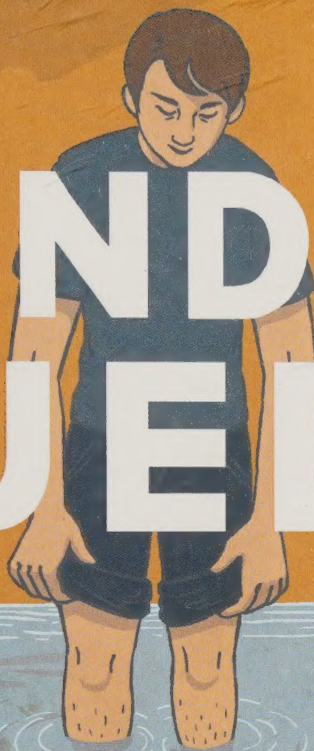


# GENDER QUEER

A MEMOIR

MAIA KOBABE



Novel



# **GENDER QUEER**

**A MEMOIR BY**

**MAIA KOBABE**

**COLORS BY PHOEBE KOBABE**



**LION  
FORGE**

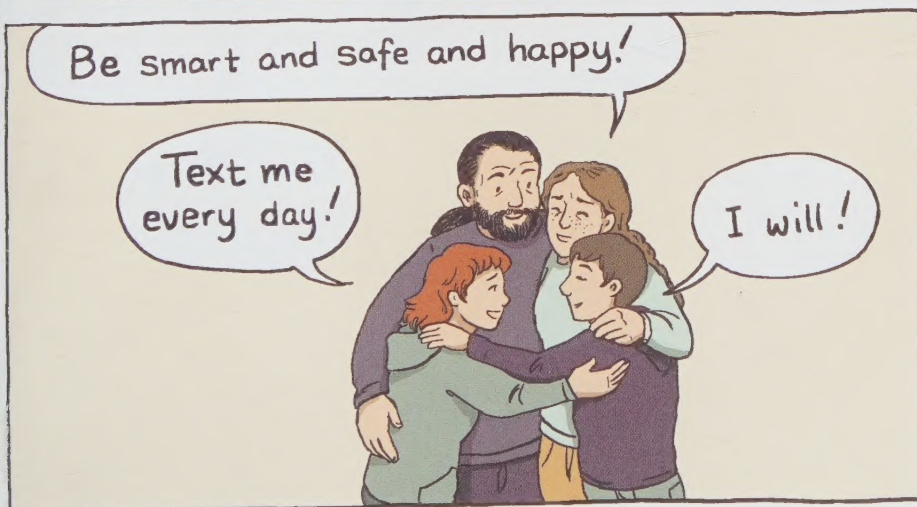
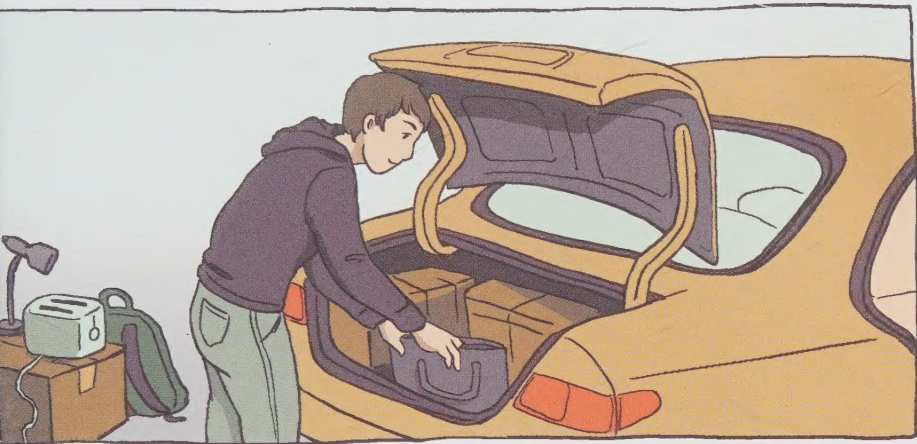
COLORS BY PHOEBE KOBABE  
SENSITIVITY READ BY MELANIE GILLMAN  
EDITOR: ANDREA COLVIN  
ASSISTANT EDITOR: GRACE BORNHOFT

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IN 2013, WHEN I WAS 24

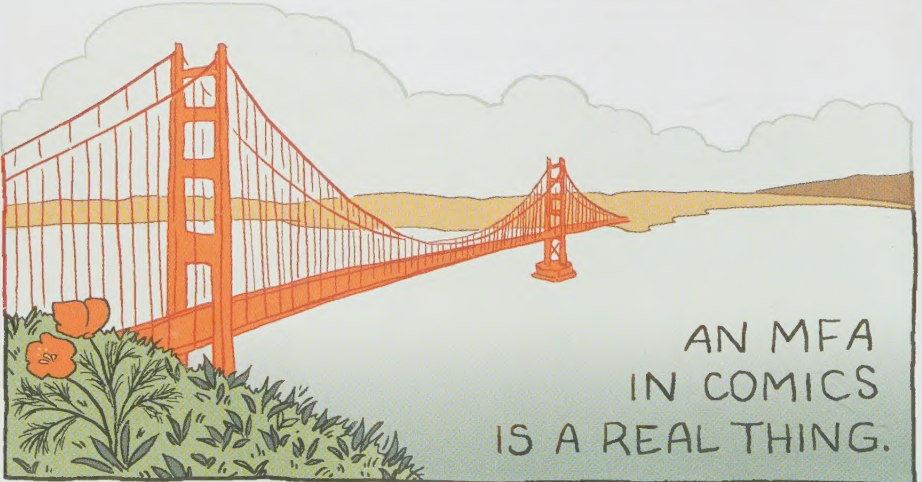


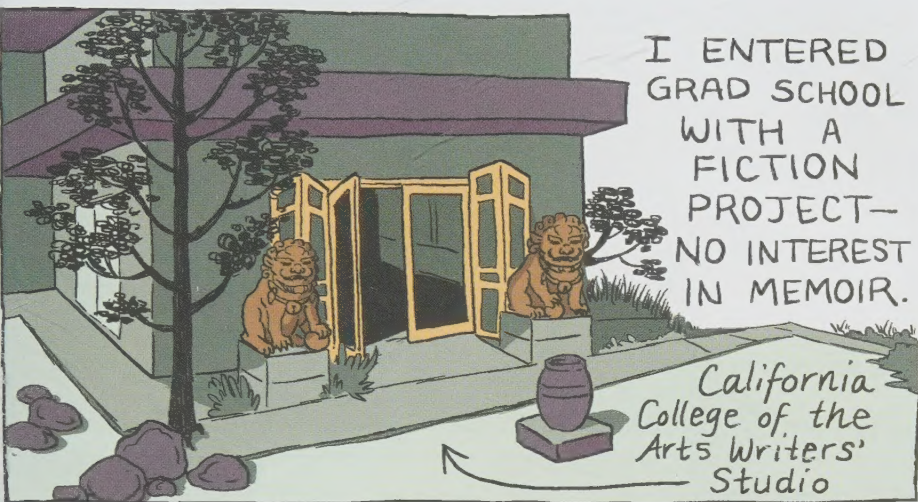
I HEADED TO SAN FRANCISCO  
TO BEGIN MY MASTER'S  
DEGREE IN COMICS.

I'D SPENT  
THE LAST SEVERAL  
MONTHS ASSURING  
PEOPLE THAT, YES,



AN MFA  
IN COMICS  
IS A REAL THING.





I ENTERED  
GRAD SCHOOL  
WITH A  
FICTION  
PROJECT—  
NO INTEREST  
IN MEMOIR.

California  
College of the  
Arts Writers'  
Studio



HOWEVER, ONE  
OF MY FIRST  
CLASSES  
WAS AUTO-  
BIOGRAPHY  
TAUGHT  
BY  
MARI  
NAOMI.

A good way to  
get started is by  
listing your biggest  
secrets—at least one  
of them should  
suggest a story!

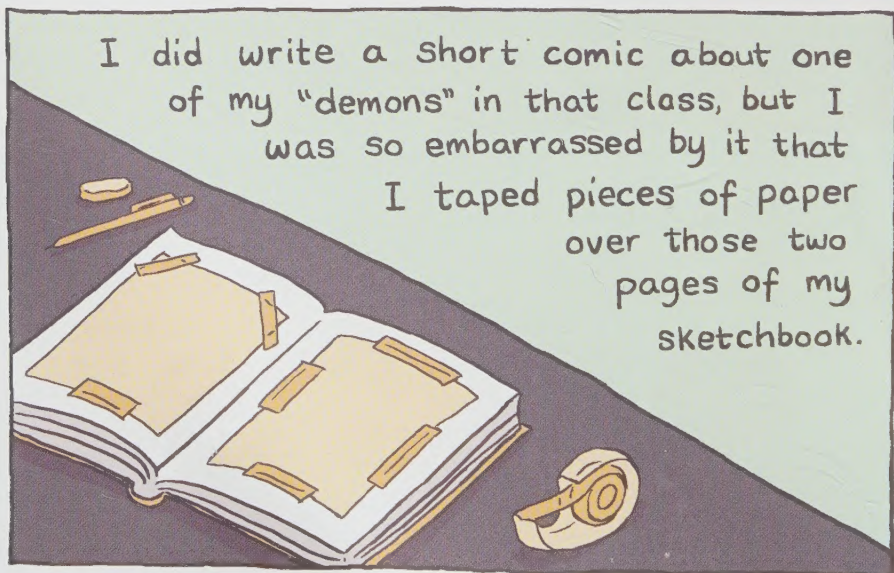
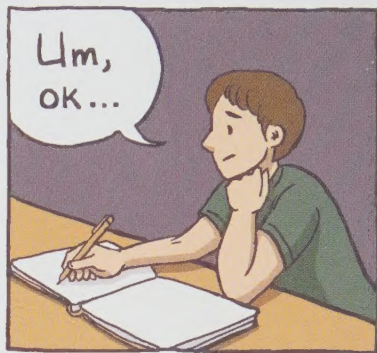
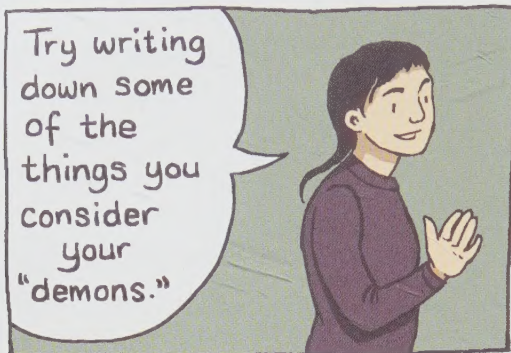


NOPE

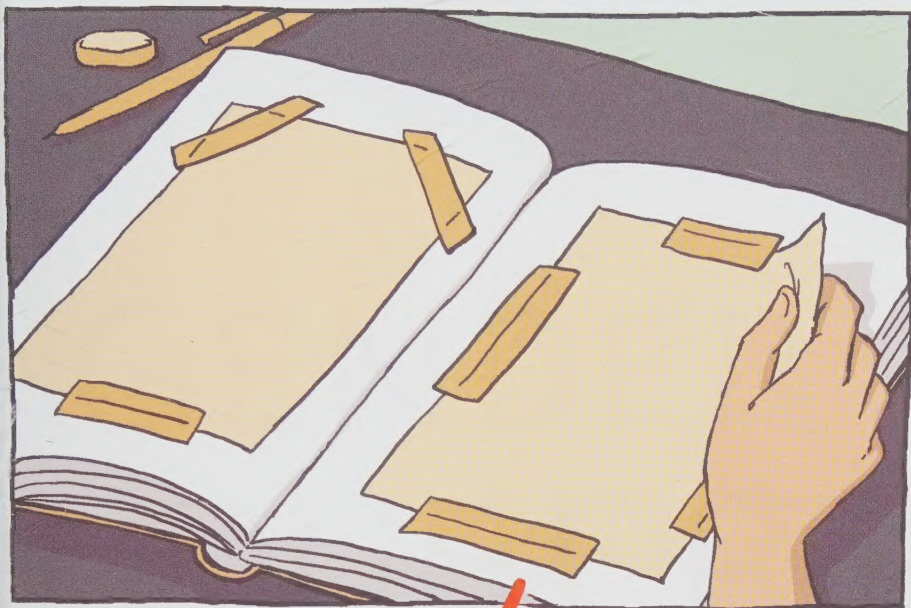



No one  
gets my  
secrets.  
They are  
MINE!

# I STRUGGLED IN THIS CLASS.









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GENDER  
QUEER

*a memoir*

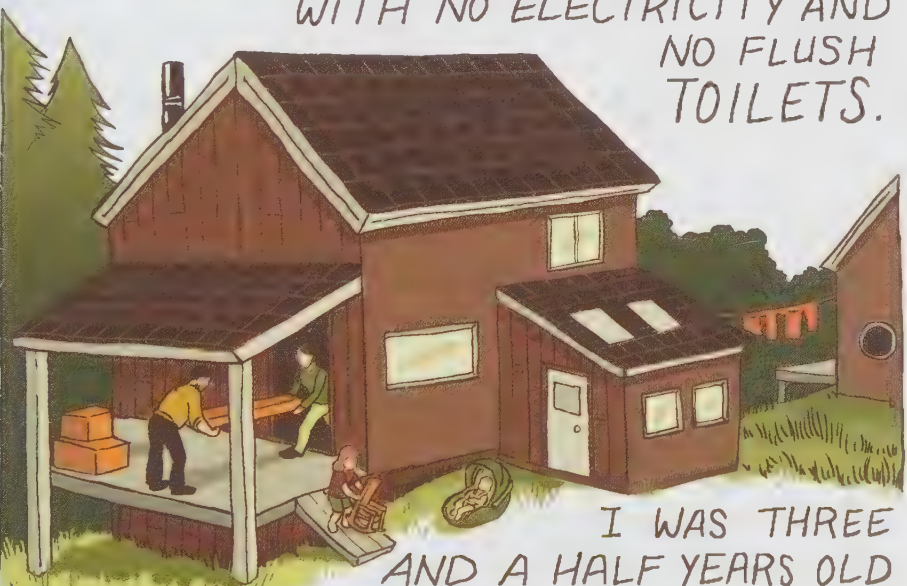
BY MAIA KOBABE





IN OCTOBER  
1992, MY FAMILY

MOVED INTO ONE OF TWO HOUSES ON A 120-  
ACRE PROPERTY IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA  
WITH NO ELECTRICITY AND  
NO FLUSH  
TOILETS.



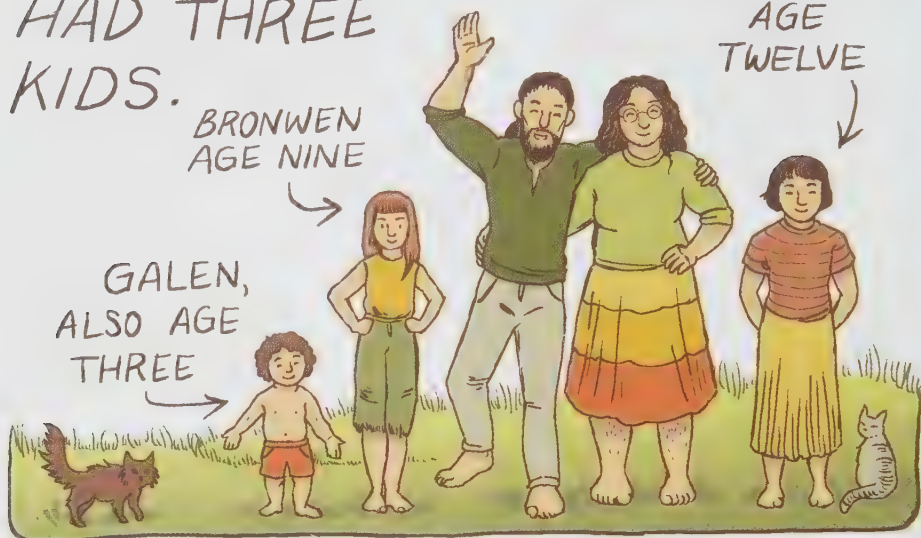
I WAS THREE  
AND A HALF YEARS OLD  
AND MY SISTER WAS ONE.

OUR NEIGHBORS  
HAD THREE  
KIDS.

REBECCA,  
AGE  
TWELVE

BRONWEN  
AGE NINE

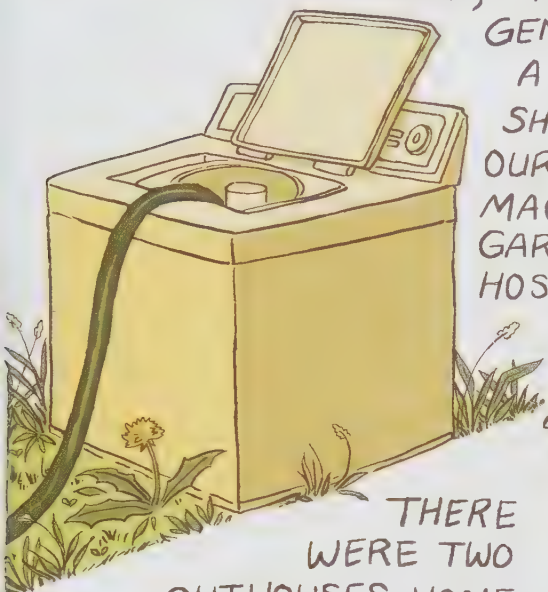
GALEN,  
ALSO AGE  
THREE



PERHAPS MY EARLIEST GENDER-  
RELATED MEMORY...



THE PROPERTY WAS POWERED BY A MIX OF SOLAR, HYDROELECTRIC, AND GENERATORS. WE HAD A BATHTUB BUT NO SHOWER. WE FILLED OUR OUTDOOR WASHING MACHINE WITH THE GARDEN HOSE.

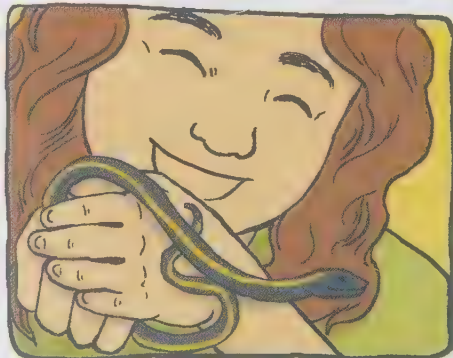
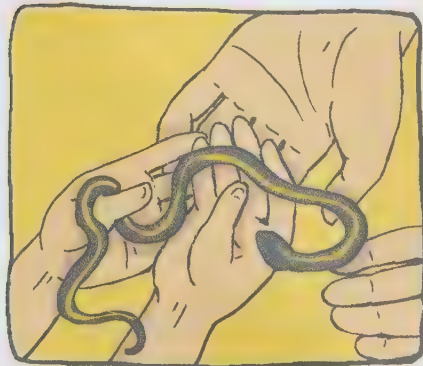


THERE WERE TWO OUTHOUSES, HOME TO MANY SPIDERS.



