Pain in my heart   - Joshua G

In search of gender euphoria

I never particularly thought or cared about gender.

As a toddler, I had guy friends.

In elementary school, girl friends.

I had a lot of age-appropriate sex-ed too.

When puberty hit, I knew what to expect.

I was told these changes were worth celebrating.

But I hated it.

My breasts were pins and needles.

My menses brought me to the hospital over and over.

But these were not things I associated with "female".

I associated it with puberty. As I'd been told to.

It was my peers changing that made me aware of gender.

Because suddenly I was... "not like the other girls".

I was told it was something worth celebrating.

But I hated it.

I felt like an alien. Uninterested and distanced.

Suddenly everything I loved was assigned to a rigid binary.

 I was encouraged to just be an "atypical girl".

It taught me to dislike girls for their feminity.

Boy, was I in for a ride, when I discovered I was bi.

Around 13 I bought my first "boy's clothes".

I saw a boy in the mirror and felt a strange... shame.

But I loved it.

When I was around 14, I realised I was not cis.

Media taught me that trans people exist.

Suddenly I realised my experience had vocabulary.
 It taught me a lot about binding and danger.
For months, I kept it all a shameful secret.
Feeling an illicit joy from looking in the mirror,
I was learning I could never share this.
And I hated it.

So... I told my best friend, who was... underprepared.
Her shaming made me doubt: Could I be trans?
If I was, could I keep living? Could I handle it?
So... I told a crush. Who got up and left.
That was enough to scare me back in the closet.
I could not be trans, not because I wasn't,
I was not allowed to be out safely.
I hated it.
I grew my hair out and sang soprano.
I hated myself for who I was and tried to forget.
Maybe I could just live "not trans" and be happy.
Around 16 I learned about genderqueerness online.
It was a compromise to me.
To be trans, but incognito.
I drew myself genderless and wore pants under skirts.
I had words that were not quite right to my experience
But I loved it.

I had trans friends who were all closeted.
They suffered bullying for being gender non-conforming.
I knew instinctively that if I told anyone... that was it.
I could be trans, if I just never "acted" on it.

I gave up on living trans,

And just focused on school.

Deeply depressed, self hating. Tired.

I knew, maybe I could figure it out later in life,

But I hated it.

After graduation, I went abroad and was shocked.

I found friends who celebrated gender diversity.

My hair cut short, I bought a binder.

I was out.

But when I came back home I was forced back in.

I reacted by covering myself in femininity.

Local LGBT+ spaces were not welcoming parts of me.

I knew I could be trans and religious on my own too.

But I hated it.

Two long years later, health scares and pain,

I accepted defeat. I could not be a "normal" woman.

During an internship I decided, I wanted to be happy.

I started lifting. I found a synagogue. I cut my hair.

I knew I was not comfortable living as "she" or "they".

I accepted I would be happy as "he".

It was scary to come out outside from friends,

But I loved it.

Over the next two years I came out to my family.

There are still parts of my life that I am closeted in.

It is still unsafe and excrutiating to calculate.

I have been called a disgrace to feminism.

My memories have been claimed to be false.

Gaslighting, threats, mocking and cut contacts,

Being out can be dangerous. Media was not lying.
But I love it.

I have ingrained a lot of transantagonism myself.
And my country refuses informed consent or self-ID.
In the midst of grief for simpler "what might have been"
The agony in my heart is gone.
I will always battle dysphoria.
My safe havens are not always safe.
My path was slow and maybe not "the norm".
But I love it.