

A Study in Pink and Blue

1

Sunday,
February 23, 1997,
8:04 PM.

“It’s a girl!”

2

My best friend is a boy.

3

Did you know Blue from Blue’s Clues is a girl?

4

Matchbox cars and Barbie dolls,
Dressing up and rolling in mud.

5

NO, I will not wear a dress to the birthday party.

6

Daddy’s little soccer star.
Or
Mommy’s tiny gymnast.

7

Basketball shorts, t-shirt, and a ponytail.
Daily.
No skirts. No dresses. NO flowers.

8

I don’t have many friends.
I do not understand the girls.
The boys think I have cooties.
I can’t be friends with boys.

9

The girls do not like me.
The boys do not know how to talk to me.

During silent reading one day, I fart loudly.
No one laughs.
It isn't ladylike.

10

I meet my first transgender person.
She is tall and kind, but my parents say "she" used to be "he".
I don't really understand. How can someone just change who they are like that?

The girls in my class start to wear skirts and makeup.

No skirts. NO makeup.

Is it wrong to want to just be me?

11

I meet my first boyfriend at summer camp.
He likes me despite my basketball shorts and ponytail,
Despite my lack of makeup and
Being outcasted by the popular girls for not being like them.
(Read: NO skirts. NO dresses. NO makeup.)

When I get back to school on the first day of 6th grade, everything changes.
The girls wear skirts. And makeup. And talk about boys.

Boys are cool but...
Had they ever considered being more like one?

No.
That's wrong.
Can't think like that.

Okay skirts. Okay dresses. Okay makeup.
No ponytails.

12

All the other girls were doing it, so I had to too.
Sports equals bad, mascara equals good.

Get it through your head.

Girls DO NOT like gym class.
Girls DO NOT like being loud.
Girls DO NOT fart.

Girls DO NOT act like boys.

13

I hate myself and everything I am.

I don't know how else to be.

14

When I act like all the other girls, boys pay attention to me.

It must be the right thing to do,
The right way to act.

I am lost. I cannot find myself.

15

Real girls wear push-up bras, yoga pants, and Ugg boots, with as many layers of makeup as possible.

Real girls don't go to school without their face on.
(What does that even mean?)

Real girls wear skirts. Real girls wear dresses. Real girls wear makeup.

Real girls don't lay in bed wondering what it'd be like to have a dick.

16

I wish I were a boy.

No drama. No makeup. No dresses.

Can't tell anyone about these thoughts.

Wrong.
Impure.

Suppress it.

Yes skirts. Yes dresses. Yes makeup.

17

I don't know who I am anymore.

18

I don't want to be a boy anymore.

I think.

I don't know how else to act anymore. Being feminine is all I know now.

YES skirts. YES dresses. YES makeup.

NO ponytails.

18

I join a gender-inclusive sport.

18

I meet my first nonbinary person.

I don't understand this.

How can someone just "not have" a gender?

Dresses? Basketball shorts? Makeup?

18

My new best friend comes out to me as genderfluid.

They say they are sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl.

And that's okay.

18

Over dinner, I tell my family about my best friend.

My family thinks genderfluidity is funny.

I do not.

I am a little less hungry.

18

I'm panicking.

Okay Google— Am I genderfluid?

Google gives me quizzes.

So you think you might be genderfluid?

What gender are you?

What is your gender identity?

Sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl.

That really sounds like me.

Maybe I am a boy.

Maybe I can still be a girl.

My family thinks being genderfluid is funny.

I do not tell them what I am feeling.

18

I call my best friend.

We meet in my dorm parking lot.

“What does it feel like?” I ask them.

It’s different for everybody, they say.

“I think I might be genderfluid,” I tell them.

Okay, they say.

Do you want me to call you by different pronouns?

“Only between us.”

And I blush.

19

I ask my close friends to refer to me as they and them, instead of she and her.

19

I buy my first chest binder.

I almost cry because it makes me so happy

To see myself with a flat chest.

No tits. No skirts. No makeup.

19

My brother visits me at school.

He knows about my best friend. He does not know about me.

With my housemates, I joke about my identity.

My brother hears.

My brother does not know it is a secret.

19

My brother casually mentions my gender identity over dinner.

I am not there.

My sister tells me over a text.

I spend the night sobbing into my best friend's arms.

19

I have lunch with my parents.

I say we should probably talk.

I am shaking.

They ask questions.

They do not understand.

That's okay.

They take it well.

I should have known.

I am still scared.

My mother tells me that I should not
Go around telling people about my identity.
She says people will treat me differently.

19

I come out publicly on a Facebook post.

It takes me six hours to write it.

My ex-boyfriend from high school writes a similar post mocking me.
He compares my identity to an attack helicopter.

For the first time I experience transphobia that directly targets me.

I want to retaliate.

I don't.

19

I go to lunch at my grandparents' apartment in New York City.

My aunt and uncle are visiting from Georgia.

My uncle tells me that genderfluidity isn't real.
But even if it was, he says, you wouldn't be it because I've
Never. Seen. It. In. You.

I don't tell him he's an asshole.

My parents, aunt, and grandmother collectively tell him he's an asshole.
And also explain why he is incorrect.
Which is nice.

Today I am less afraid of what my parents think of me.

19

My boyfriend buys me men's clothes, so I can
Feel more comfortable being myself.

This time I do cry.

For the first time I see myself as
Who I always wanted to be.

20

I consider going on T.

20

I do not go on T.

The idea of change being permanent scares me.

I wish I were brave.

21

I change my Tinder profile to say “genderfluid.”
Most people ignore it.

21

Most of the team is new people.
All of them have been told I am genderfluid.

They take me out of the game because we are violating the gender rule.
We are not.

I realize they counted me as a girl.

I am not a girl, I yell.

I am not calm.

I am allowed to not be.

21

Every time I meet someone new, I am forced to come out again.
Every time I meet someone new, I am forced to wonder if they will react poorly.

After being told what pronouns I use, most people do not even try.
I am forced to accept this.

21

Every day I wake up and decide if I am going to dress the way I want to,
Or the way I am “supposed to.”

I say,

Sometimes skirts. Sometimes basketball shorts. Sometimes makeup.
Sometimes sweatpants. Sometimes button-downs. Sometimes dresses.

21

I will not apologize for who I am.

I will not hide from who I am.

And that's okay.