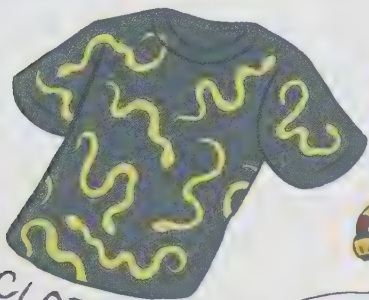
GALEN AND I OFTEN JUST peed IN THE YARD.

ONE DAY WHEN I WAS WALKING WITH GALEN'S MOM...





FOR MANY BIRTHDAYS AFTER I REQUESTED SNAKE-THEMED GIFTS:



CLOTHES



TOYS

BAG O' SNAKES

MY PARENTS MADE SURE



BOOKS

SAFE TO BEFRIEND AND WHICH WERE NOT.

I COULD IDENTIFY WHICH



WHEN I WAS SIX, WE RENTED A NEW HOUSE AT THE END OF A MILE-LONG DRIVEWAY, SURROUNDED BY COW PASTURES.



ONE TIME I  
CAUGHT A BIG  
GOPHER  
SNAKE,  
MORE THAN  
3 FEET  
LONG.



HOLDING IT  
CAREFULLY,  
I RAN  
TO SHOW  
MY  
SISTER



SUDDENLY  
I SAW  
A  
SECOND  
ONE!



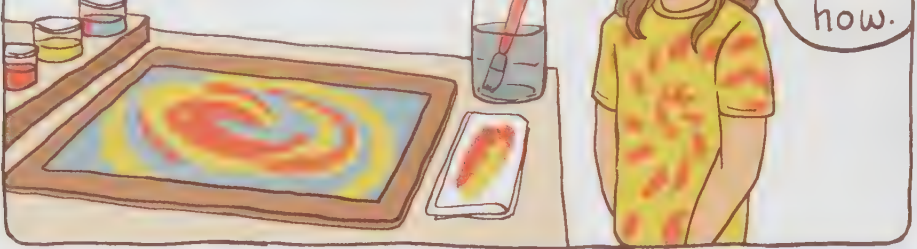
ALAS, HAVING  
ONLY TWO HANDS  
TO CATCH  
SNAKES!

NEITHER GALEN NOR I ATTENDED A PRESCHOOL OR A KINDERGARTEN. THE FIRST DAY OF FIRST GRADE WAS OUR FIRST TIME MIXING WITH OTHER KIDS OUR AGE.



THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS I DIDN'T KNOW.

My classmates knew how to paint with watercolors on wet paper,



I don't know how.

how to knit,



I don't know how.

a select few could even read.



I don't know how!

MY TEACHERS WERE VERY PATIENT.

# AT MY WALDORF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



IT WASN'T UNUSUAL  
FOR BOYS TO  
HAVE LONG  
HAIR

IN MY CLASS OF  
18 STUDENTS  
FOUR BOYS HAD  
HAIR THAT  
BRUSHED THEIR  
SHOULDERS.



# I REMEMBER A FIELD TRIP I TOOK WITH MY CLASS IN THIRD GRADE

We were visiting a farm next to a river. It was a hot afternoon and our teacher said we could take off our shoes and socks to wade.

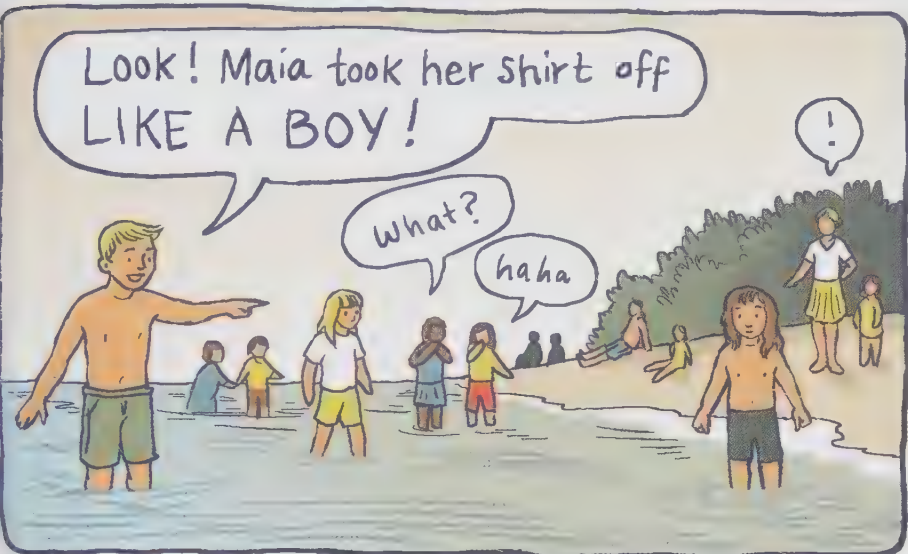


My dad was one of the trip chaperones, and he took off his shirt to sit in the sun.

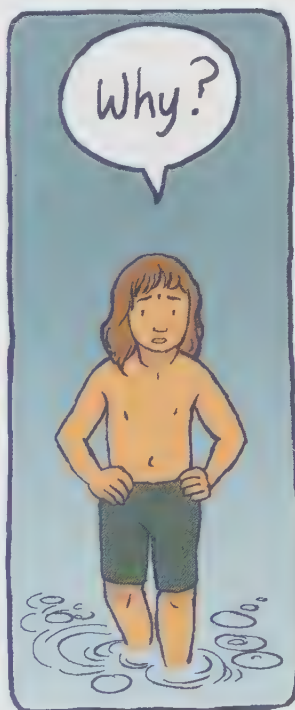
I took my shirt off too, and walked in the shallows just wearing my shorts.



SOME OF MY CLASSMATES NOTICED.



MY TEACHER INTERVENED.



I walked back to put my shirt on again. But I didn't feel that I had done anything wrong.



It was everyone else being silly,  
**NOT ME.**



# NEITHER OF MY PARENTS WERE INTERESTED IN ENFORCING GENDER ROLES

Weaver, sewer,  
knitter, broom-maker,  
preschool & handwork  
teacher

Has never, to my  
knowledge, worn  
makeup

Very  
athletic,  
loves hiking,  
swimming,  
used to run  
& row

Gardener  
with a  
green  
thumb

Vegetarian

Degree  
in botany

Loves camping



MY MOM

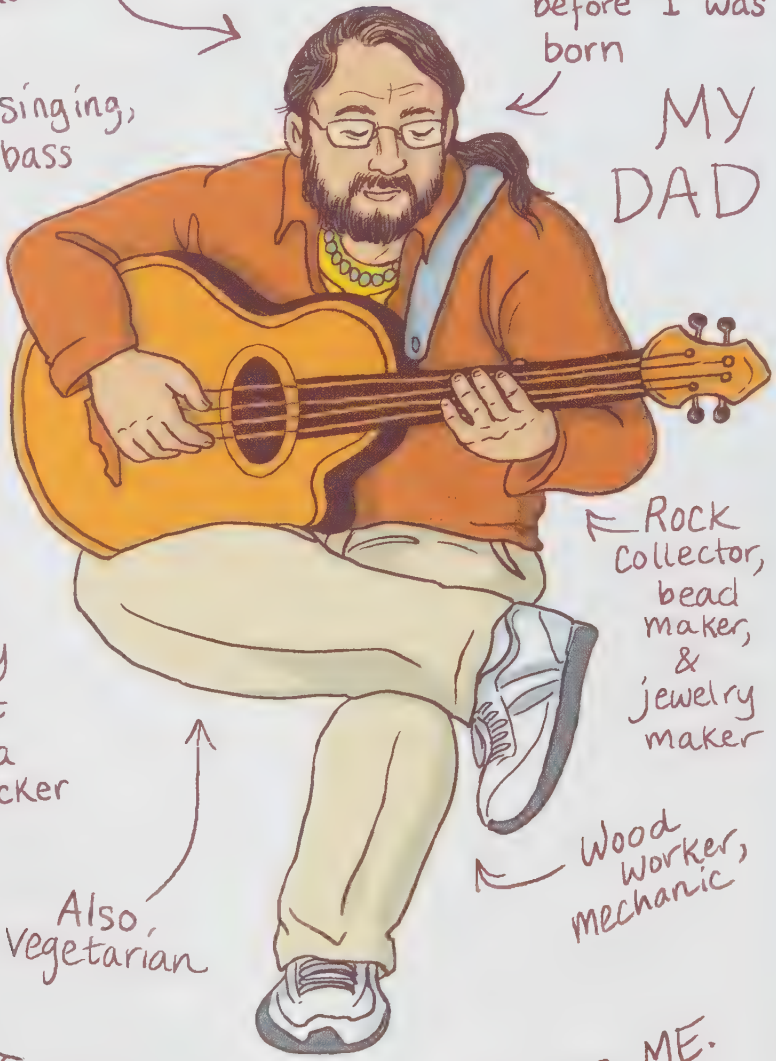
Waldorf elementary school teacher

Degree in physics

Has had long hair since before I was born

Loves singing, plays bass & flute

MY DAD



Was a Boy Scout and a backpacker

Rock collector, bead maker, & jewelry maker

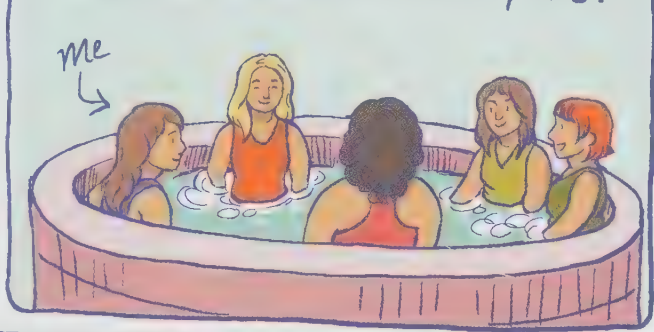
Also, vegetarian

Wood worker, mechanic

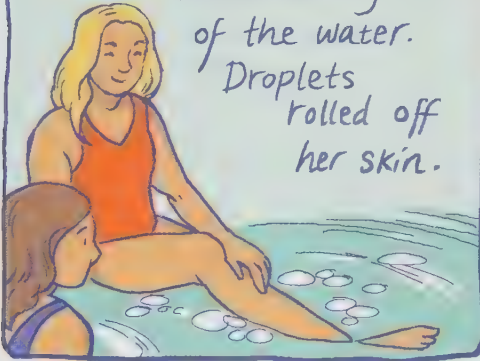
EITHER ON THEMSELVES OR ME.

IN  
FIFTH  
GRADE I  
WENT TO A  
BIRTHDAY  
PARTY AT  
A HOUSE  
WITH A  
HOT TUB

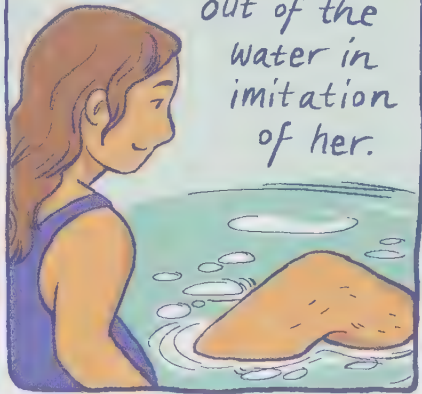
This was the last year  
during which I would voluntarily  
wear a swimsuit around peers.



The most feminine and most  
confidant girl at the party  
raised her leg out  
of the water.  
Droplets  
rolled off  
her skin.



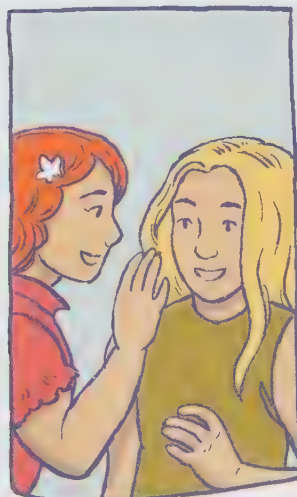
I raised my leg  
out of the  
water in  
imitation  
of her.



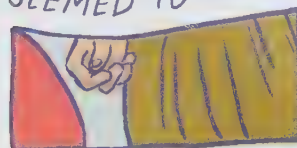
INSTEAD OF ROLLING SMOOTHLY  
AWAY THE WATER BEADED IN  
MY GROWING LEG HAIR.



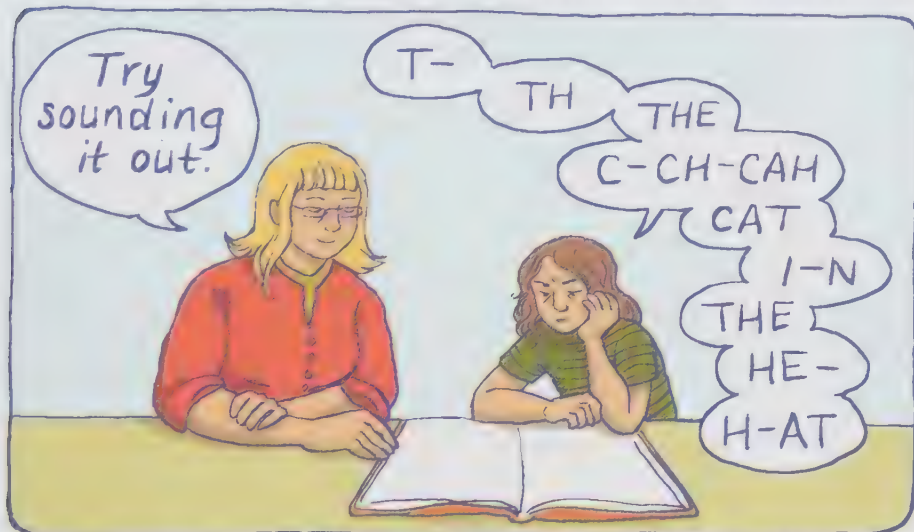
I WAS GRUMPY AND EMBARRASSED TO ENCOUNTER YET ANOTHER THING I WAS APPARENTLY SUPPOSED TO KNOW BUT DIDN'T.



EVERYONE AROUND ME — BUT ESPECIALLY GIRLS — SEEMED TO HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION I LACKED.



This was both emotionally and literally true. AT 11 YEARS OLD I HAD NOT YET LEARNED TO READ.



I STARTED AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING BUT MY PROGRESS WAS FRUSTRATINGLY SLOW. I HAD TWO CONSOLATIONS:



FINALLY, IN THE SUMMER BETWEEN FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE, I HAD A BREAKTHROUGH

Harry Potter mania  
hit my class

in 1999.

HARRY POTTER  
AND THE  
SORCERER  
STONE

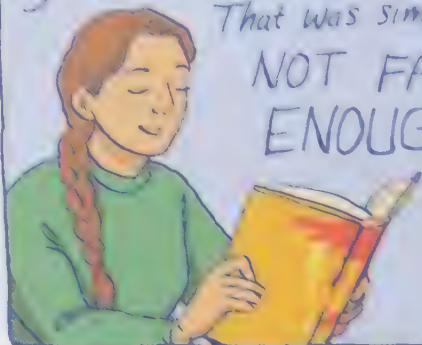
HARRY POTTER  
AND THE  
CHAMBER  
OF SECRETS

HARRY POTTER  
AND THE  
PRISONER  
OF AZKABAN

My mom was reading the  
second book out loud to me &  
my sister one chapter a night.

That was simply

NOT FAST  
ENOUGH.



ONE NIGHT I SNUCK THE BOOK & A FLASHLIGHT INTO MY BED. I VOWED NOT TO SLEEP UNTIL I FIGURED OUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.



BY MORNING SOMETHING MAGICAL HAD  
HAPPENED. I HAD BECOME

A READER.

A MUCH LESS WELCOME CHANGE  
WAS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.



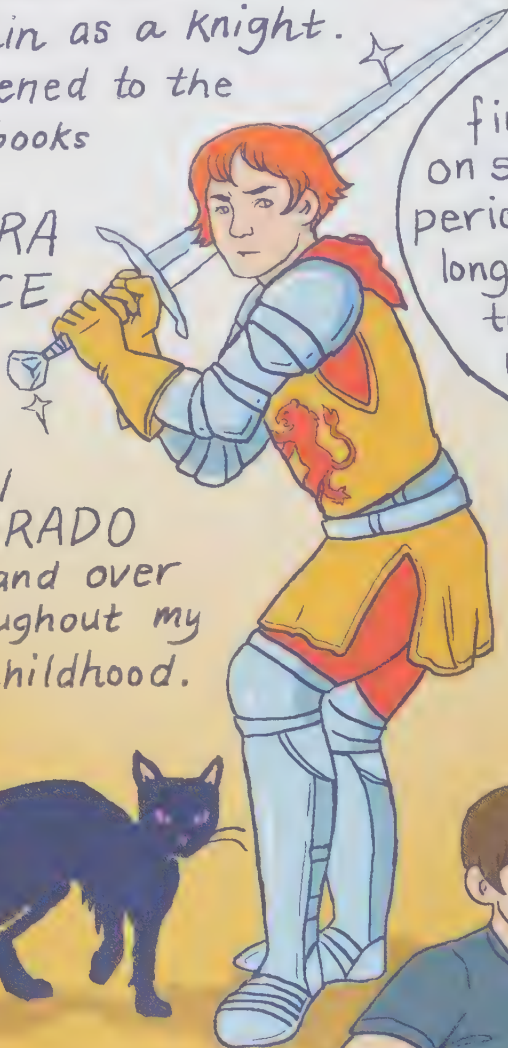
My favorite fictional character at this time was **ALANNA THE LIONESSE** — a short, stubborn girl who disguised herself as a boy to train as a knight.

I listened to the audiobooks

by **TAMORA PIERCE** and read by

**TRINI ALVARADO**

over and over throughout my childhood.



Alanna's first question on starting her period was "How long do I have to put up with this?"

"I didn't ask to be born a girl.

It's not fair."



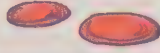


BECAUSE OF THE ALANNA BOOKS I KNEW:

Periods  
involved  
bleeding  
every month,



were  
related  
to the  
ability  
to become  
pregnant,



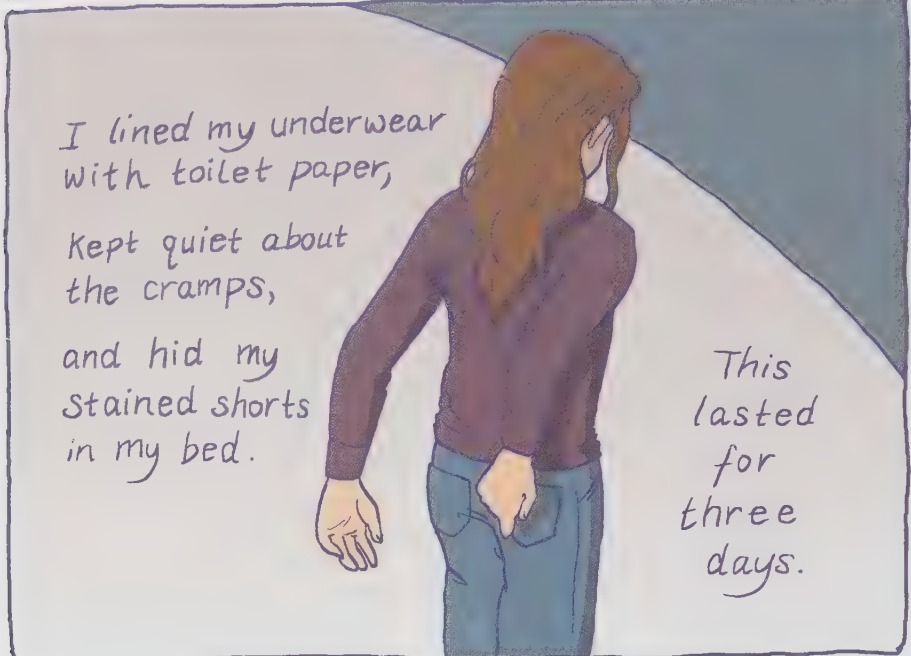
and  
were a  
totally  
normal and  
natural  
thing to  
happen  
to young  
teen girls.

