

Lia's Journey

Written by: Lia and Dr. Tal Croitoru



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Graphic Design: Tut Blumental

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Cover and Graphic design by
Tut Blumental with the assistance of AI

My name is Lia, I am 24 years old. Right now I'm sad that my days of living as a guy are over, because now I have to face the reality that I am a butch lesbian and worry that everyone will look at me as if I am weird.



Childhood



I grew up in a progressive American city.
As a child I had seen gender nonconforming
people whose biological sex confused me.
Most of them were men who dressed as women.
I was exposed to the idea of 'sex change' at
a young age, but I didn't think it was relevant
to me in any way.



As a child I lived entirely inside my mind. I struggled to communicate my feelings, which were very intense. When I was sad I felt physically ill. When I was happy I was in such a state of excitement that I was unable to fall asleep at night.



As a child, I pulled out
my eyelashes
constantly and I was
diagnosed with
a type of OCD called
'trichotillomania',
although I had
no other symptoms.



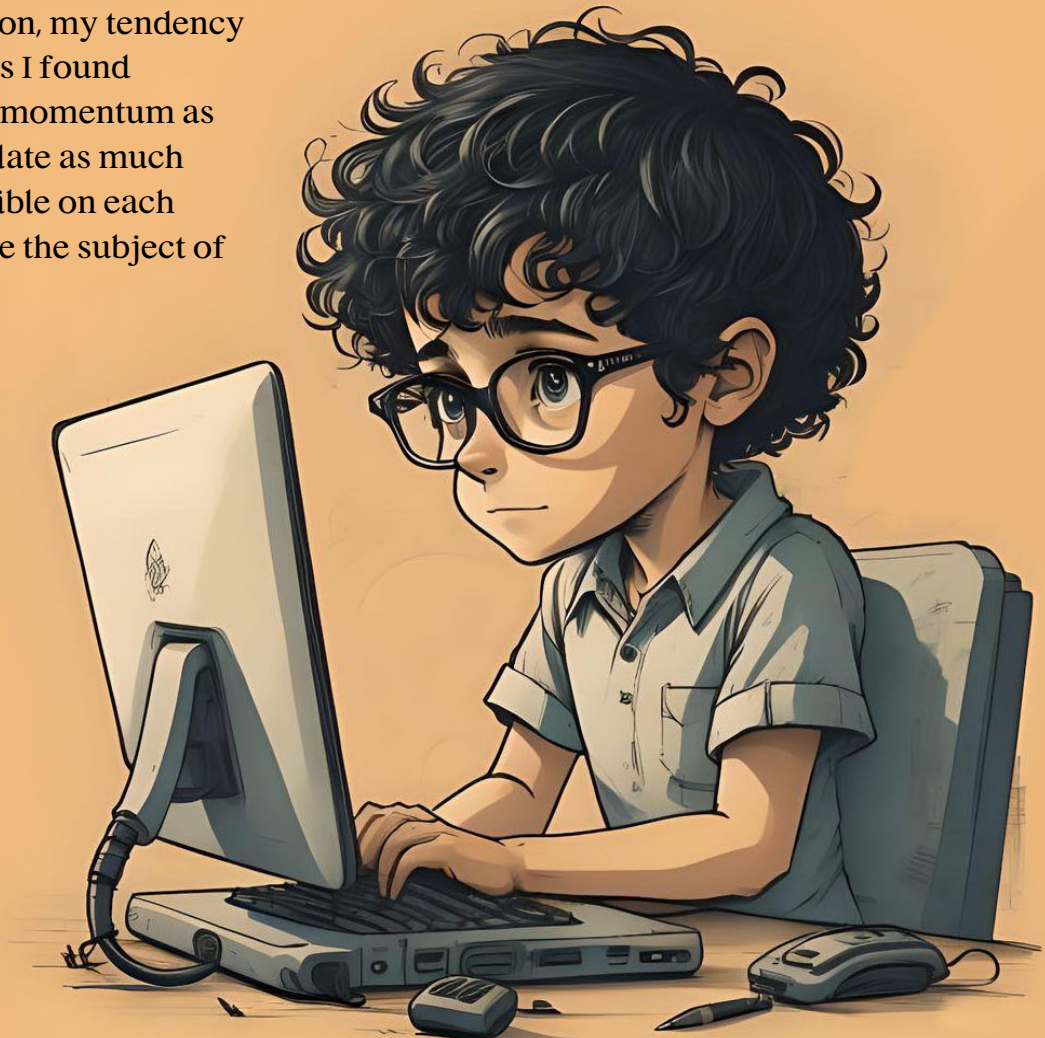
Age 8



At the age of eight I came across a copy of the Guinness Book of World Records and stumbled upon a page discussing the world's tallest people. This topic fascinated me. After independently researching this phenomenon online, I discovered that the world's tallest people all suffered from a rare brain tumor that caused a condition called "acromegaly".

