already come out to his parents as queer and felt accepted, and now they help with his social transition. They reach out to an adult transgender friend. There are slip-ups with his deadname or feminine pronouns, but his parents are trying, his grandparents are trying, and the family members who now despise him mean nothing to him anymore. His friends understand, and he feels safe enough now to explain himself to those who don't.

A year later, post-COVID lockdowns, he returns to school. His head is shaved and his name is changed. He makes a friend who is a transgender man, and he has never felt more understood. Every time his name is called by his new friends or for attendance, he beams.

Even though he is a completely new person, people still call him "she," and the word settles deep in his chest. He

begins to bind his breasts to conceal his feminine form, crying with the pressure of his binder — not from the pain of constriction, but with relief from dysphoria.

Sometimes, though, he doesn't understand any of this himself. He knows some transgender men feel dysphoric over their periods, but he doesn't. Transgender men sometimes keep their hair short, but he is looking forward to growing his out. He realizes he needn't explain himself to anyone; every transgender person is different. He feels safe with a flat chest. He may not want a penis, but that doesn't make him any less of a man.

But for years now he's wanted a beard and a deep voice and fat redistribution to his stomach, and that will require testosterone. He's fine with the possibility of developing a receding hairline; feeling safe is more important to him than his curls.

He talks to his parents. He divulges his desire to fully inhabit a male body. "But you are agender, are you not?" his mom asks. He argues it is not the length of his hair or the tone of his voice or even about others' perception. It is his deepest, most primal feeling. He doesn't know how to express any of that, though, so he just begs his parents to trust him. And they do.

After three years on antidepressants, his mental health has drastically improved and, with the help of his parents' adult transgender friend, plus his mother's experience as a health care provider, he is finally granted an appointment.

He is prepared to have to justify himself, for the possibility he may not receive care for many more years. But his doctor's questions confirm what his parents have already filled out in a detailed questionnaire. His doctor understands the health risks of gender dysphoria, and that this is something he wants. To his surprise, the doctor starts asking how he would like to administer the testosterone.

Men aren't supposed to cry, but he does anyway. Despite being a minor, he will be offered hormonal treatment. He stays awake many nights, the anticipation of his first testosterone shot settling in. When his mother injects his first dose, he is euphoric.

He records his voice once a week, listening back to the recordings to see if he has changed at all. He inspects his chin, watching as more hair begins to grow. For possibly the first time in his life, he feels just a little bit like himself.

He can't help but wonder, though. What if his mother had given in to her fears that this was just a phase? What if his parents hadn't had unwavering trust in their child? What if he hadn't been in an environment that had supported him wholeheartedly? What if he hadn't had transgender friends to go to? Why do his friends, the ones who assured him he belonged despite his differences, struggle to get the same medication? Had his situation been any less supportive, he might have waited one more year, five more years, or even ten more years for care. In a world that tries to erase him, testosterone has given him safety and solace.

He looks at the wonderful start to his medical transition, and he wonders, *why do so many trans people have to fight?*

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This article has been peer reviewed.

Editor's note: The author is a sixteen-year-old transgender individual who loves expressing himself through artistic mediums such as drawing and writing. He especially enjoys exploring topics personal to him, including gender identity.

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