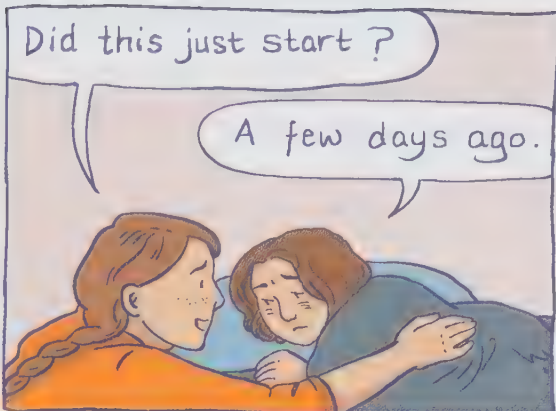


BUT I  
NEVER  
thought it  
would  
happen  
TO ME.

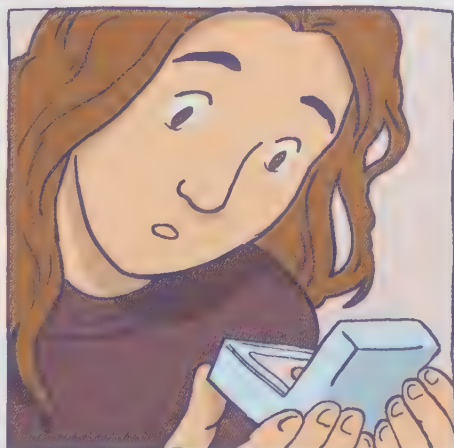
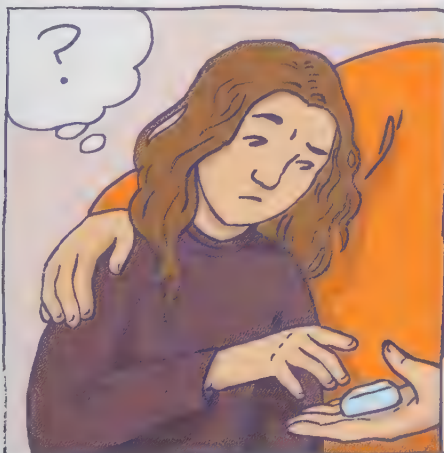


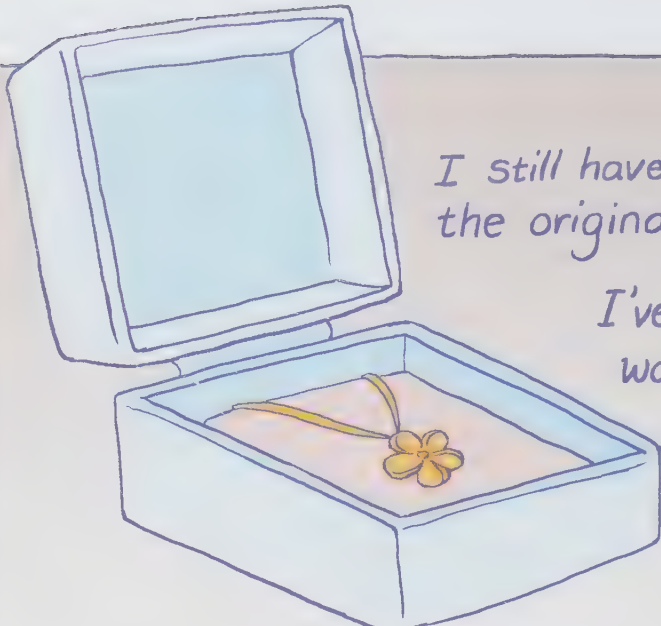
# I TRIED TO HIDE IT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.





## THE NEXT DAY

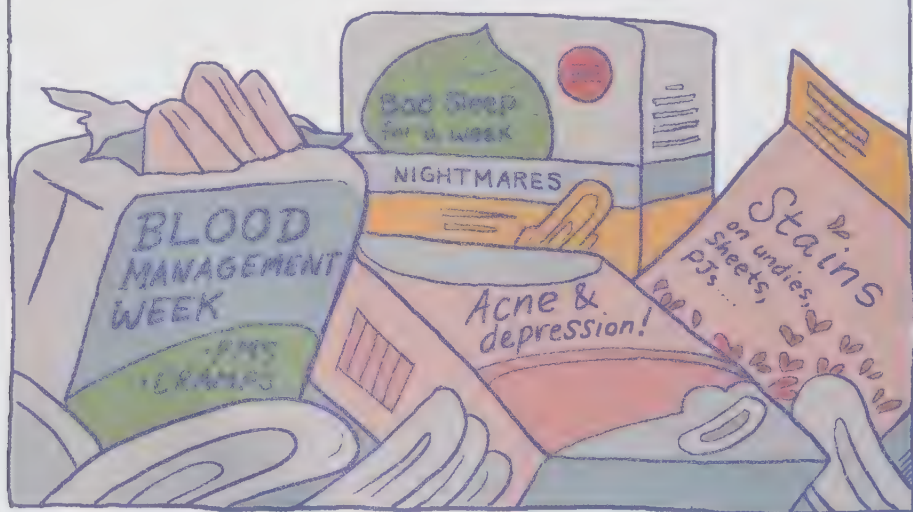




*I still have it in  
the original box.*

*I've never  
worn it.*

*I couldn't see this new development  
as a reason to celebrate.*



HIDING MY PERIOD BECAME EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO ME. FOR TWO ENTIRE SCHOOL YEARS I SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDED EVER USING A SCHOOL BATHROOM.

I'd often wear the same pad for so long that the dried blood turned to dark crumbles



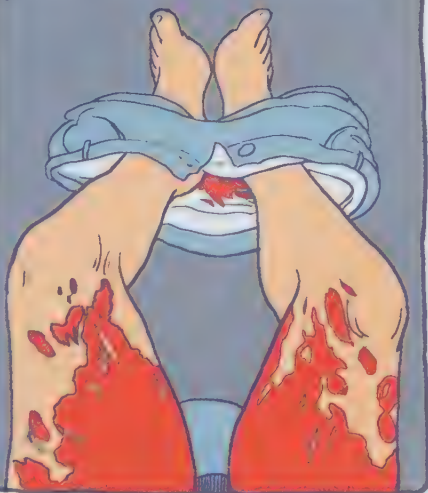
resembling coffee grounds.

TO THIS DAY A HUGE NUMBER OF MY NIGHTMARES INVOLVE MENSTRUAL BLOOD.

I'll feel the familiar sensation of hot blood gushing from my body—



When I make it to the bathroom I'll find my legs smeared with blood from waist to knees.



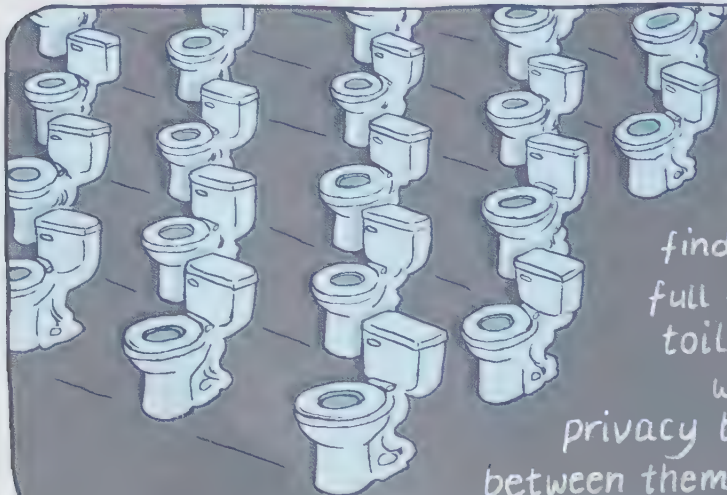
OF COURSE I NEVER HAVE A PAD OR CLEAN CLOTHES.



Often  
I'm in a  
bathroom  
with no  
stall doors.



Or the only  
available toilet  
is overflowing  
with a soup of  
blood and shit.



Or I'll  
find a room  
full of clean  
toilets but  
with no  
privacy barriers  
between them at all.

RESTROOM

Or the most mundane. I am in line for the toilet but it's too slow. Blood seeps through my pants. By the time I reach the stall it will be visible to everyone in the building.



MEN



WOMEN

IT'S AMAZING I NEVER DEVELOPED A URINARY TRACT INFECTION.

IN SEVENTH GRADE MY MOM BOUGHT ME  
MY FIRST BRA.

I liked that it flattened  
my tiny boobs  
into non-  
existence



but I  
hated that  
I needed it  
at all.

I STARTED DAYDREAMING ABOUT GETTING  
BREAST CANCER THINKING IT WOULD  
GIVE ME THE PERFECT EXCUSE  
TO HAVE MY BREASTS REMOVED.

Since then there have been  
several cases of cancer in  
my family, so I know  
how terrible that  
sounds.



I'd like to say I  
never think about that  
anymore... but that  
would not be true.



THE BOYS AROUND ME SEEMED AS YET UNRAVAGED BY  
PUBERTY. I WISHED I WAS ONE OF THEM.



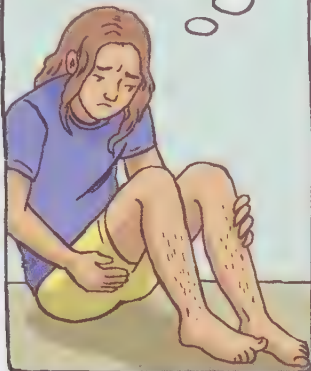
# WHEN MY MOM WAS 13 HER MOM TOLD HER



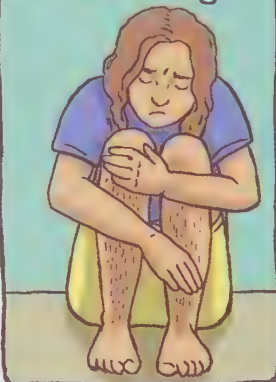
# WHEN I WAS 13 ONE OF MY AUNTS TOLD ME



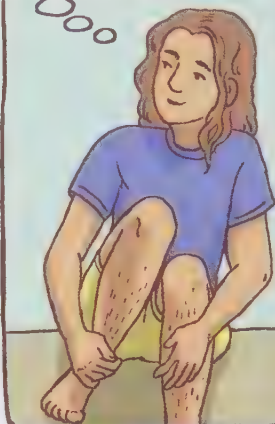
Why are girls supposed to shave their legs but boys don't have to?



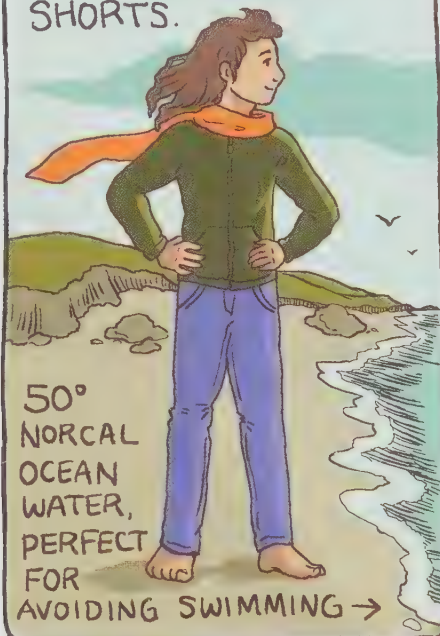
This hair is so soft, I don't want to shave it.



I'll just never wear shorts out of the house so no one sees it.



AND SO, FOR TEN YEARS, I NEVER WORE SHORTS.

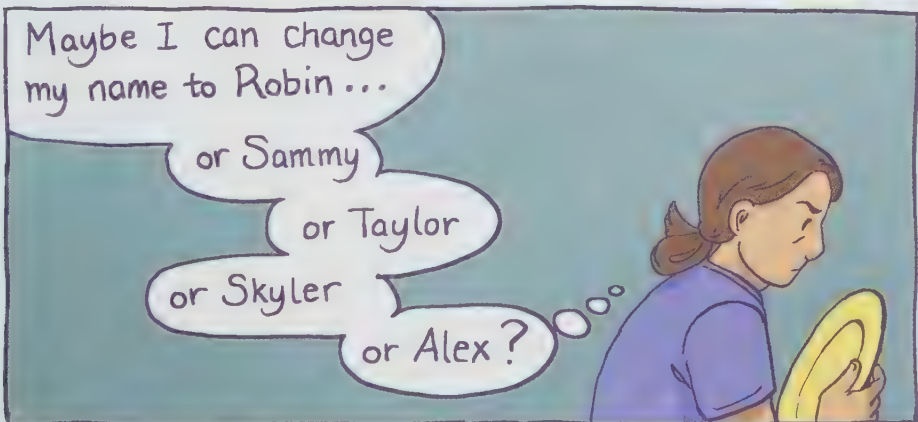
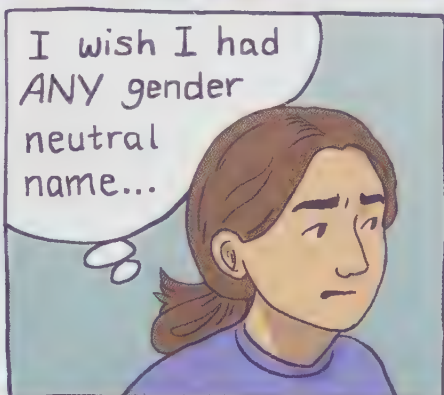
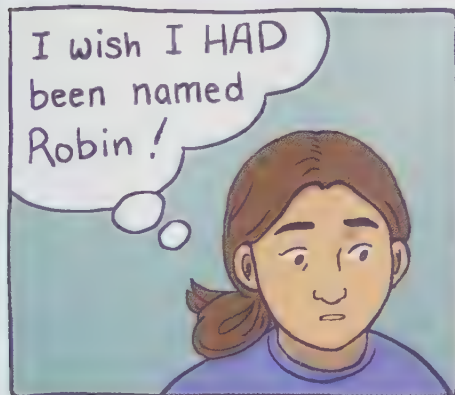
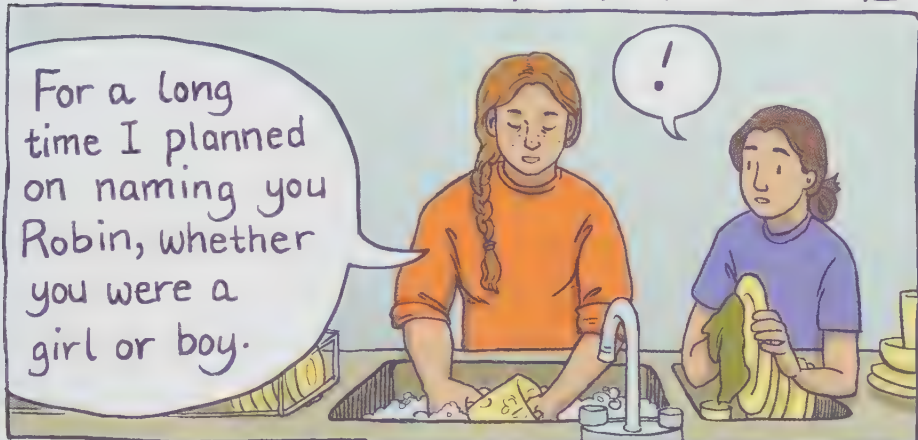


(EXCEPT FOR JUNIOR SOCCER LEAGUE.)

LEGS SAFELY COVERED UP TO THE KNEE.



# I REMEMBER WHEN MY MOM TOLD ME



BUT I COULDN'T GET ANY OF THEM TO STICK.

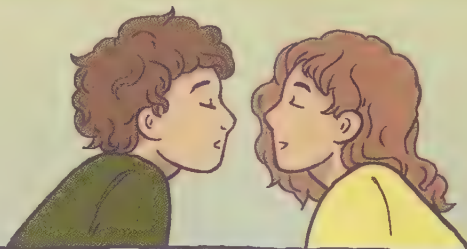
My first crush was on my neighbor GALEN.



His sisters thought it was cute when we kissed.



SO WE DID.



Smooch!  
♥

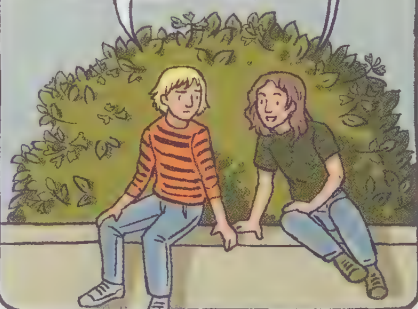
My second crush was on a tomboy girl in my elementary school class.



I ASKED HER :

Can we kiss?

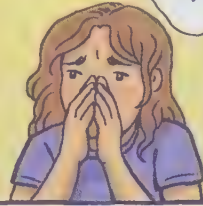
I'd rather not.



My third crush was on a cocky boy three years older than me.



I was so embarrassed around him I could hardly speak...

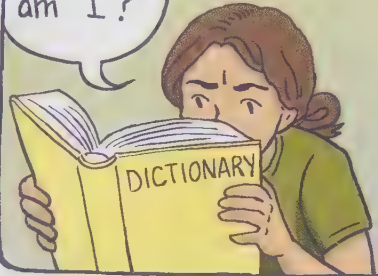


My fourth crush, in 8th grade, was on a girl who had a Lord of the Rings nickname.



It was around this time that I looked up "gay" and "lesbian" in the dictionary.

What am I?



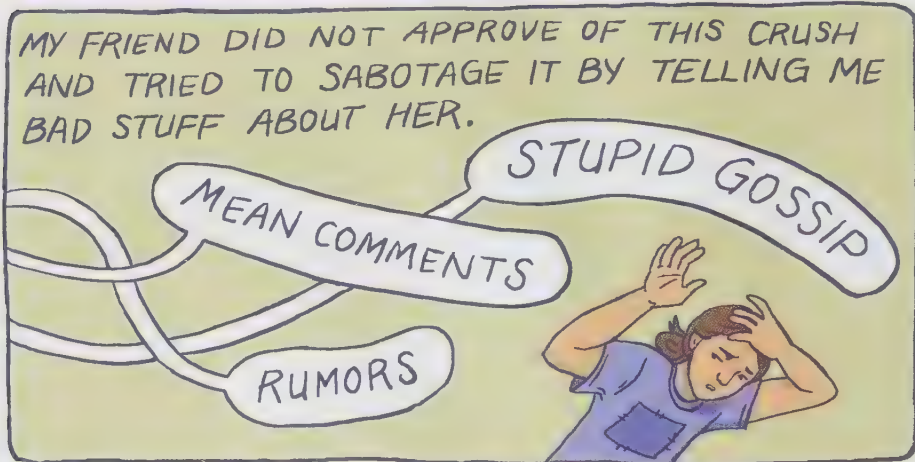
ONE WEEK BEFORE I STARTED HIGH SCHOOL, I TOLD A FRIEND ABOUT THESE CRUSHES.