At the time, there was only one documentary about acromegaly available online. I watched it over and over again until I had memorized each word of the 45 minutes of footage. I continued to read everything I could find about acromegaly online, including medical journals.

From that moment on, my tendency to fixate on subjects I found interesting, gained momentum as I sought to accumulate as much knowledge as possible on each topic which became the subject of my fixation.



The world's tallest people wasn't the only subject I was obsessed with. After that, I became obsessed with parenting and child psychology books. I had developed intense obsessions with topics brought up in these books, and found myself staying up all night researching conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, hyperlexia and OCD.



After that, I was obsessed with genetics.



I was not a particularly feminine or masculine child. I didn't play with dolls or trucks. I was busy collecting toy cats because I was obsessed with them in addition to acquiring a library of books about a variety of interesting subjects I had explored throughout my life, including books about rare brain tumors. The unconventional subjects that interested me made me more detached from my peers and more connected to adults, especially to my teachers. On the one hand, I didn't understand my peers, and on the other hand, they weren't very interested in the topics which interested me. However, even though I was a very unusual child, I was still quite popular with my classmates.



Age 12



At the age of 12 I received an iPad as a gift. Today this model of the iPad would be considered old-fashioned, but for me it was revolutionary. Finally, I had the world's information at my fingertips, allowing me to nurture my love for research.



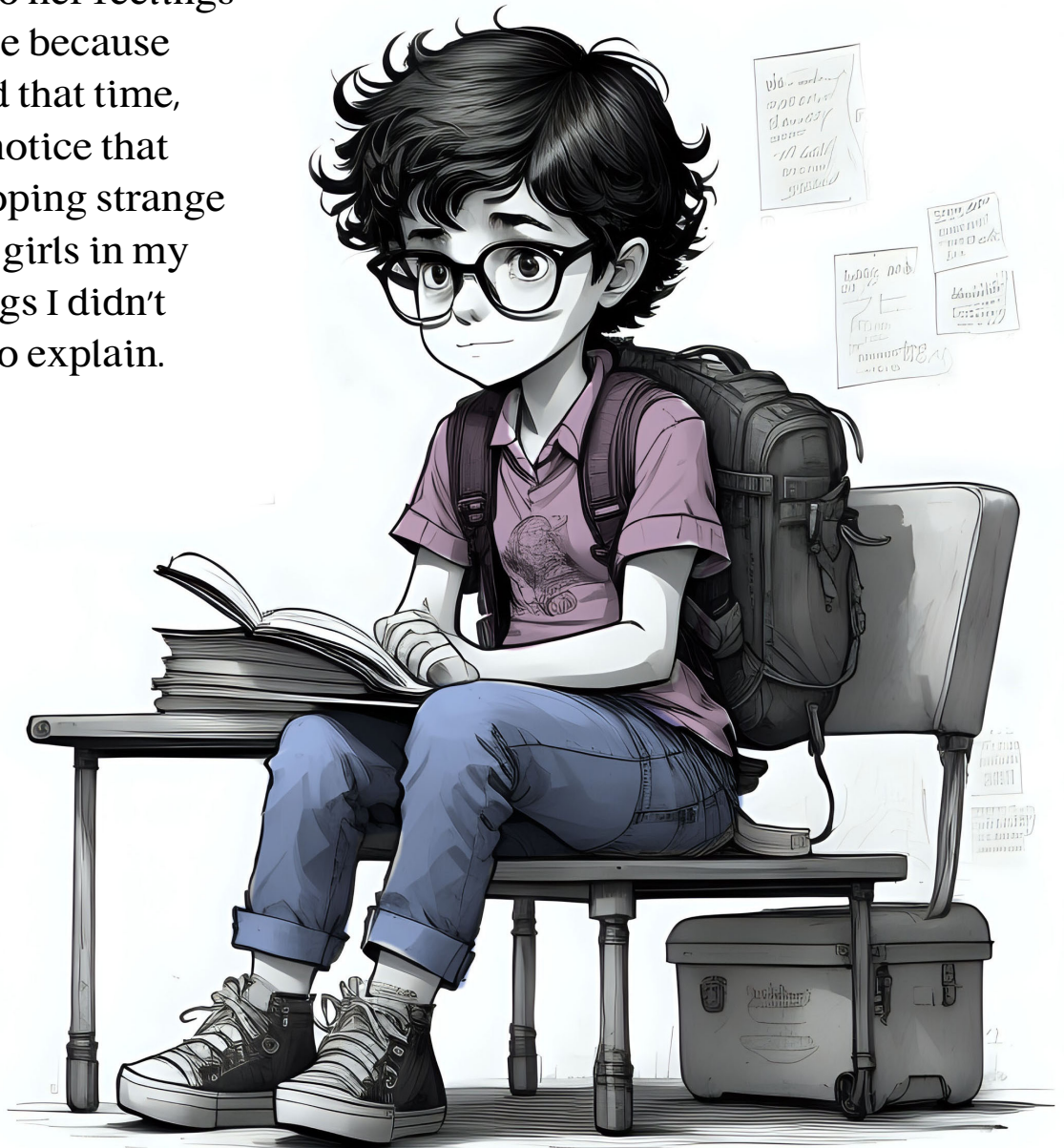
The iPad I got as a gift for my 12th birthday changed everything. Not only was the internet fast enough to load pages instantly, but I finally had the privacy to start researching the questions which plagued my brain at the time.