My mom said girls getting crushes on girls is pretty normal.

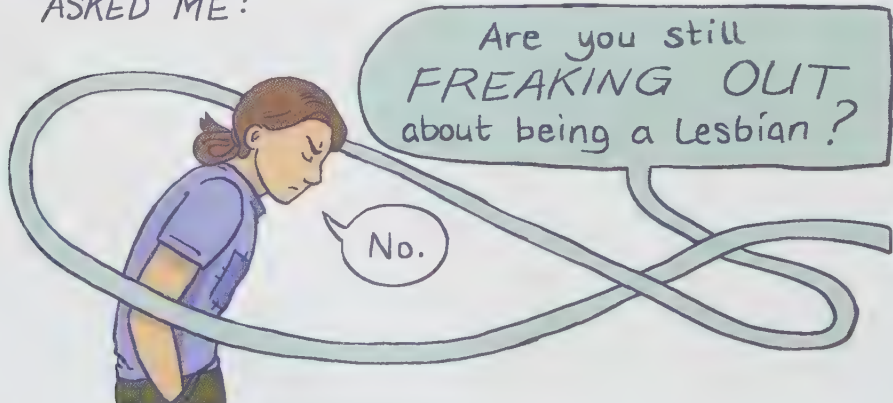
And it's probably just a phase.

Maybe

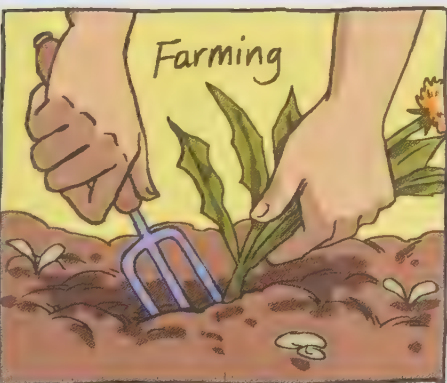
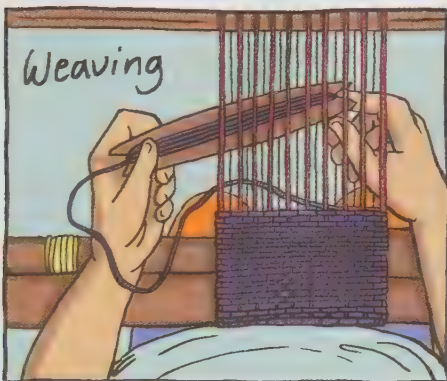
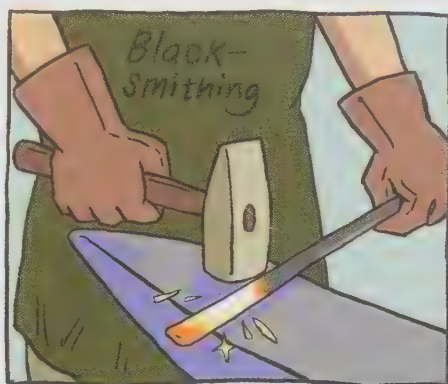




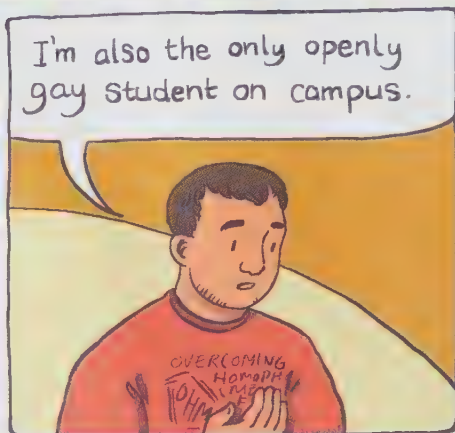
TWICE OVER THE NEXT YEAR THIS FRIEND ASKED ME:



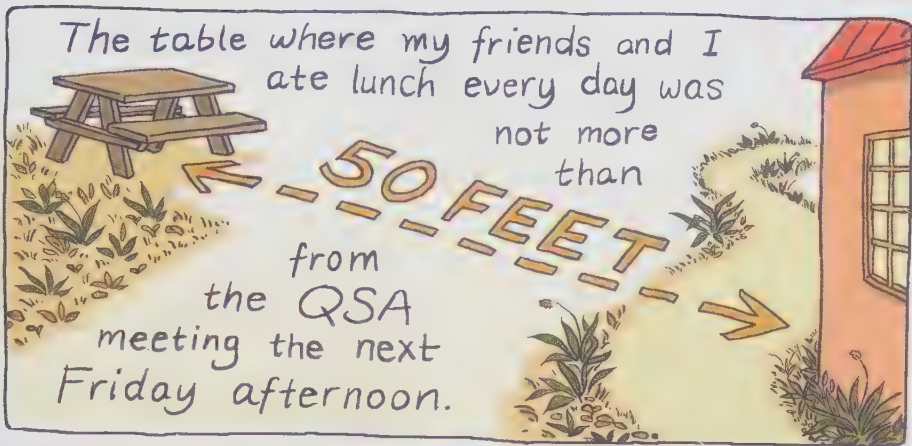
AFTER SPENDING EIGHTH GRADE IN A HOMESCHOOLING PROGRAM, I WENT BACK TO WALDORF FOR HIGH SCHOOL. REQUIRED CLASSES INCLUDED:



# A MONTH AND A HALF INTO MY FRESHMAN YEAR







The table where my friends and I ate lunch every day was not more than

from the QSA meeting the next Friday afternoon.



My friends chatted as usual

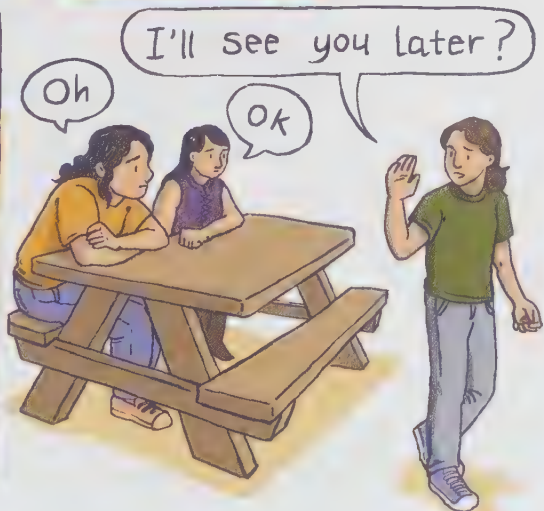


while I vibrated with nervous energy.

FINALLY I GOT UP THE COURAGE TO SAY:



I'm going to go check out the QSA meeting ...



I'll see you later?

Oh

OK



The QSA meeting was full of familiar faces. Over half the members were girls from my own class.

Come sit with us!

OK, thanks!

Are they all gay???



LATER I WOULD LEARN THAT THREE OF THEM CAME FROM FAMILIES WITH LESBIAN MOMS; THEY AND THEIR FRIENDS CAME AS ALLIES.

I brought two articles I was thinking we could discuss for our first meeting.

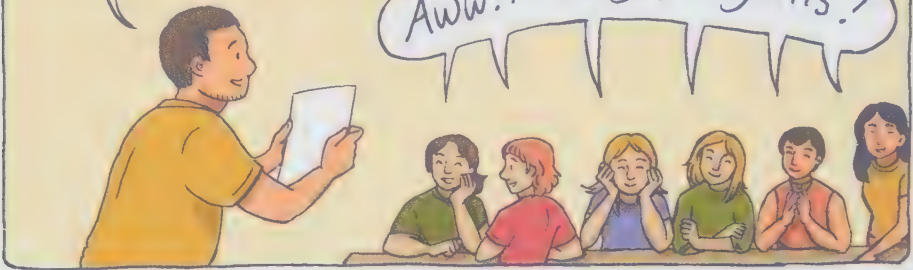


Massachusetts JUST declared that they will start allowing gay marriage beginning in May of next year!



And The Central park Zoo gave an egg to a pair of gay penguins and they raised a chick together named Tango.

Aww!!! Gay penguins!

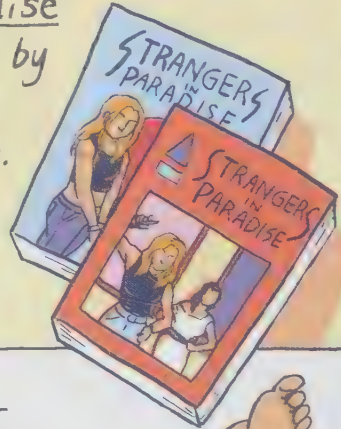


I left the meeting wondering why I'd been so nervous to enter it.

That was so cool!



A friend from QSA lent me the Strangers in Paradise series by Terry Moore.



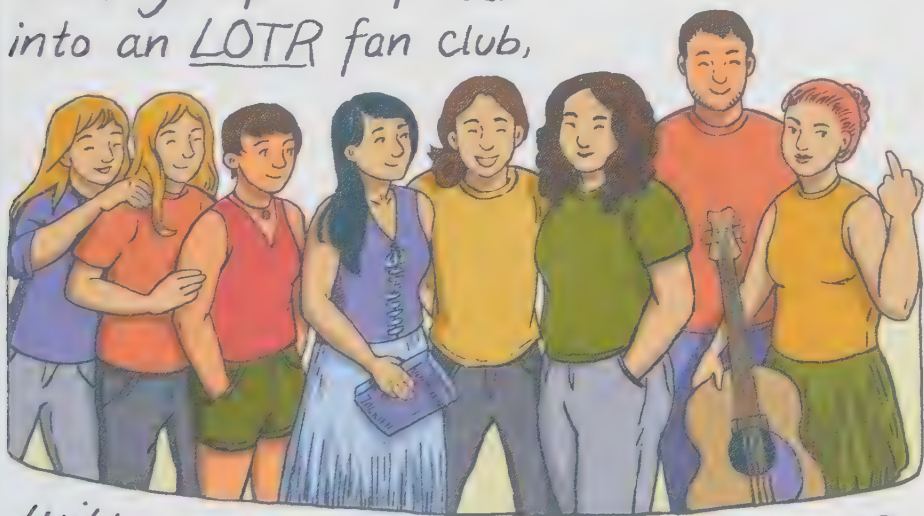
I DEVoured THEM.



One day my  
best friend gave  
me a note:

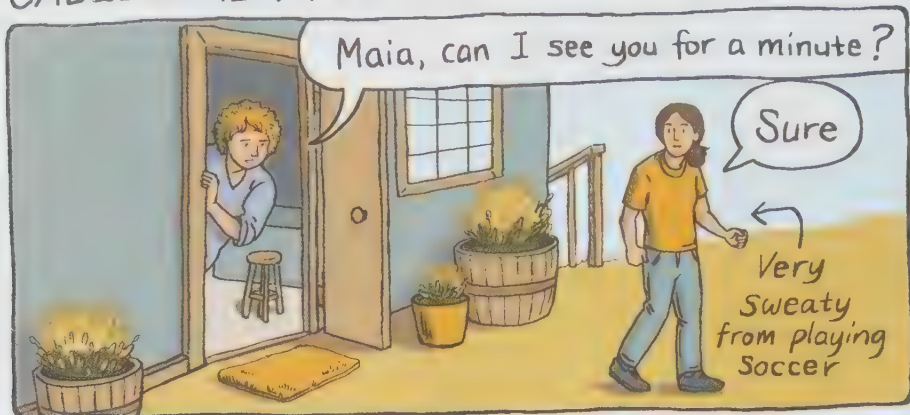
DON'T READ ANY  
MORE GAY ROMANCES  
YOU GET ABSOLUTELY  
UNBEARABLE FOR  
DAYS AFTER.

But  
by the end  
of the year she had started  
coming to QSA meetings with me.  
This group morphed  
into an LOTR fan club,



with meetings devolving into hours  
of discussion about which of the  
Lord of the Rings actors were  
MOST LIKELY TO BE GAY.

# ONE DAY THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR CALLED ME INTO HER OFFICE



Mom, will you buy me a deodorant?

Of course,  
what kind?

The normal kind?

LATER

Here goes  
nothing...

RUB  
RUB

Almost  
immediately  
an  
itchy  
red rash  
developed—  
it felt like  
having 50  
mosquito bites  
in each  
armpit.

I kept wearing  
it until pieces of  
skin began to flake  
off, causing snow-like  
Showers of dandruff...

Eventually my mom found a deodorant my skin could handle.



I never learned who had reported my B.O. It didn't occur to me to ask.

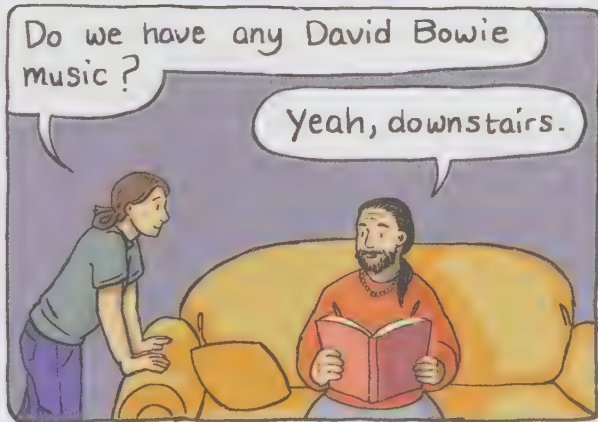
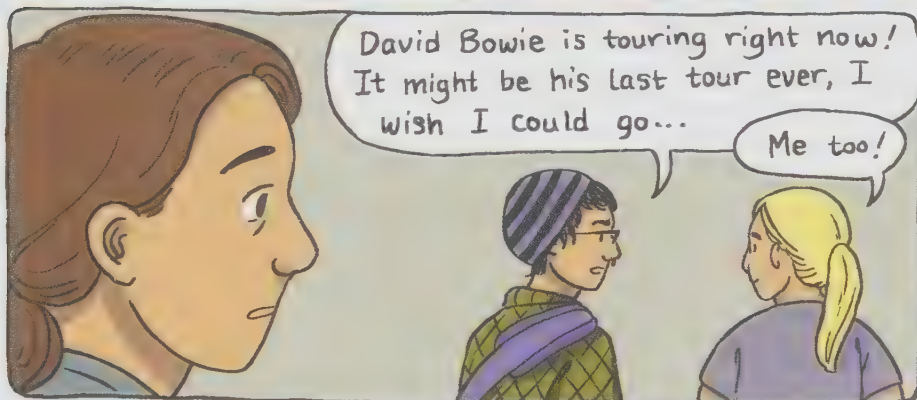


Probably because I didn't blame whoever it was. This was simply another example of my constant ignorance.





# I SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN NINTH GRADE EAVESDROPPING ON MY CRUSH



Here you go!  
These are tapes  
I made when I  
worked at the  
radio station.  
A ton of good  
stuff you'll  
like it.

Awesome,  
thank you.



Tommy by The  
Who, this is a  
great album.



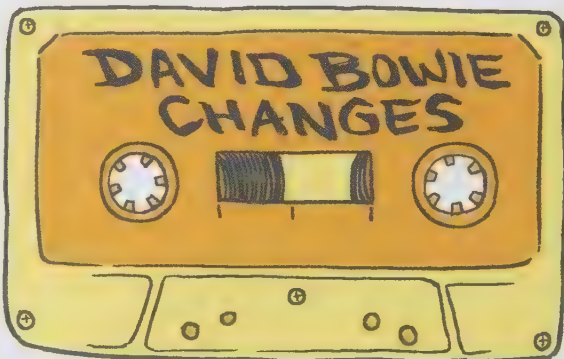
The Doors, The  
Stones, Pink  
Floyd, Frank  
Zappa, The  
Beatles ...



Have you  
ever listened  
to Queen?



Here's what we  
were looking for.






IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I COULD  
EVER REMEMBER HEARING QUEER  
REFERENCES IN SONG LYRICS:



I ONLY LET MYSELF LISTEN TO THE  
TAPE ONCE THROUGH PER DAY



AFRAID THAT I WOULD WEAR IT OUT.



Bowie's music  
was the first  
that felt like



**MINE.**

My  
love of  
Bowie  
has long  
outlasted  
the crush  
that started  
it.

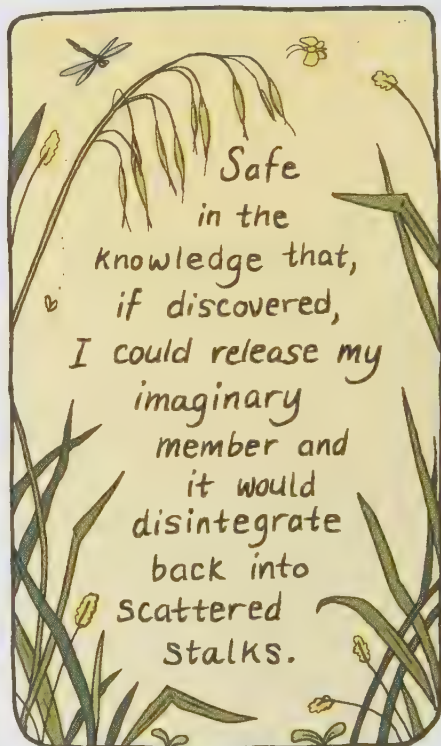
I WAS 11 OR 12 YEARS OLD THE FIRST TIME I CAN REMEMBER FANTASIZING ABOUT HAVING A PENIS.



I WAS LYING, FULLY CLOTHED, ON A HILLSIDE UNDER AN OPEN SKY.



I HELD A FOLDED HANDFUL OF GRASS BETWEEN MY LEGS.



Safe  
in the  
knowledge that,  
if discovered,  
I could release my  
imaginary  
member and  
it would  
disintegrate  
back into  
scattered  
stalks.

FOR YEARS MY STANDARD METHOD OF MASTURBATION WAS STUFFING A SOCK INTO THE FRONT OF MY PANTS AND MANIPULATING

*The Bulge.*

THIS WOULD EVOLVE INTO *HIP-THRUSTING* WHILE THINKING OF MY LASTEST GAY SHIP ...



MEMORABLY, I GOT OFF ONCE WHILE DRIVING JUST BY RUBBING THE FRONT OF MY JEANS AND IMAGINING GETTING A

*Blow JOB.\**

\* I PROMISE I'M A REALLY SAFE DRIVER.

# WHEN I FINALLY GOT OLD ENOUGH TO NOT BE EMBARRASSED TALKING ABOUT THIS STUFF WITH MY SISTER:

It really never occurred to you to put something into your vagina, not even a finger?

It really didn't.

So you've never tasted yourself?

What? NO! EW!

WAIT—  
you have?

HAHA, of course!  
You should try.

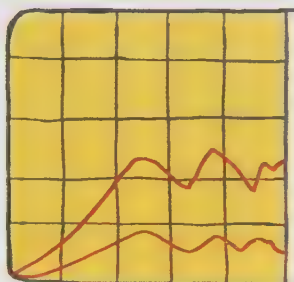
AND  
SO:

Vagina  
Slime

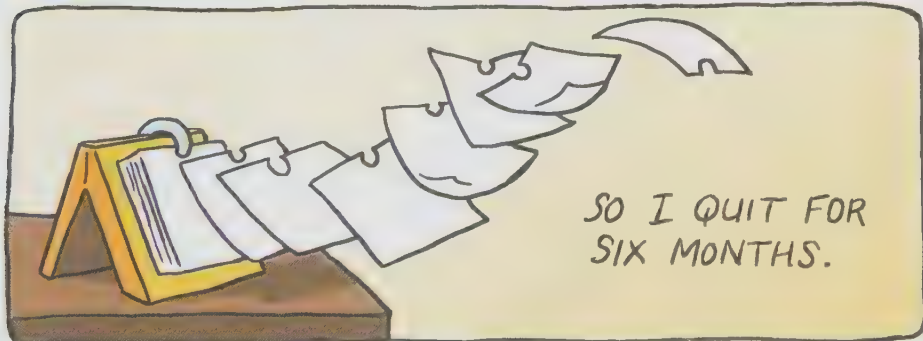




NOPE! CAN'T DO  
IT! I REFUSE!



I HAVE AN EXTREMELY LOW  
SEX DRIVE COMPARED TO  
PRETTY MUCH ALL OF MY  
FRIENDS. AS A TEEN I GOT  
BORED OF MASTURBATION



SO I QUIT FOR  
SIX MONTHS.

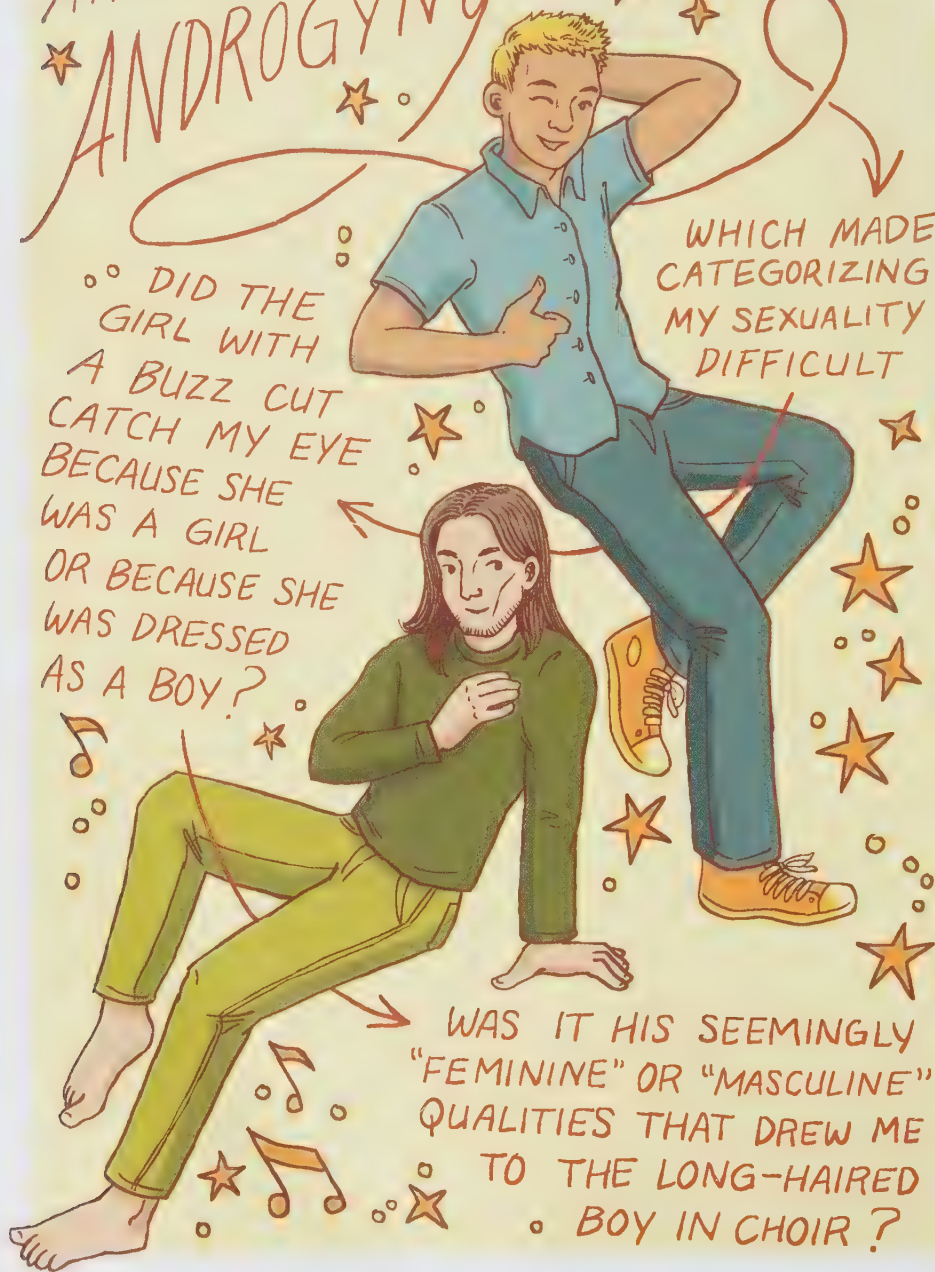
The MAIN TRAIT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN  
ATTRACTED TO IS

ANDROGYNY

DID THE  
GIRL WITH  
A BUZZ CUT  
CATCH MY EYE  
BECAUSE SHE  
WAS A GIRL  
OR BECAUSE SHE  
WAS DRESSED  
AS A BOY?

WHICH MADE  
CATEGORIZING  
MY SEXUALITY  
DIFFICULT

WAS IT HIS SEEMINGLY  
"FEMININE" OR "MASCULINE"  
QUALITIES THAT DREW ME  
TO THE LONG-HAIRED  
BOY IN CHOIR?



MY  
DEEPEST  
EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS  
HAVE ALWAYS BEEN  
WITH WOMEN.  
DID THAT MEAN I WAS  
A LESBIAN?  
BUT MY  
SEXUAL FANTASIES  
INVOLVED TWO MALE  
PARTNERS. WAS I A  
GAY BOY TRAPPED IN  
A GIRL'S BODY?

The knowledge of a third option  
slept like a seed under the soil.

THIS SEED  
PUT OUT  
MANY  
LEAVES

BUT I DIDN'T  
HAVE THE  
LANGUAGE  
TO IDENTIFY  
THE  
PLANT

I  
wish  
I had a  
gender  
neutral  
name

I feel like  
something is  
wrong with  
me

I wish  
I was a boy

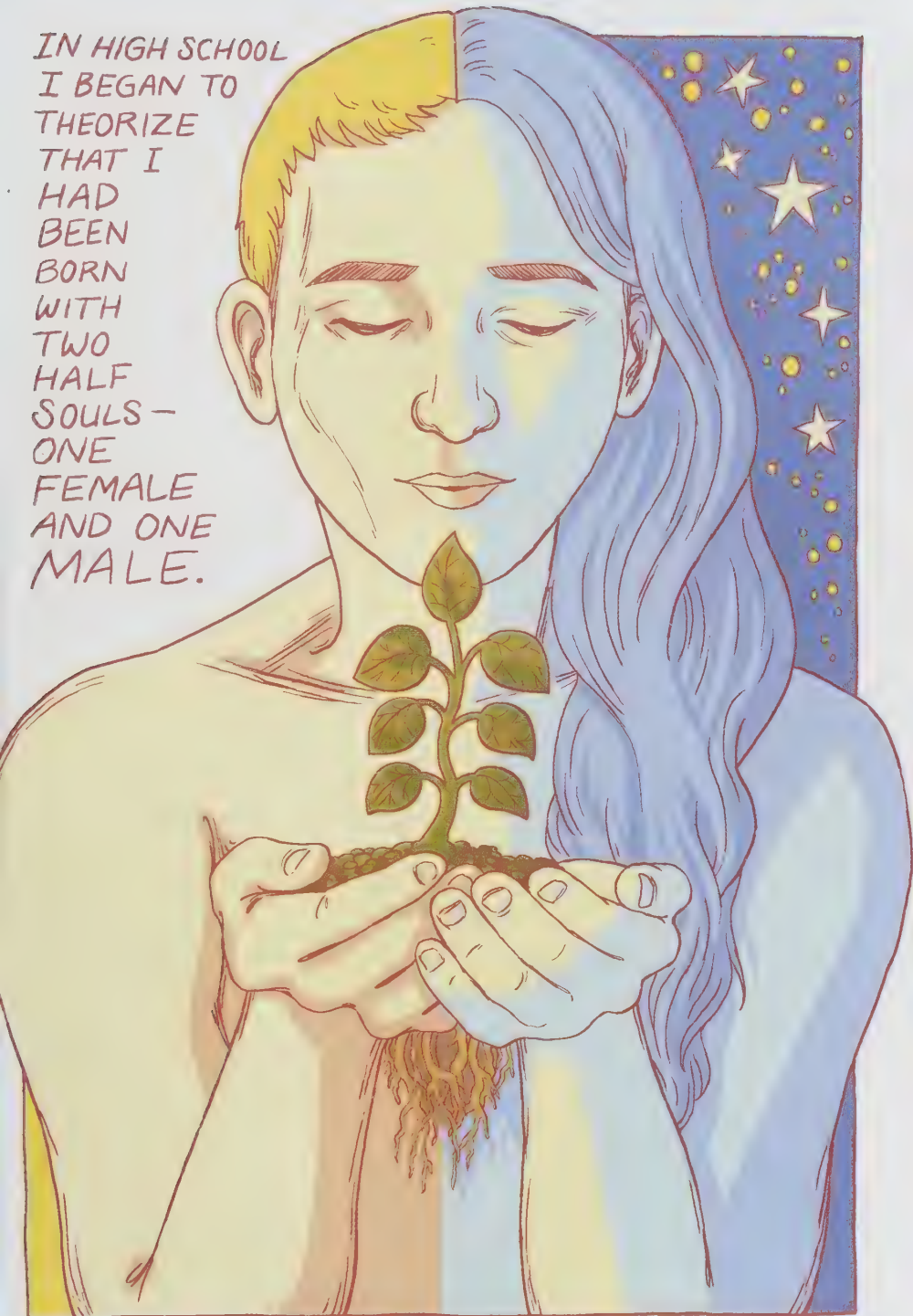
I hate  
my breasts

I never  
want to  
have sex

I never  
want kids

I wish I  
had short  
hair

IN HIGH SCHOOL  
I BEGAN TO  
THEORIZE  
THAT I  
HAD  
BEEN  
BORN  
WITH  
TWO  
HALF  
SOULS -  
ONE  
FEMALE  
AND ONE  
MALE.



I  
INVENTED  
AND  
NAMED A  
LOST MALE  
TWIN

WHO HAD  
ALWAYS FELT  
LIKE HE SHOULD  
BE A GIRL. IF  
I COULD JUST  
FIND HIM

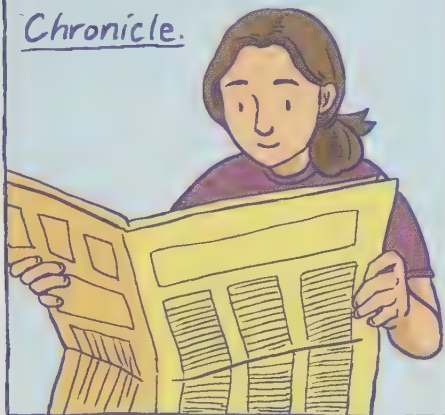
WE  
WOULD  
FINALLY  
BOTH FEEL  
LIKE

WHOLE  
COMPLETE  
PEOPLE.

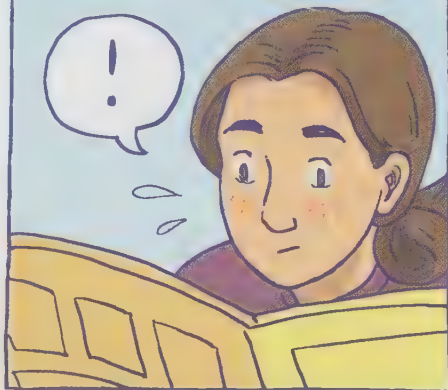


# THE WORD "TRANSGENDER" ENTERED MY VOCABULARY IN THE SUMMER BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL.

I noted in a journal entry on June 9, 2003 that there had been a lot of articles on gay issues in the San Francisco Chronicle.



Including a profile of a lesbian whose partner was taking testosterone and had switched to male pronouns.



Over the next year, I also found articles on transgender magic in my mom's pagan magazines and gender rants in a pile of feminist zines given to me by a friend.

But where do I fit into all of this?





If I was trans, wouldn't I be saying, "I am a boy" not "I wish I was a boy"?

Wouldn't I be more SURE?

And if I am trans...

Am I a gay boy

Or a straight boy

Or a bisexual boy

I can't be a girl

What am I?

If I'm asexual does my gender even matter?

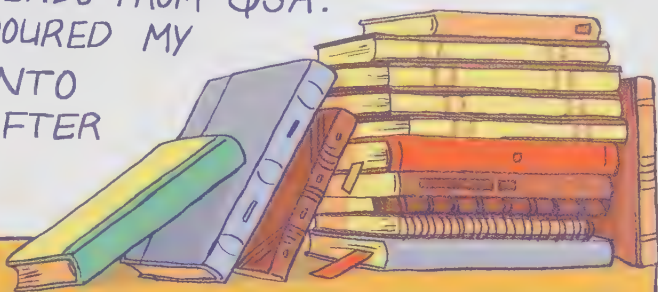
Does that mean I'm asexual?

Except I'm not sure if I ever want to have sex...

But I don't FEEL like a girl!



I DIDN'T SHARE THESE QUESTIONS, EVEN WITH MY FRIENDS FROM QSA. INSTEAD I Poured MY CONFUSION INTO JOURNAL AFTER JOURNAL.



14 NOTEBOOKS,  
2001-2014

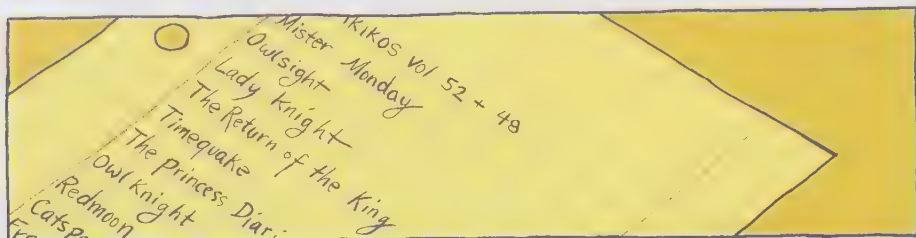


If only I could switch between sexes whenever I wanted. Like Ranma from Ranma 1/2.

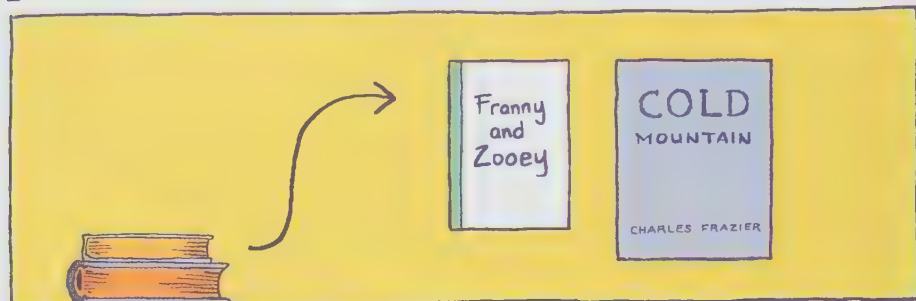
QUOTE FROM AN ENTRY I WROTE IN 2004, WHEN I WAS 15:

I don't want to be a girl. I don't want to be a boy either. I just want to be myself.

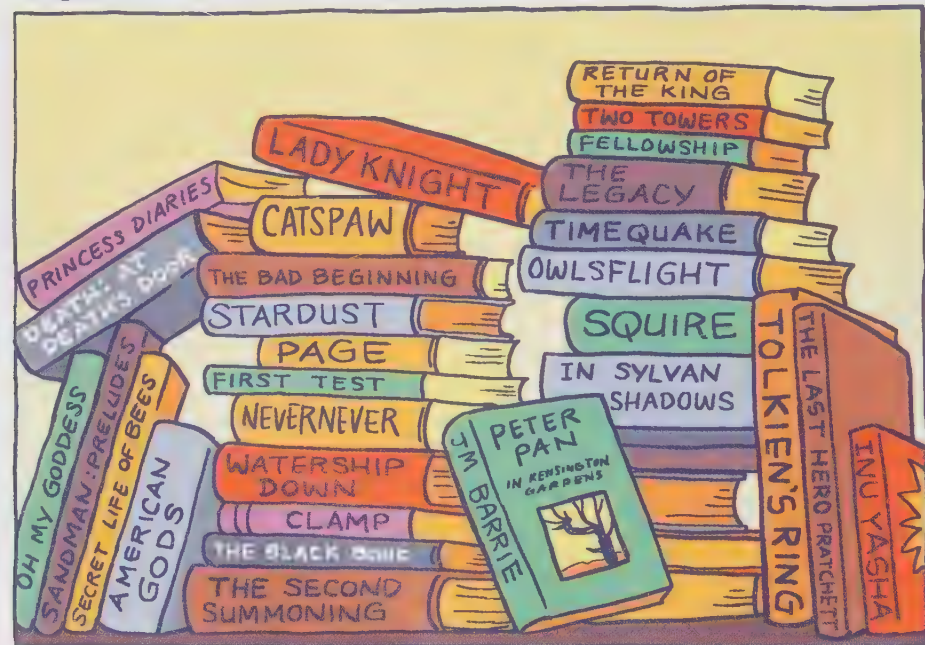
AFTER NINTH GRADE I DECIDED TO KEEP A LIST OF ALL THE BOOKS I READ OVER THE SUMMER.



I INCLUDED THE TWO BOOKS I READ FOR SCHOOL



& ALL THE ONES I READ JUST FOR MYSELF.



BY THE END OF THE SUMMER, MY LIST HAD 68 TITLES, READ IN 82 DAYS.



Look!

That's a lot of books!

MY PARENTS WERE DULY IMPRESSED



Yes, it's a very nice list.

But what movies did you see over the summer?

AND MY FRIENDS ROLLED THEIR EYES.

I was so pleased I decided to maintain the list INDEFINITELY.