At that time I became obsessed with homosexuality and the emerging gay rights movement. My parents had gay male friends. But it was clear to me from my mother's reactions to butch lesbians that female masculinity is wrong, ugly and generally undesirable.



I was especially
vulnerable to her feelings
of reluctance because
right around that time,
I started to notice that
I was developing strange
feelings for girls in my
class. Feelings I didn't
know how to explain.



In my intellectually oriented family, we didn't talk much about feelings beyond a basic level, and we certainly didn't talk about "crushes".



I was never particularly interested in watching fictional TV or movies. I could never sit still long enough to watch a complicated plot and track the storyline. I struggled to pick up on the non-verbal cues of the characters.

As I was unable to interpret the characters' facial expressions, body language and shifts in vocal pitch, I struggled to infer and understand the messages which were communicated implicitly or indirectly.

So while my peers probably learned about falling in love from their family or from movies, I had no idea what was happening to me.





On the one hand, I knew that gay people existed, and I was an enthusiastic supporter of them. On the other hand, I didn't know that the feelings I was experiencing for my female classmates could be described as "crushes".

Around the time when I noticed that I was developing these feelings, I began to think about how others perceived me. For some reason, I felt that I wanted others to perceive me as a boy. I had no words to describe this experience, so I went online to search for an answer to my question as I had done many times before. I searched the internet for girls who want to be boys. This is how in 2012, before hardly anyone had heard the term 'transgender', I knew everything there was to know about transgender people.



When I came out to my mother as trans at the age of 12, the conversation really didn't go well... I fought with my mother to get the most masculine clothes and the most masculine haircut she was willing to allow me, but there were great restrictions on my ability to experiment with the style I wanted. Every new haircut and article of clothing always had to be a compromise.



I wanted to wear what my brother wore, and to have a fashionable guy's haircut like his, but I wasn't allowed.

I always had to settle for the most unisex clothes my mom would buy me, and I had to live with the coldness I felt from my mom due to her reluctance around my appearance.