AT THE

HOW I PAID FOR COLLEGE  
ATTACK OF THE THEATER PEOPLE  
AM I BLUE?  
WEETZIE BAT  
WHERE IS HOME?  
PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER  
CARD CAPTOR SAKURA  
CARD CAPTOR SAKURA  
XXXHOLIC

RG VEDA  
LEGAL DRUG  
TOKYO BABYLON  
X/1999

LIBRARY

VERY LFSREAK  
STUCK RUBBER BABY  
Annie on my mind  
GEOGRAPHY CLUB

MISFITS  
TOTALLY JOE  
PRIVILEGE OF THE SWORD

SWORDPOINT  
MAGIC'S PAIN

MAGIC'S PRICE  
MAGIC'S PROMISE

I BEGAN TO DISCOVER MORE AND MORE

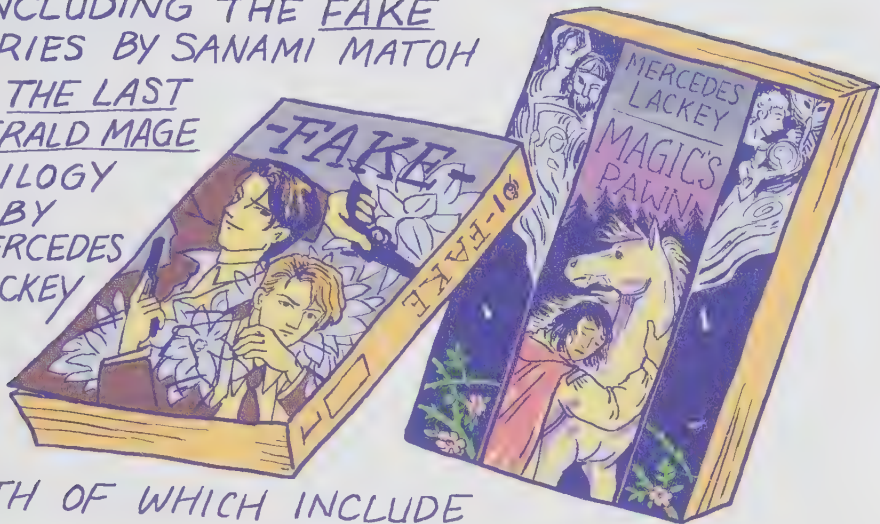
BOY MEETS BOY  
THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY  
WIDE AWAKE  
Keeping you a Secret  
LUNA  
off\*BEAT  
RAINBOW BOYS  
RAINBOW HIGH  
RAINBOW ROAD

SKIM  
PEDRO & ME  
PARADISE KISS

QUEER BOOKS.

A row of various colorful books on a shelf, including titles like 'THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY', 'WIDE AWAKE', 'LUNA', 'off\*BEAT', 'RAINBOW BOYS', 'RAINBOW HIGH', 'RAINBOW ROAD', 'SKIM', 'PEDRO & ME', and 'PARADISE KISS'.

INCLUDING THE FAKE  
SERIES BY SANAMI MATOH  
& THE LAST  
HERALD MAGE  
TRILOGY  
BY  
MERCEDES  
LACKEY



BOTH OF WHICH INCLUDE  
VERY TAME GAY SEX  
SCENES.

I can still  
recall a specific  
physical sensation I  
got from reading  
these scenes—



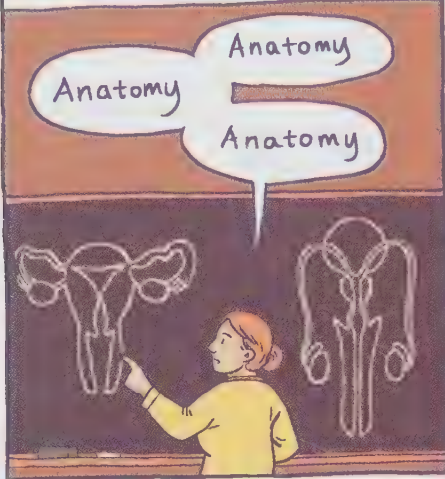
It felt  
as if  
lightning  
was  
coming  
from  
the  
pages.



Electricity  
flowing  
directly  
into my  
palms.

THE MAIN KIND OF SEX DISCUSSED IN MY FOUR DIFFERENT SEX ED CLASSES WAS SEX INVOLVING A PENIS AND A VAGINA.

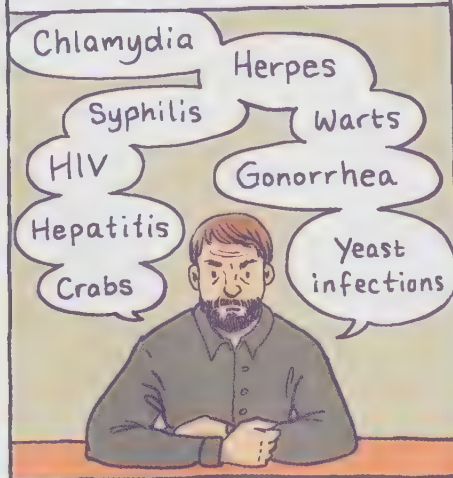
SEVENTH GRADE



NINTH GRADE



TENTH GRADE



ELEVENTH GRADE



THAT KIND OF SEX SOUNDED RISKY & UNAPPEALING.

DURING MY ENTIRE  
CHILDHOOD  
MY MOM  
DID ALL  
OF OUR  
FAMILY'S  
HAIRCUTS.

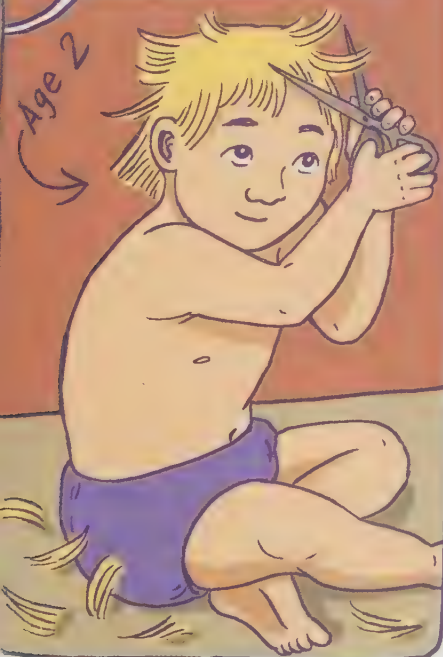
Just trim the  
ends please.



(ASIDE FROM THE TWO MEMORABLE  
OCCASIONS MY SISTER CUT HER OWN.)

Phoebe!! NO!

Age 2



Not again!!

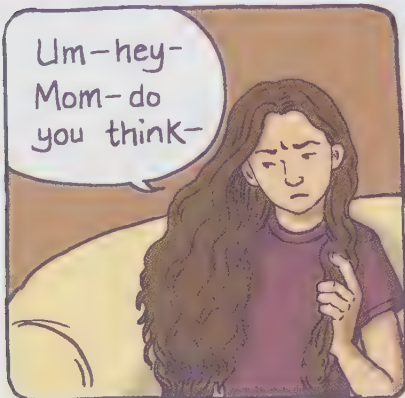
Age 4



BY MY 13<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY, MY HAIR WAS DOWN TO MY WAIST. I'D WANTED IT SHORT FOR YEARS, BUT (UNLIKE PHOEBE) I HAD A HARD TIME WORKING UP THE NERVE.



Um-hey-Mom-do you think-



For my birthday, could I get my hair cut at a salon?



Alright.

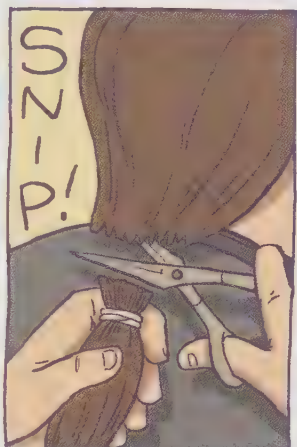
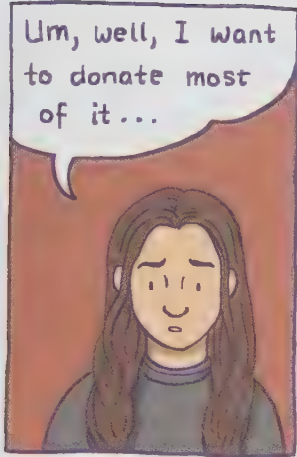
WHEN THE DAY CAME I WAS SO NERVOUS.

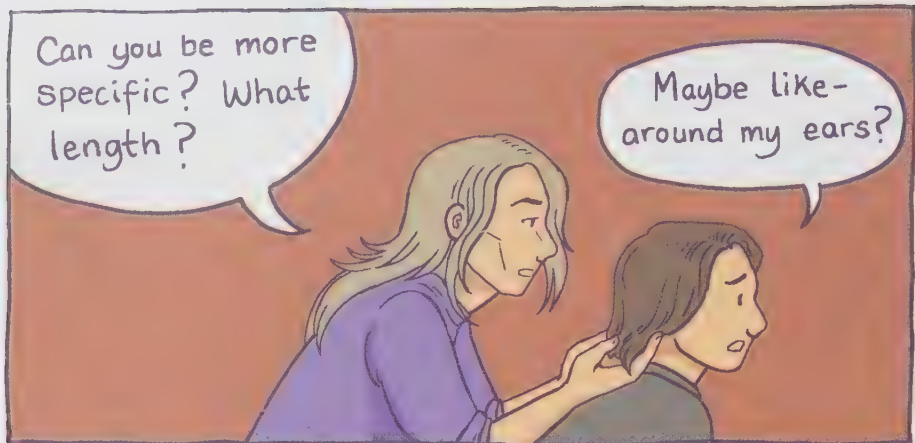
I'd never had my hair cut professionally before.



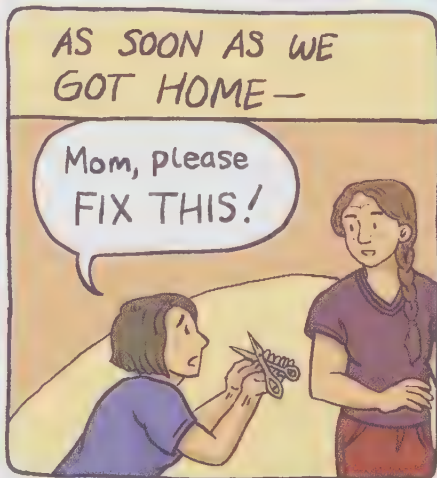
So, what are we doing today?

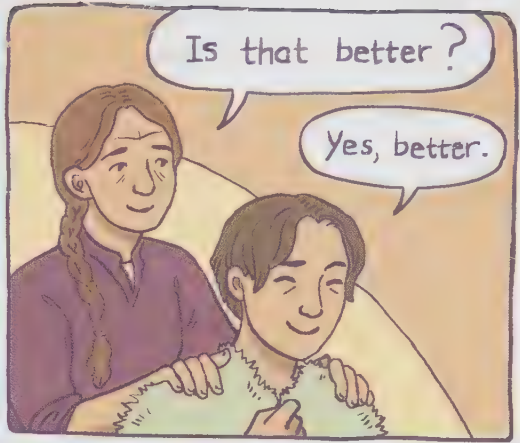




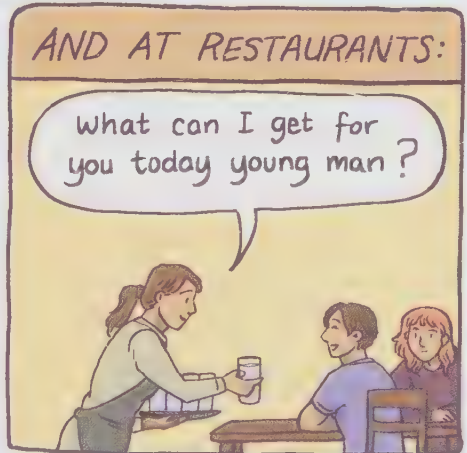


SHE GAVE ME A BASIC A-LINE BOB. I HATED IT INSTANTLY.





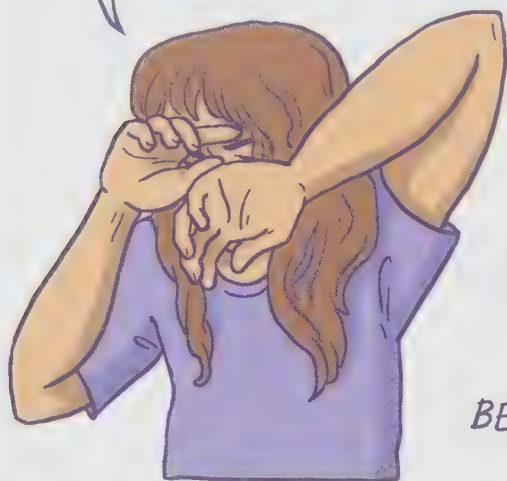
TWICE OVER THE FOLLOWING SUMMER, I GOT ASKED:



I LOVED IT.

WITH PUBERTY I HAD DEVELOPED  
AN INTENSE DISLIKE OF BEING  
PHOTOGRAPHED.  
THIS FADED AFTER  
I CUT MY HAIR.

NO PICTURES!



I WANTED TO  
KEEP IT SHORT  
BUT NO LONGER  
TRUSTED SALONS.  
MY SISTER  
BECAME MY REGULAR  
HAIRDRESSER.

Remember how you cut it  
last time?

Of course.



Just like that,  
BUT SHORTER!



# MY SISTER CIRCA 2018

Much more fashionable than me

Also Queer!

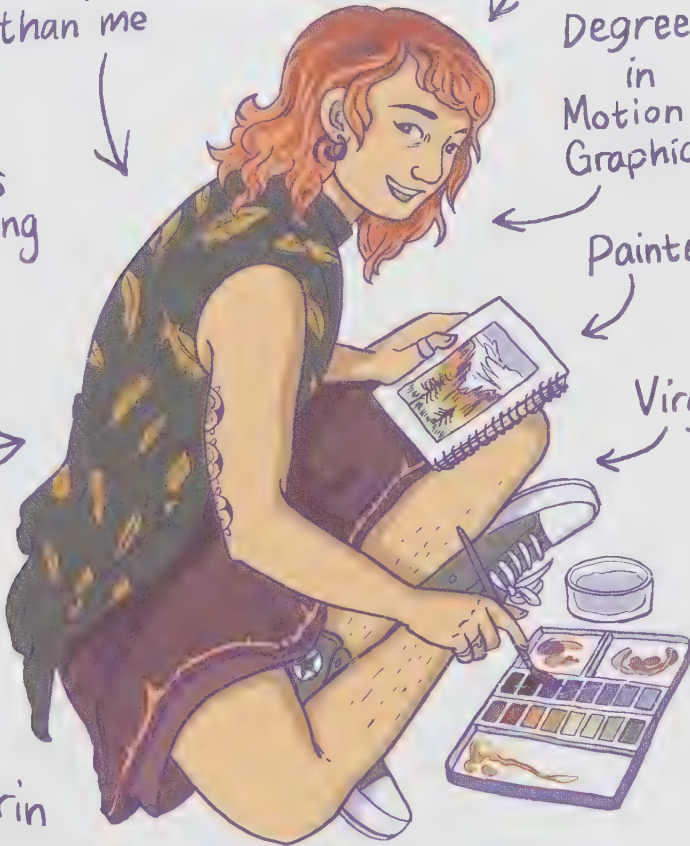
Degree in Motion Graphics

Painter

Virgo

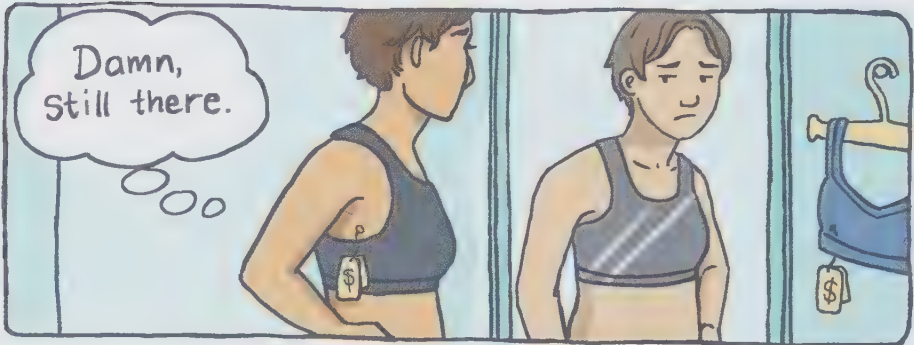
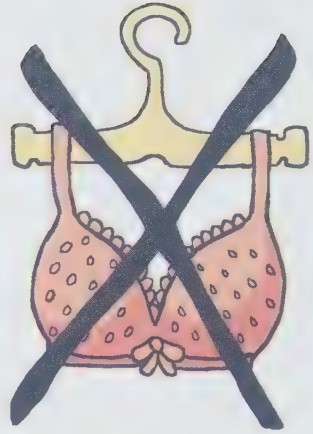
Loves camping & road trips

Slytherin

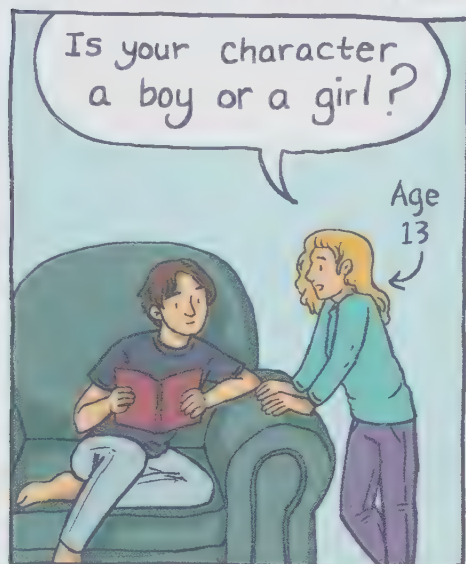


I LUCKED OUT SO HARD IN THE SIBLING LOTTERY ♡ ♡ ♡

SHE HAS PROVIDED YEARS OF MORAL SUPPORT DURING MY LEAST FAVORITE KIND OF SHOPPING.



WHEN I WAS CAST IN A MINOR ROLE  
IN A CLASS PLAY IN TENTH GRADE,  
PHOEBE ASKED ME:



SHE KNEW BEFORE I DID.

DURING THE FOLLOWING YEAR, AN AMBITIOUS NEW DRAMA TEACHER DECIDED TO DIRECT OUR SCHOOL'S FIRST EVER MUSICAL.



I JOINED THE BACKSTAGE CREW AND FULFILLED A STEREOTYPE BY FALLING IN LOVE WITH THEATER.



ON A THEATER TRIP I GOT TO SEE  
The Importance of  
Being Earnest

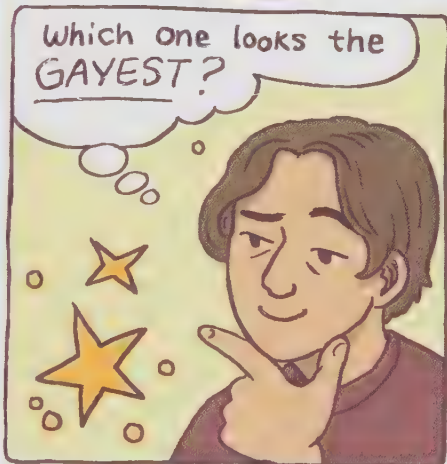


KICK-  
STARTING MY  
LIFELONG LOVE OF  
OSCAR WILDE.