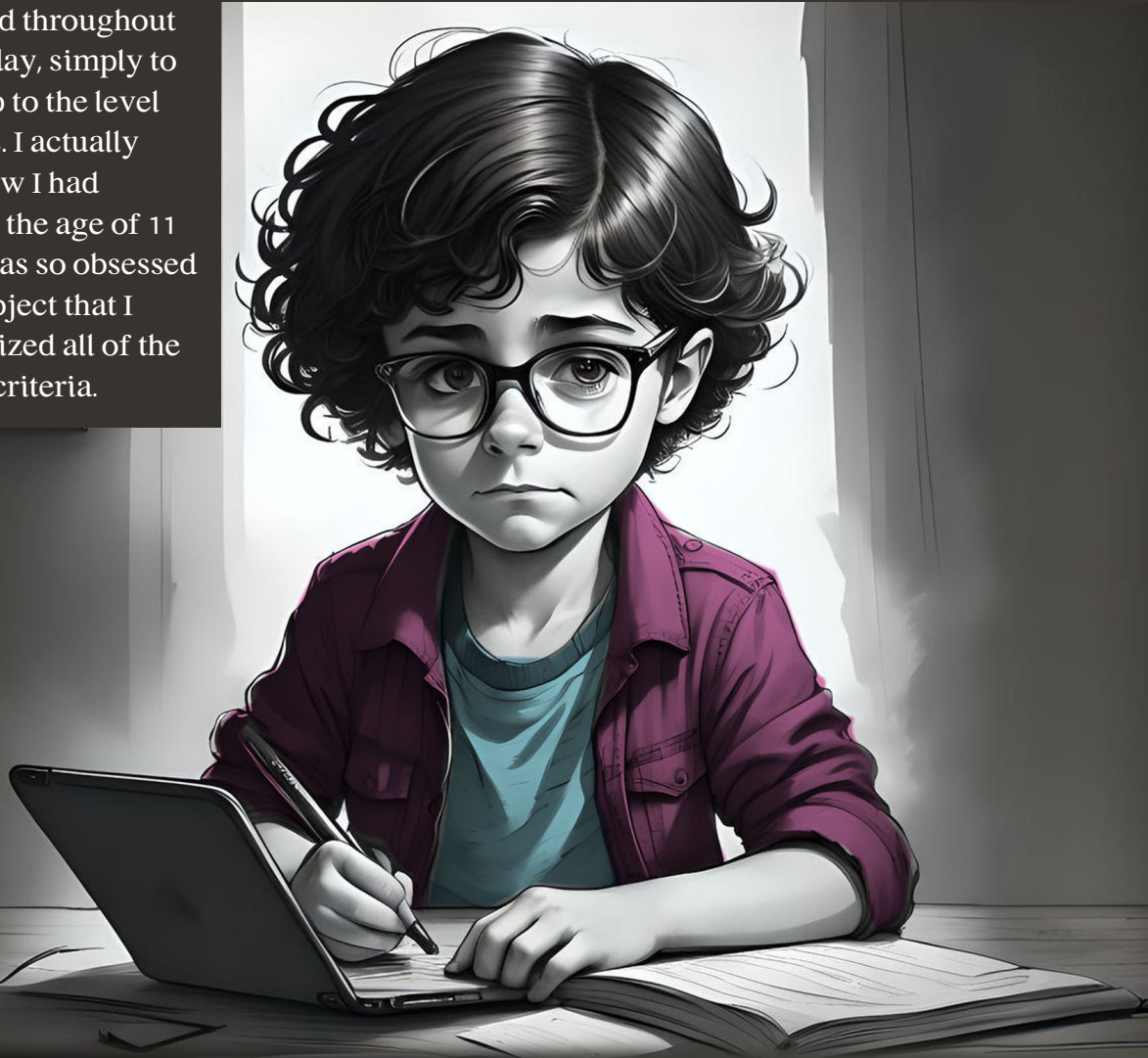
For years I dreamed of transitioning. After my mother's unpleasant reaction to my coming out in 2012, I hid my desire to become a boy, but still fought to adopt a more masculine appearance.

Age 14



At the age of 14 I was diagnosed with ADHD, after years of hard struggles to cope with the material at school. My mother was against seeking labels for my quirky behavior, choosing instead to teach me about social norms herself. Despite my many personality traits which are consistent with an autism spectrum diagnosis, there was no push by anyone to have me tested for autism. However, I struggled academically because I found it impossible to pay attention during the majority of the lessons, as they did not align with my narrow set of interests. By high school, my parents and I found it impossible to continue spending copious amounts of time doing homework. Nearly every night, my mom and I stayed up late studying what I should

have learned throughout the school day, simply to catch me up to the level of my peers. I actually already knew I had ADHD from the age of 11 because I was so obsessed with the subject that I had memorized all of the diagnostic criteria.



Age 15



When I was 15, I decided to join the high school debate team. At that time rhetoric was my obsession. We would always dress in suits for competitions. The boys wore ties and I wanted to too. But not just any tie, I specifically wanted a bow tie. Because no adult would buy them for me, I learned to sew them myself. I started to save small amounts of money here and there so I could buy some better looking bow ties. The bow ties made me feel much more at peace with myself, and as an added benefit, because of them, I got a lot of attention from girls who complimented my style.



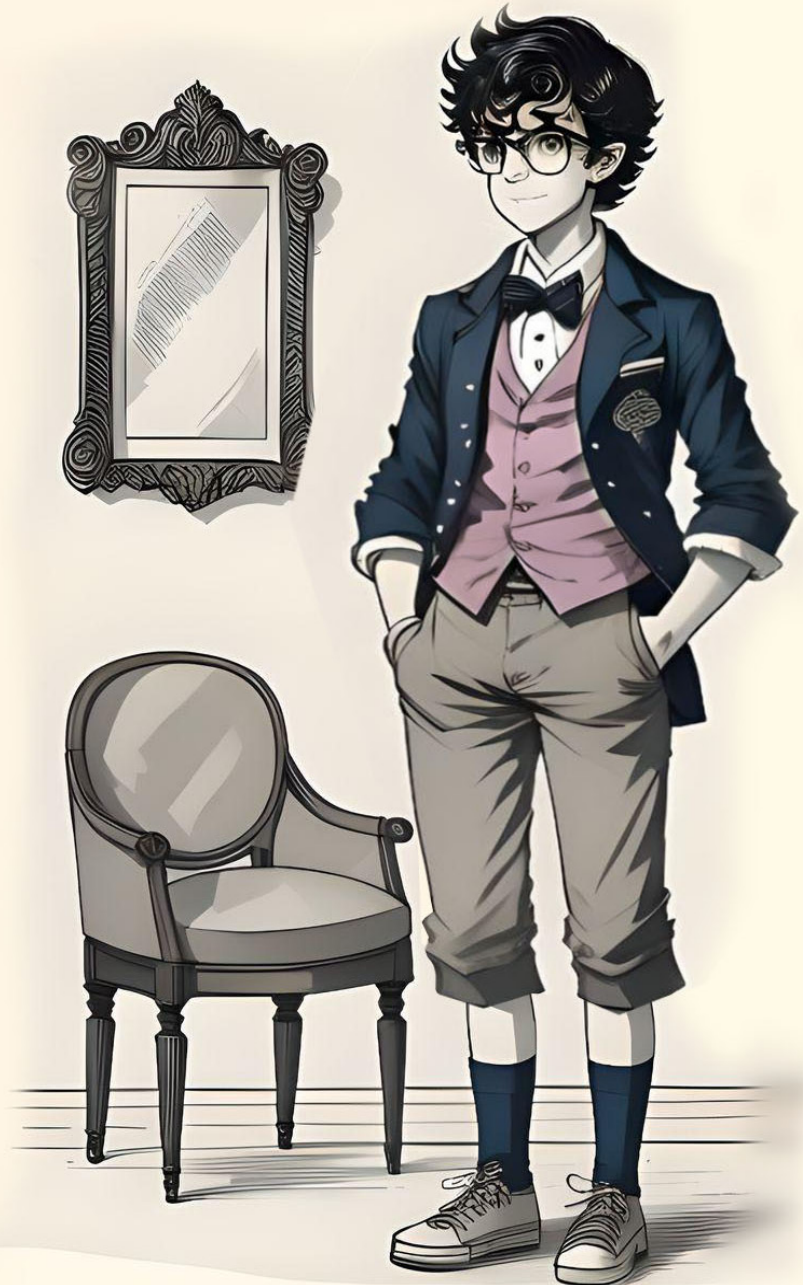
Age 18



At the age of 18, I started studying at university and realized that I had finally arrived at a place where I could turn over a new page and finally live openly as I wanted - as a boy.



My life as a guy lasted
for a few years.
I made my appearance
and my style more
masculine, and
experimented with
wearing the clothes
I always wanted to wear
but was never allowed
to when I was younger.



Age 19



When I was 19 my mother became very suspicious and asked if I was using “he” or “they” pronouns, and if I was on hormones.





We had not discussed the trans issue for several years, but my gender non-conforming appearance raised questions for her.