AT THE LIBRARY LOOKING  
FOR A WILDE BIOGRAPHY



Which one looks the  
GAYEST?



SHORTLY  
AFTER MY  
JUNIOR YEAR,  
I GOT A  
CALL FROM  
A FRIEND  
WHO'D HAD A  
CRUSH ON  
ME FOR AT  
LEAST TWO  
YEARS.

Would you go  
on a date-  
just one date-  
with me before  
I leave for  
college?

THE  
LAST TIME  
HE HAD  
ASKED ME  
OUT, I'D  
SAID NO.



It would  
just be one  
date.

Then he's  
leaving for  
a year.

It would  
make him  
really  
happy...



Yeah... we can  
do one date...



YAY! I can't wait  
to introduce people  
to MY GIRLFRIEND!

WAIT WHAT



Did he say  
GIRLFRIEND?!?  
I did not sign  
up for that!



I HAVE  
MADE A  
MISTAKE.





Look, I'm really sorry, but I can't go on this date.



And I also can't be your girlfriend.



That word makes me want to barf.



I hate this and I feel terrible.



But I will NEVER be anyone's girlfriend.



## LATER, TALKING TO MY BEST FRIEND

I hate it! I hate having boobs and a period. I hate buying bras and underwear.

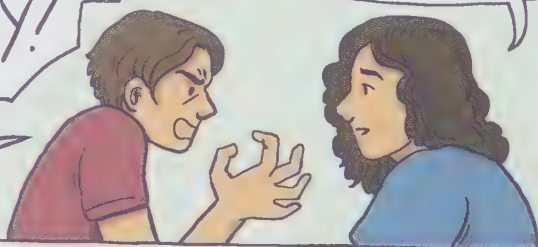
I hate feeling like I have to shave my armpits and have a perfect tan...



I hate feeling like I'm supposed to wear makeup and like boys and

**ACT GIRLY!**

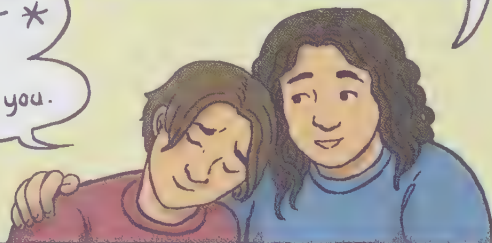
Maia- you are one of the least girly people I know.



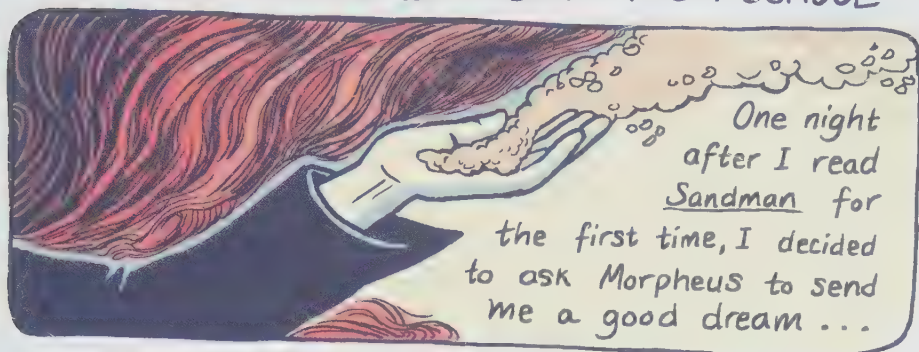
Even if you did wear a dress and a ton of makeup- even then, I don't think people would find you girly.

**\*SNIFF\***

Thank you.



# TWO DREAMS I HAD IN HIGH SCHOOL

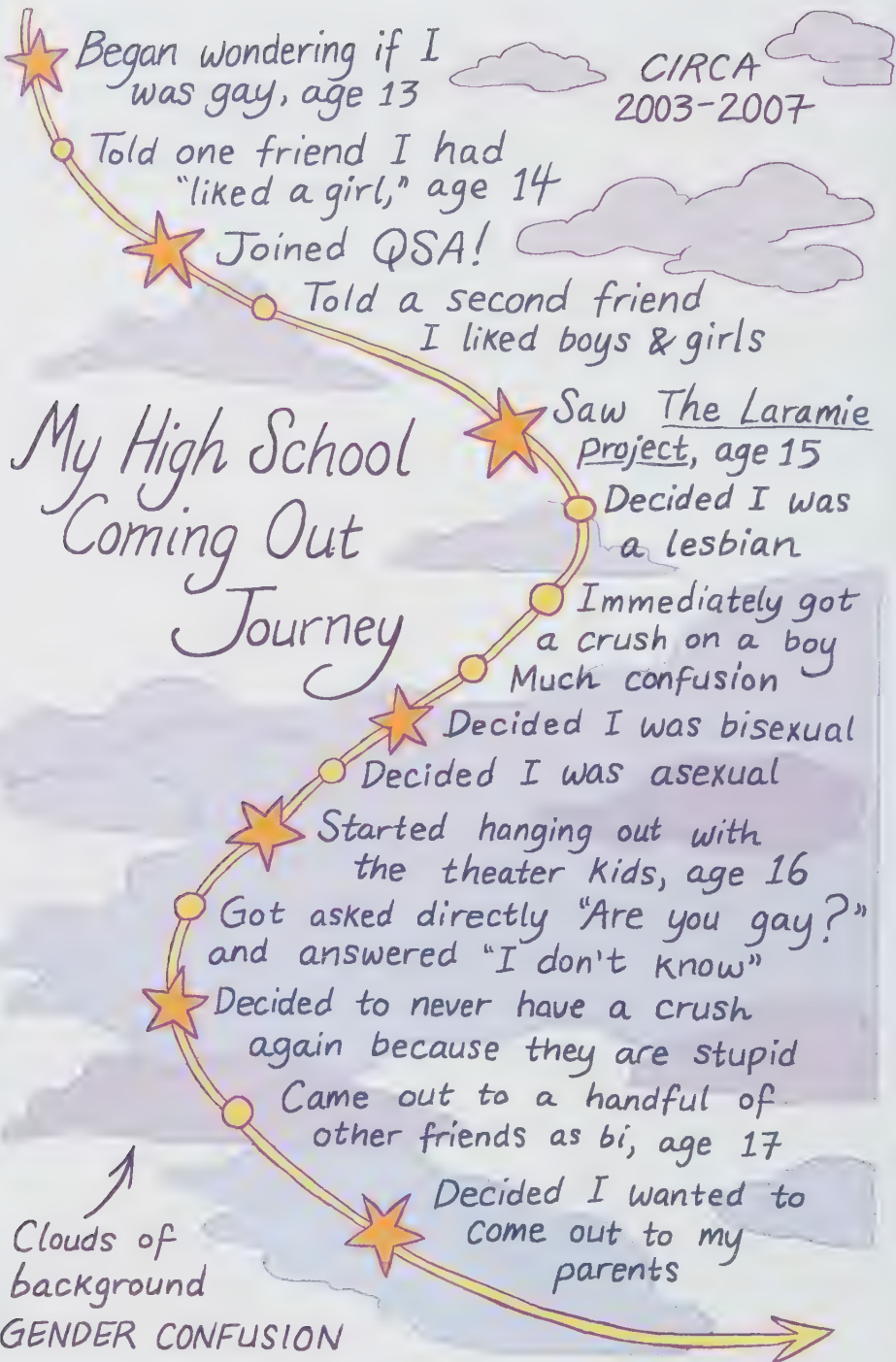


## IN THE MORNING



BUT  
WHEN  
I  
LOOKED  
CLOSER—





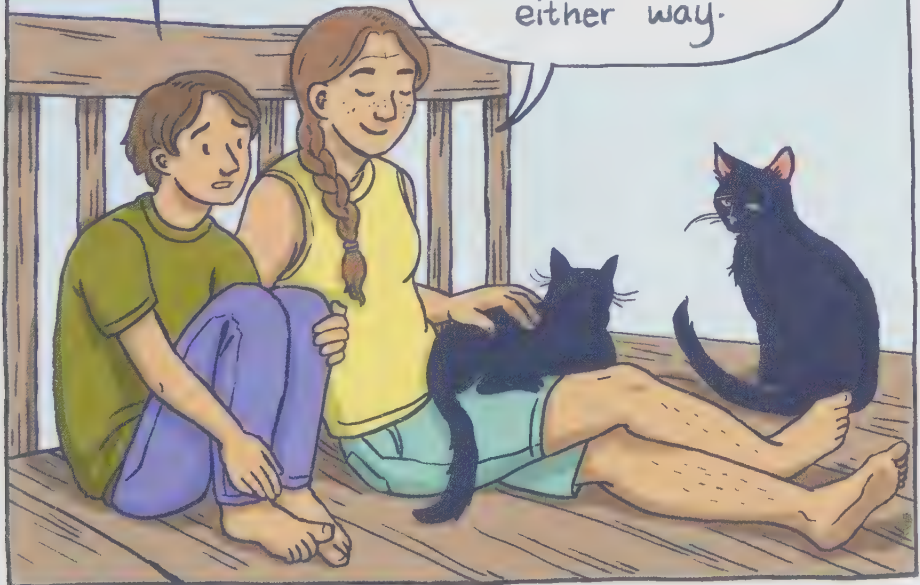


March 3, 2007

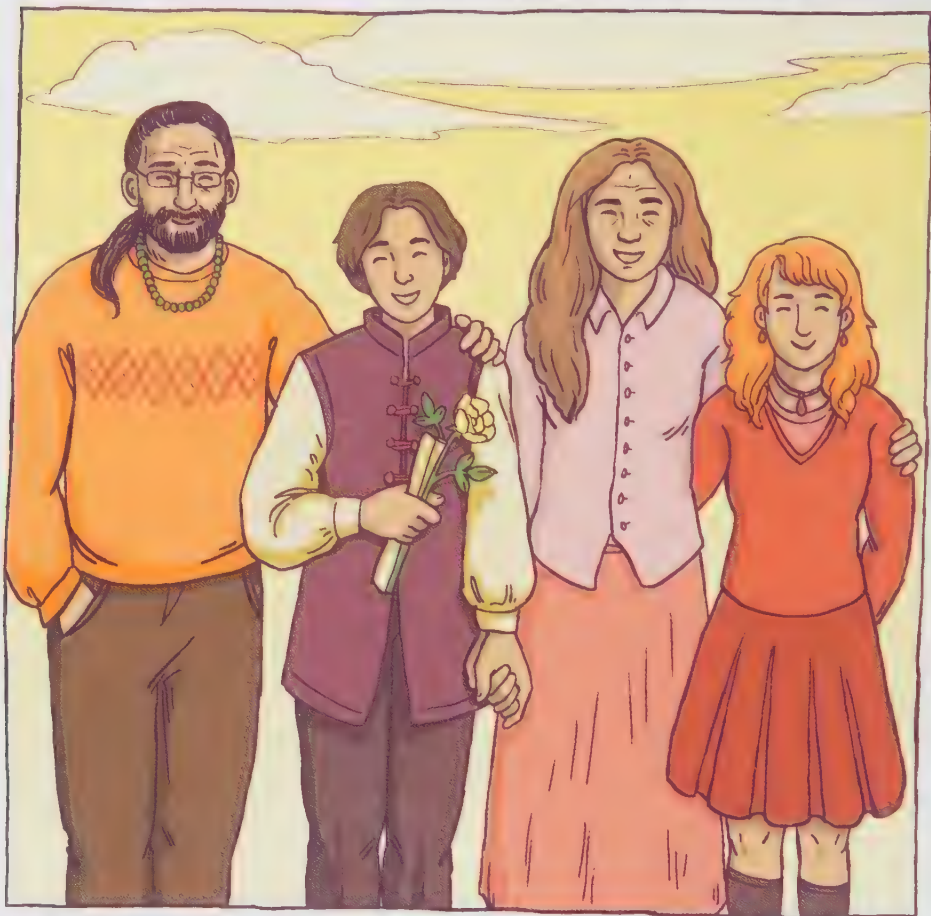
... And I talked to my mom. On Friday. We were on the deck. I was nervous, but I needn't have been. I felt much better having told her, though.

Uh, Mom, I'm pretty sure I'm bi.

I always thought you were one of those kids who could go either way.

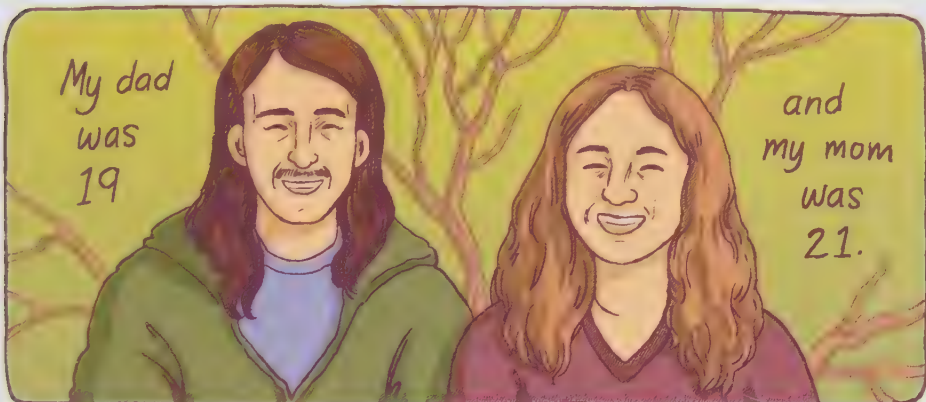


AT MY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION  
IN 2007, I WAS THE ONLY A.F.A.B.  
(ASSIGNED FEMALE AT BIRTH)  
GRADUATE WHO WORE PANTS.

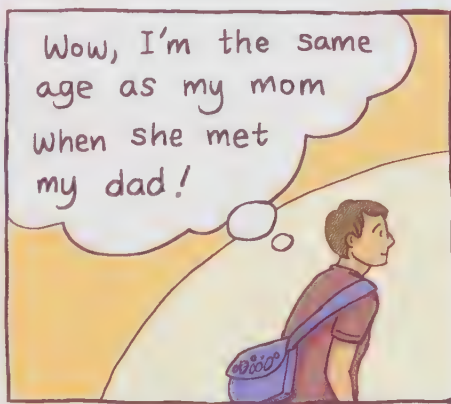
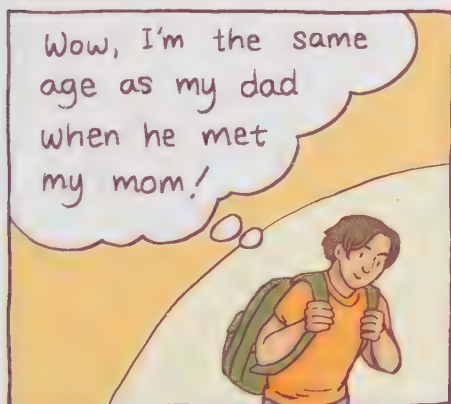


SOMETHING I LOST WHEN I CUT  
MY HAIR: VISUAL UNITY WITH  
MY LONG-HAIRED FAMILY. THINGS  
I GAINED: CONFIDENCE, HAPPINESS.

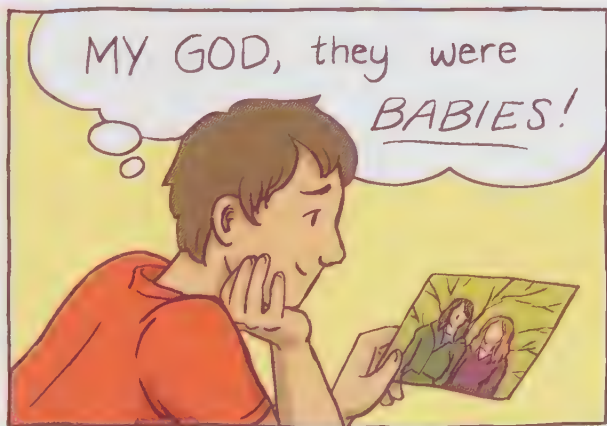
# MY PARENTS MET WHEN THEY WERE IN COLLEGE



WHEN I REACHED EACH OF THESE RESPECTIVE AGES, I REMEMBER THINKING:



NOW  
I FIND  
MYSELF  
THINKING:



# Meet the ART STUDENT meme!

AGE: 18

GENDER: ?

ZODIAC: Taurus

YEAR OF: Snake

HOUSE: Ravenclaw

MYERS-BRIGGS: ISTJ

STRENGTHS:

Drawing, Reading, Writing

WEAKNESSES:

Math, Technology, Pop culture

I just discovered Deviant Art!



## IN MY BAG:

My first laptop  
(But I didn't know how to type)



Flash drive I didn't know how to use



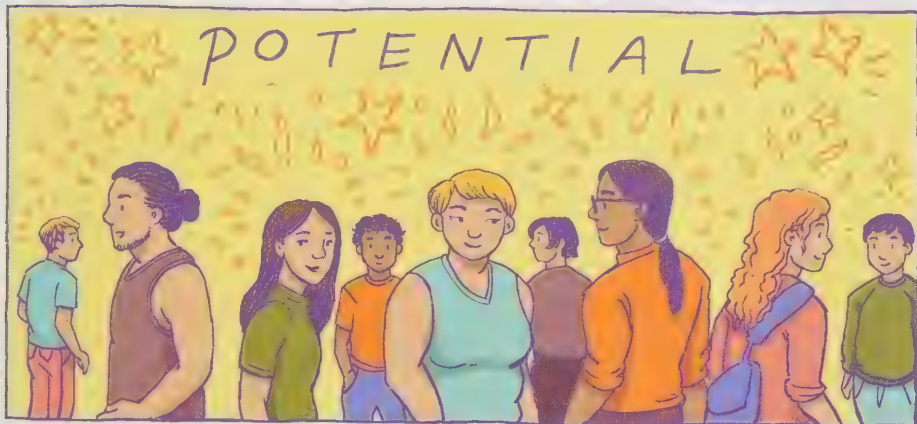
Dorm key, I was afraid of losing - (at home in the country we didn't lock our doors)



Biography of Andy Warhol

DURING MY FIRST FEW WEEKS OF COLLEGE,  
EVERYONE AROUND ME SEEMED TO GLOW WITH

POTENTIAL

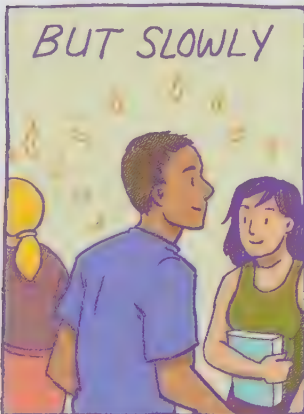


I REMEMBER  
THINKING...

The person I spend the rest of my life with might  
be here, in this cafeteria.



BUT SLOWLY



THE GLOW



FADED.



I JOINED THE DRAMA CLUB BUT WAS DISAPPOINTED TO FIND IT SMALLER THAN THE ONE AT MY HIGH SCHOOL.