I admitted to her that I live as a guy at the university, and that I am not on hormones. My mother told me that I must study abroad in a country that is far from the whole environment of gender ideology. I suggested Israel, and she agreed, probably because she did not know that gender ideology had already reached Israel.

The first seed of doubt around my trans identity was planted around that time, at the age of 19, when my girlfriend and I started reading Leslie Feinberg's 'Stone Butch Blues'. Many parts of the story resonated with me due to the similarities in many of the personal experiences I shared with the main character. Reading this book was the first time in my life that I heard stories of people like me who were described under a different label, and not as 'trans'. The main character in the story is Butch (a masculine lesbian) who underwent a medical gender transition decades ago when butches had few other options to maintain romantic partnerships, employment and personal safety. As a result of the main character's transition, she largely lost her connection to the lesbian community.



Upon finishing this book, second thoughts entered my mind upon realizing that despite dating several women, I actually never gave myself the chance to live as a lesbian and be in community with others like me. I started to experience longing for a community which I had never before participated in. These thoughts were simultaneously intriguing and terrifying to consider.



But there was no way for me to enter the lesbian community because in 2018 these communities no longer existed. Gender ideology had already succeeded in destroying many of the spaces which once belonged to lesbians. As I was unable to find any semblance of lesbian community, I pushed these new thoughts and desires to the back of my mind and stayed trans.



Then I came to Israel. In Israel I could live a double life, where most people automatically assumed that I was a guy, albeit one who was several years younger than I actually was. It was so easy for me to pass as a boy without any medical procedures. After several years of passing as a teenage guy, I realized that soon would come a time where people would not be able to take me seriously as a twenty-plus-year-old man when I looked like a teenager. I knew that I would have to go through medical procedures if I wanted to continue living this life and be taken seriously.



At that time, I lived through my first war in Israel. This experience forced me to re-examine my entire perception regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I realized that there were large gaps between what I was taught in the US and what I saw and lived through in Israel.

As I began to search the internet for information which debunked the accepted progressive narrative of the conflict, computer algorithms began exposing me to content which was also critical about gender ideology and the transgender movement.



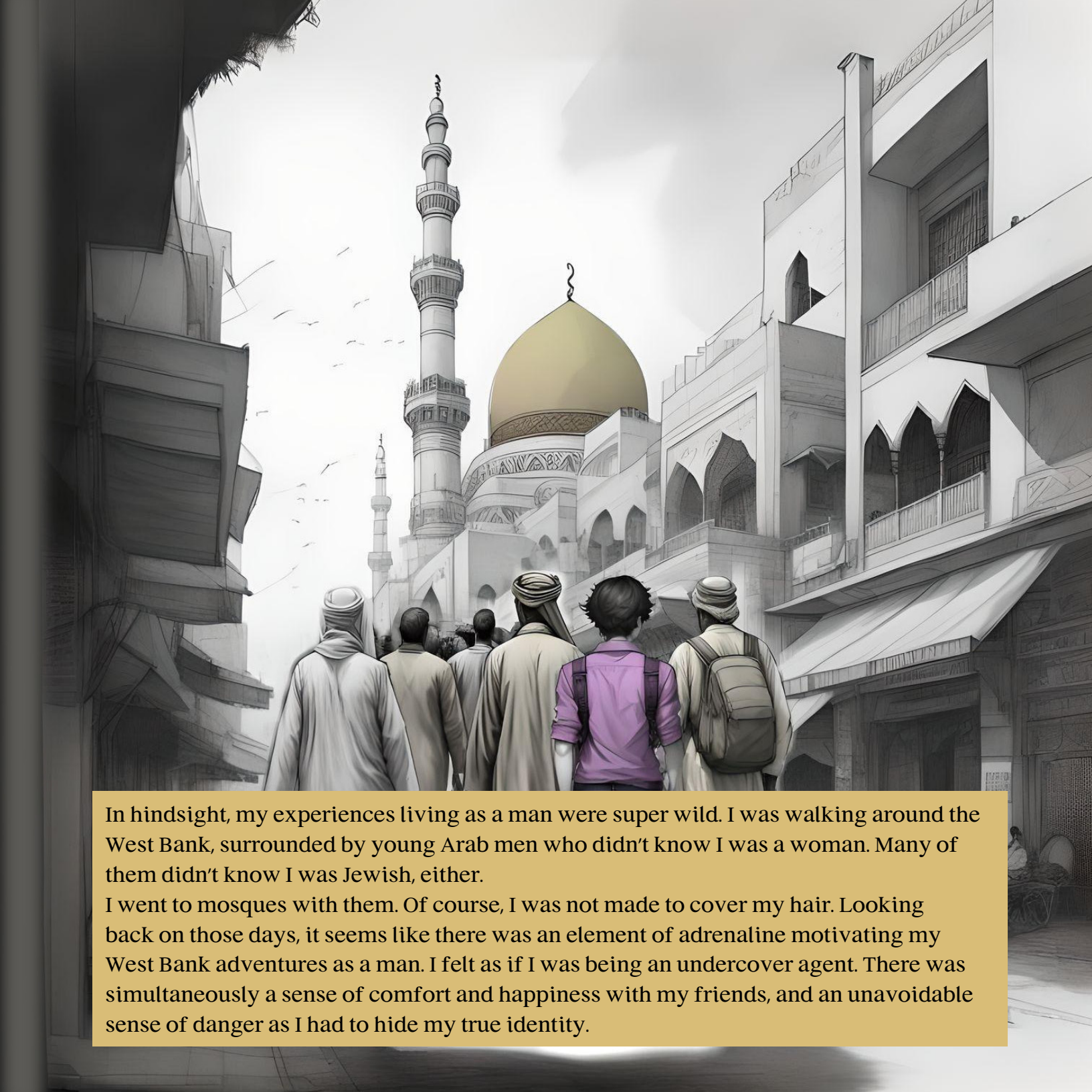
I then started to be slightly involved in the Israeli trans community, thinking that it would be more open to controversial viewpoints.

I went to several events. I noticed that this community was incapable of meeting my needs. Everything I loved about living life as if I were a normal straight guy, was not supported by the trans community- neither in Israel nor in the US. These people felt strange to me, our experiences and desires for transition shared few (if any) commonalities. I wanted to assimilate into society, but these communities with their strange 'neopronouns' and odd hairstyles put me off. I wanted nothing to do with them. At that time, I hung out mostly with Arab guys who thought I was a young man and certainly did not know that I was actually female.



I felt we had a lot in common. We bonded over our mutual love for Arabic folk songs, poetry, and traditional dances. We also loved talking about women.





In hindsight, my experiences living as a man were super wild. I was walking around the West Bank, surrounded by young Arab men who didn't know I was a woman. Many of them didn't know I was Jewish, either.

I went to mosques with them. Of course, I was not made to cover my hair. Looking back on those days, it seems like there was an element of adrenaline motivating my West Bank adventures as a man. I felt as if I was being an undercover agent. There was simultaneously a sense of comfort and happiness with my friends, and an unavoidable sense of danger as I had to hide my true identity.

I didn't want anyone to know I was trans.
I wanted nothing to do with the trans
community, I just wanted to be as normal
of a man as possible.



One day, I went to the Western Wall to pray on the men's side. Upon hearing that I had never experienced the critical rite of passage into Jewish manhood, several religious volunteers even did a bar mitzvah there for me. I had no clue that I had a bar mitzvah until it was over. I went to the men's bathroom and no one stopped me or asked questions. The whole time everyone accepted me as 'one of the guys'.



But I was always scared to death of someone finding out the truth. I had already built an entire social life for myself in which I was a popular person with many friends and acquaintances, outside the trans community.



It was only after meeting detransitioners in real life that I decided to stop being trans.



I met a butch lesbian who is a detransitioner and I felt a strong connection between my situation and hers.



Age 23-24



Even today, very few people know that I am trying to rediscover myself as a butch lesbian, and end my twelve year long love affair with the trans identity and the fictional promises that it had bestowed upon me.





I thought that before I take any medical action, I should at least give myself a chance to live as a butch lesbian and see if I can learn to accept myself as such.

My decision to stop being trans was a decision to give up the path I had planned for myself for 12 years, which is half of my life. My decision was also based on all the research I did on the Internet, that these treatments are not evidence-based and do not have the approval of the FDA.



I knew that because I am under 25 years old and because I have ADHD which further delays full brain development and cognitive maturity, I cannot trust myself to make permanent decisions with lifelong consequences.

The fact that I wanted to transition for so many years is not evidence that transitioning is the 'right' choice. By choosing not to take hormones and undergo experimental surgeries, I am knowingly investing in my future.



Although, the truth is that I don't yet see the benefits of my choice to stop investing my future in medically transitioning, either. Weirdly enough, I miss life as a man. I miss the sense of normalcy of being able to be masculine, and having the world interact with me accordingly.



I don't know what to expect from the world now.
How am I supposed to relate to men when just recently I was
'one of the guys'? And now I have to learn how to relate to
women without hiding the fact that I am female.



I think that the trans identity allowed me to rationalize and understand my sexual orientation. It also allowed me to more easily play the role I wanted to play in relationships with women. I liked taking on the traditional roles of men in my relationships with women- opening doors, buying flowers, giving up my seat on the bus and other acts of chivalry which Western societies seem to have largely abandoned.

But on the other hand, my trans identity also came as a result of a lot of pain, of feeling that being very masculine and having a female body are so incongruous that it is disgusting.



Now I have to deal with these feelings, and resolve everything related to deep relationships that felt amazing to me, but that were all based on a lie.

I'm still not sure how it will look, but it creates a very deep feeling of loneliness for me.



Throughout the years, the two aspects of my original dreams from younger ages have remained unchanged. The first is my desire to help vulnerable people. The second is the desire to find a woman who will ask me to help her zip up her dress, who will straighten my bow tie, and walk by my side. It took me a while to realize, but in the end I understood: none of these core dreams require any medical interventions.



Final thoughts by Lia - part I - to people like me.

With the passage of time, experience, and exposure to different narratives, I have come to understand my gender nonconformity outside of a transgender identity. I now believe that the root of my gender nonconformity stems from neurodivergence and homosexuality. It is well known that many adult homosexuals were gender nonconforming children. However, fewer people know that children who have specific traits consistent with autism tend to be naturally gender nonconforming themselves. Someone who has problems understanding social norms and expectations is less likely to be influenced into normative behavior, simply because they are unable to perceive it or uninterested in it.

In my case, I never truly wished to fit in with girls. The thought never crossed my mind. If I was bullied for my nonconformity, I was certainly too socially clueless to notice. **My nonconformity didn't cause me any distress until adults in my life explicitly told me that my behavior was socially unacceptable.** When I started developing crushes on my female classmates, I had no understanding of how to impress them.

I couldn't ask my parents. Therefore, I copied the behavior of the boys in my class, thinking they had some secret information or a strategy to win over a girl. None of this behavior was conscious.

I realized that being around cute girls made me nervous. Hanging around boys and pranking the teacher when she wasn't looking seemed like a good way to make girls laugh.

I related much better to the boys in my class because, at age 12, we had the same goals. We wanted to be popular and we really wanted to impress girls.

I was looking for a framework to understand my masculine tendencies and attraction to women.

A trans identity provided an answer. It gave me a clear plan for growing up to be a normal straight man instead of a masculine lesbian.



Final thoughts by Lia part II - to parents

People who are immersed in the gender world are familiar with the term “ROGD” (rapid onset gender dysphoria). Just as confused and distressed kids are looking for a framework to understand their experiences and desires, so are parents. Many parents, upon learning about the phenomenon of rapid onset gender dysphoria, want to rationalize their child’s experience in this way. They want to be able to make use of advice from parents who have helped their children desist from a trans identity. Parents need to know that, although ROGD is absolutely a relevant and helpful framework, not every trans identified teenager is ROGD.

In any case, parents should be curious about the underlying reasons for their child’s trans identity. They should ask thoughtful questions, without judgement, so as to understand what the trans identity means for their child.

If you suspect that your dysphoric child is questioning their sexuality, don’t defer to gay youth organizations, as they are ideologically captured by gender ideology.

Rather, strive to include people from all backgrounds in your family life. Introduce your child to older gays and lesbians, so they can envision a future for themselves outside of a trans identity.



Lia started to feel strange emotions toward her female classmates when she was 12. After looking online, the answer to her questions was clear—she was definitely transgender.

What else could she have been, considering her gender nonconformity?

She moved to Israel and lived as a boy for several years. Most people did not even know that she was actually female.

After living half her life dreaming of being male, was it possible that another word could describe her experience?

This graphic novel is based on Lia's true life story.