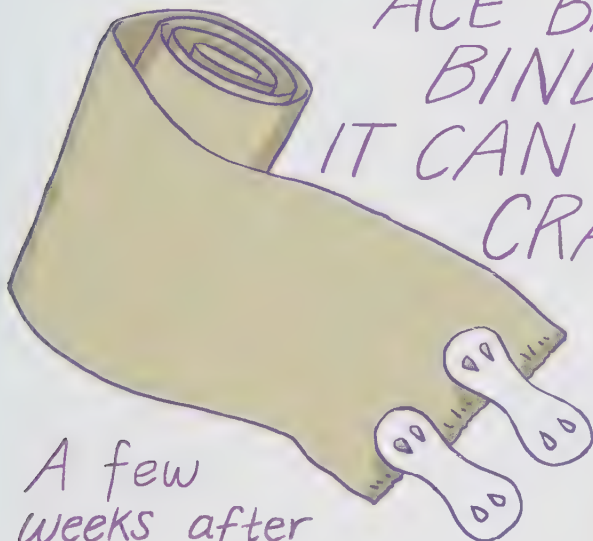
However, this lack of resources led to me getting cast in a male role—and my first experience binding.

How does that feel? Too tight?

No, it's good.



AT THE TIME I DIDN'T  
KNOW THE DANGERS OF  
ACE BANDAGE  
BINDING—  
IT CAN LEAD TO  
CRACKED  
RIBS.



A few weeks after the show ended, I went to a formal school event wearing the ACE bandage and a too-long tie. What had felt liberating onstage felt embarrassing in public. I put the bandage away and never wore it again.

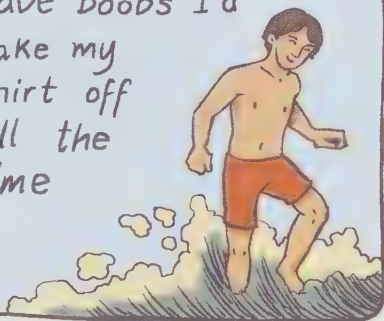


I have spent so much time  
looking at boys in button-up  
shirts - JEALOUS  
of the flatness  
of their chests.



SALE  
40%  
OFF

If I didn't  
have boobs I'd  
take my  
shirt off  
all the  
time



And feel  
delicious  
sunshine  
on my  
back.



But I  
can't  
stand  
the  
feeling  
of air  
on my  
breasts.



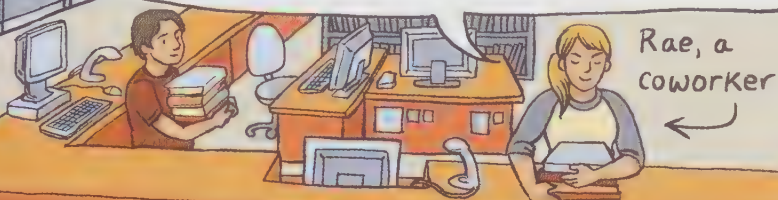
My boobs  
are holding  
my back  
hostage.

A BINDER WOULD HAVE HELPED BUT IN  
COLLEGE I DIDN'T YET KNOW THEY EXISTED.



# I GOT A WORK-STUDY JOB AT THE LIBRARY.

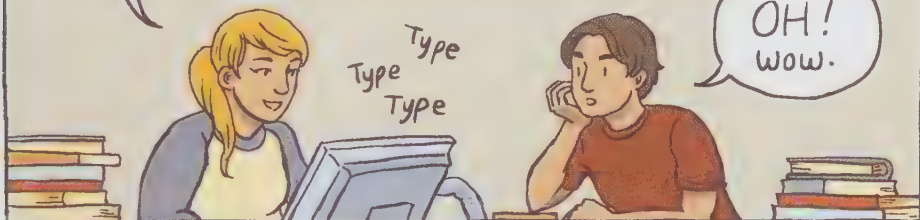
It's too bad you missed Kira's birthday. We started playing "Never have I ever" with shots and it got SO CRAZY!



Rae, a coworker

Sophomore year, 2008

Someone said, "Never have I ever kissed a girl," and Molly took a drink! Can you believe it? But she refused to give any details.



Type  
Type  
Type

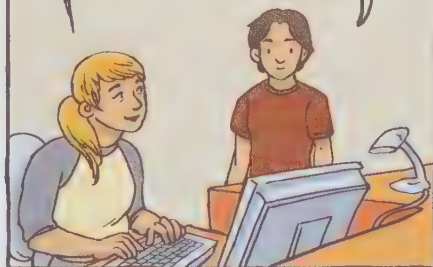
OH!  
Wow.

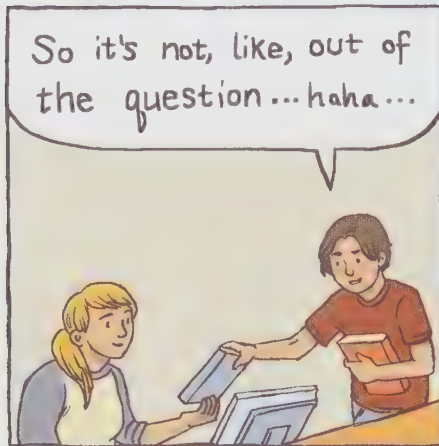
Haha, I know. I wonder if we got her drunk again if she'd tell us the whole story?



Anyway, have you?

Have I what?

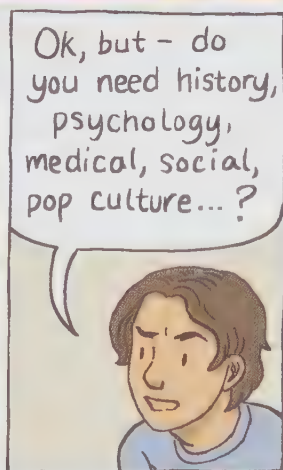


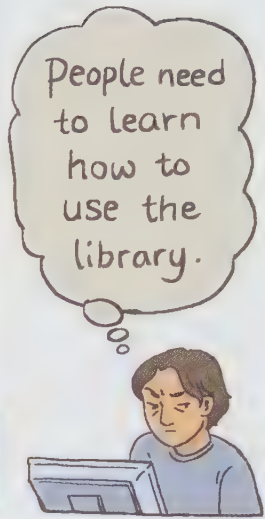
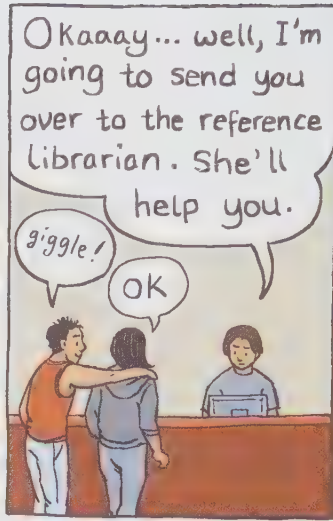


Well, she's the first person I've come out to at work! I wonder if she will tell anyone? Kind of weird, but I'm glad I said it.



AT  
WORK,  
A FEW  
DAYS  
LATER





A FEW MINUTES LATER I SAW THEM LEAVE



Hey Maia, I found out a secret ~

Someone has a crush on you!

Oh yes?



I wonder if it's that girl who was in here acting so weird earlier...



I ... don't know how I'd feel about that.



## THE LAST DAY BEFORE WINTER BREAK

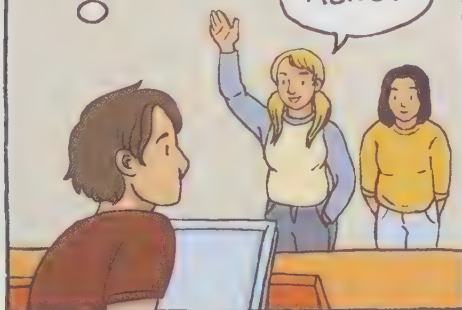
My two favorite coworkers, AJ & Fish, both out gay men

On my last shift of the semester

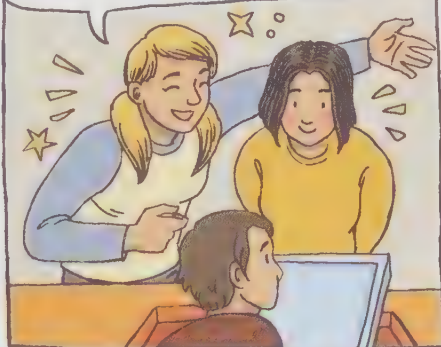


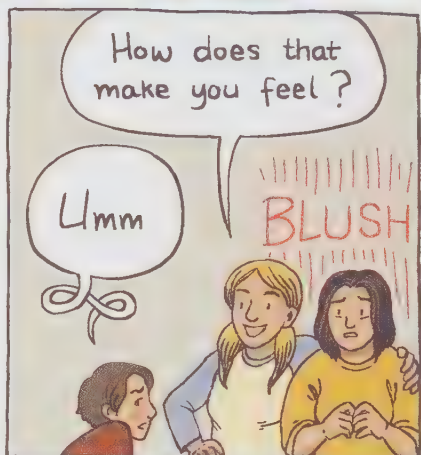
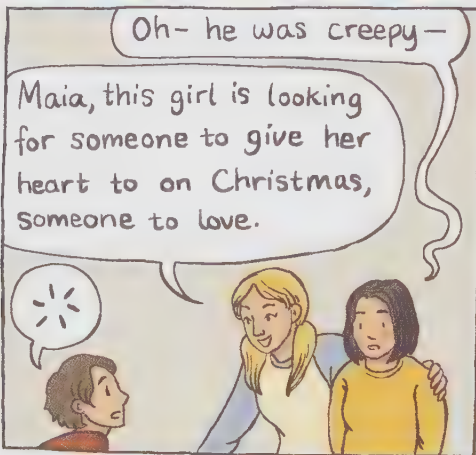
It's that girl ... how does Rae know her?

Hello!



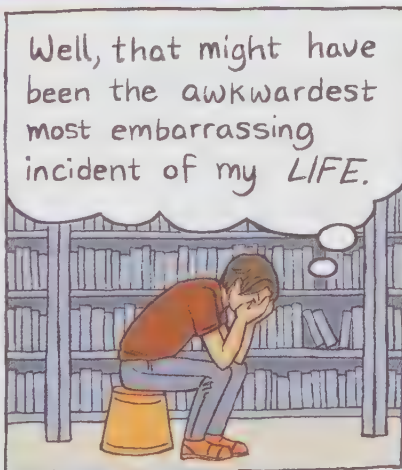
I want you to meet my friend Autumn!







HIDING UPSTAIRS IN THE LIBRARY STACKS



I DECIDED  
TO SEND HER  
A FACEBOOK  
REQUEST  
WITH A NOTE:



SHE ACCEPTED AND WROTE BACK:

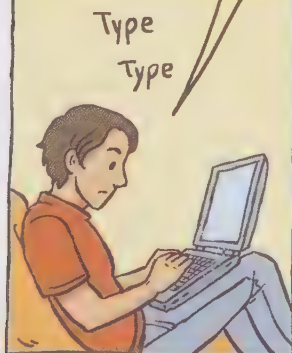
I was going to thank her, actually, for finally getting me to talk to you.



I'm kind of shy...  
it's hard to start  
conversations with  
people like you.



What do you mean,  
people like me?



People I think  
are cute.



I don't  
know how to  
respond!





My parents' narrative of meeting in college was deeply pressed into my psyche.

I think I'm supposed to want this?

She's cute, she's friendly, she reads, she writes poetry.

She would probably make out with me.

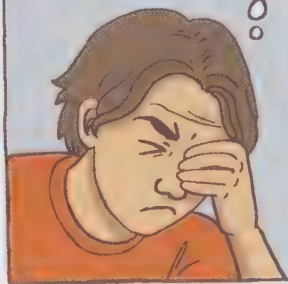
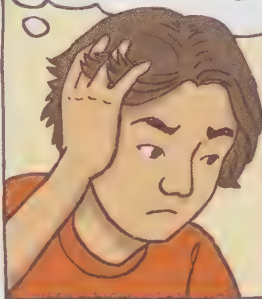
But am I interested in that? I can't tell...



I bet it would be really easy to make her fall in love with me.

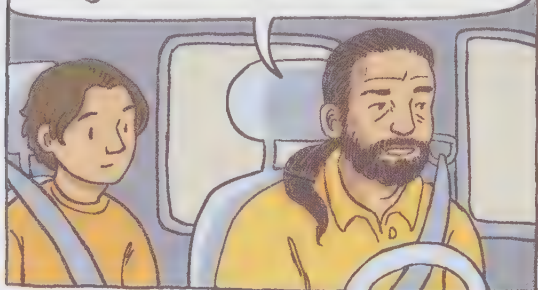
But for her it would be real and for me it would just be practicing.

UGH, I don't want to talk about this through FB!



I TOLD MY DAD ABOUT THE SITUATION.

I got hit on by a few guys when I was in college. At first I thought it was a little weird.



But if you aren't interested, you can always say "No."



I found the concepts of dating & relationships DEEPLY confusing.



What, exactly, did people get out of them?

I ENDED UP CALLING HER ON THE PHONE.

I've never even been on a date. Have you...dated very much?



I've never dated a girl, but I had a boyfriend for three years.



We broke up because of you, actually.

WHAT?



He read my diary. He found an entry I'd written about you.

WHOA



We had a huge fight, and then we broke up.

That's crazy, I'm sorry.



Yeah. Well, maybe it's for the best.

I guess?



You are the first girl I've let myself have feelings for. I really want to try being with you.



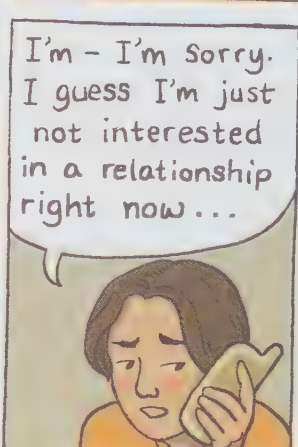
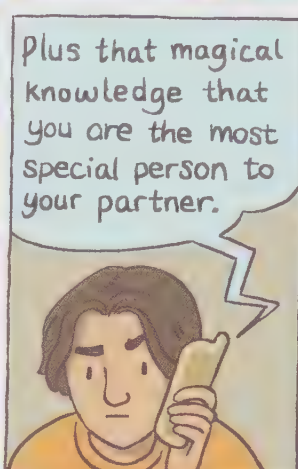
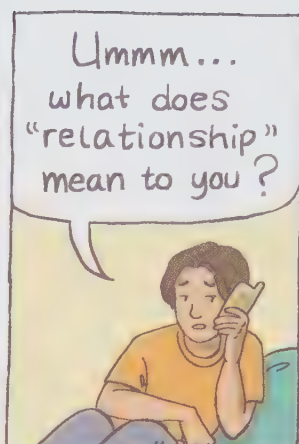
Will you give me a chance?

Umm

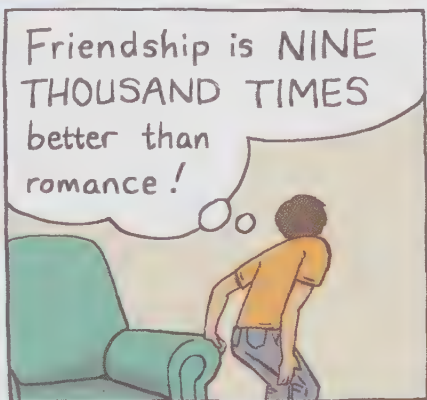
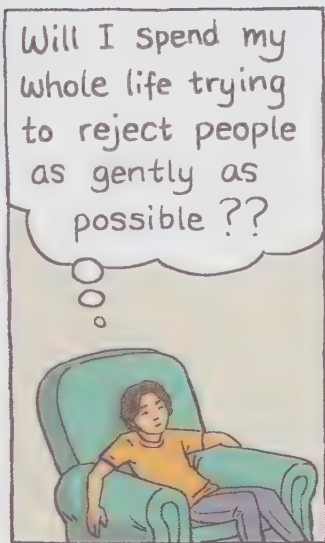


This girl has been on a year-long emotional journey entirely based on just the idea of me.





AFTER  
THE  
CALL  
ENDED

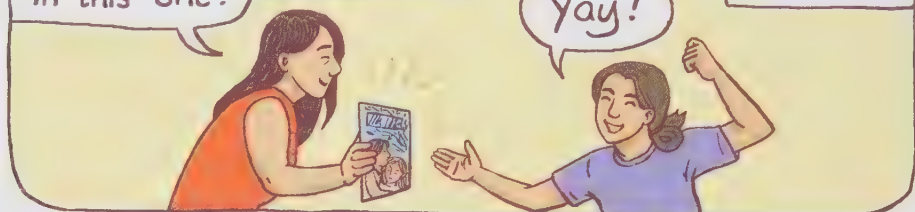


INTEREST IN EROTIC GAY FICTION HAS BEEN SO PREVALENT IN MY FRIENDSHIPS, ONE COULD MISTAKE IT FOR A PREREQUISITE.

I brought you some doujinshi! Aragorn & Legolas make out in this one.

HIGH SCHOOL

Yay!



When did you first ship Sam & Dean?

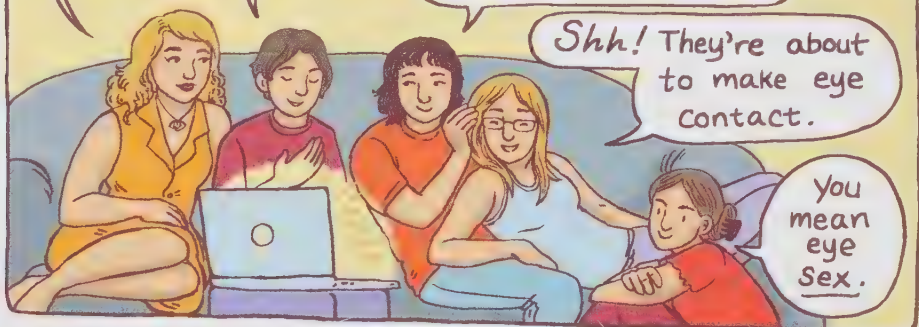
COLLEGE

When Dean pushed Sam against the bridge in the first episode!

That part is so hot.

Shh! They're about to make eye contact.

You mean eye Sex.



I'm sending you my favorite Merlin fic- you have to read it because Merlin & Arthur are the OTP of my heart.

GRAD SCHOOL

And you have to read the Harry/Louis story I'm sending you.



# IN FACT, I'M SHOCKED WHEN A FRIEND SAYS:



LATER SHE DESCRIBED HERSELF AS HETERO-FLEXIBLE AND TRIED TO EXPLAIN WHY SHE LIKED LESBIAN PORN MORE THAN GAY PORN.



DURING THE 2010 WINTER GAMES, ALL OF MY ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON:

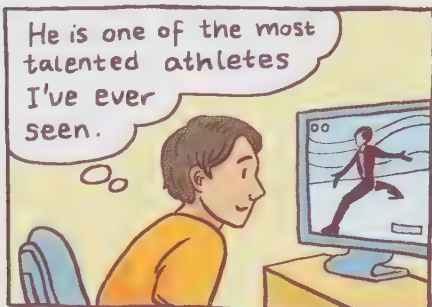
FIGURE  
SKATER  
JOHNNY  
WEIR

I was  
entranced.



He is one of the most  
talented athletes  
I've ever  
seen.

And he makes me want  
to wear glitter!



AND SO :

So wait -  
why are we  
here again?

My  
sister  
→

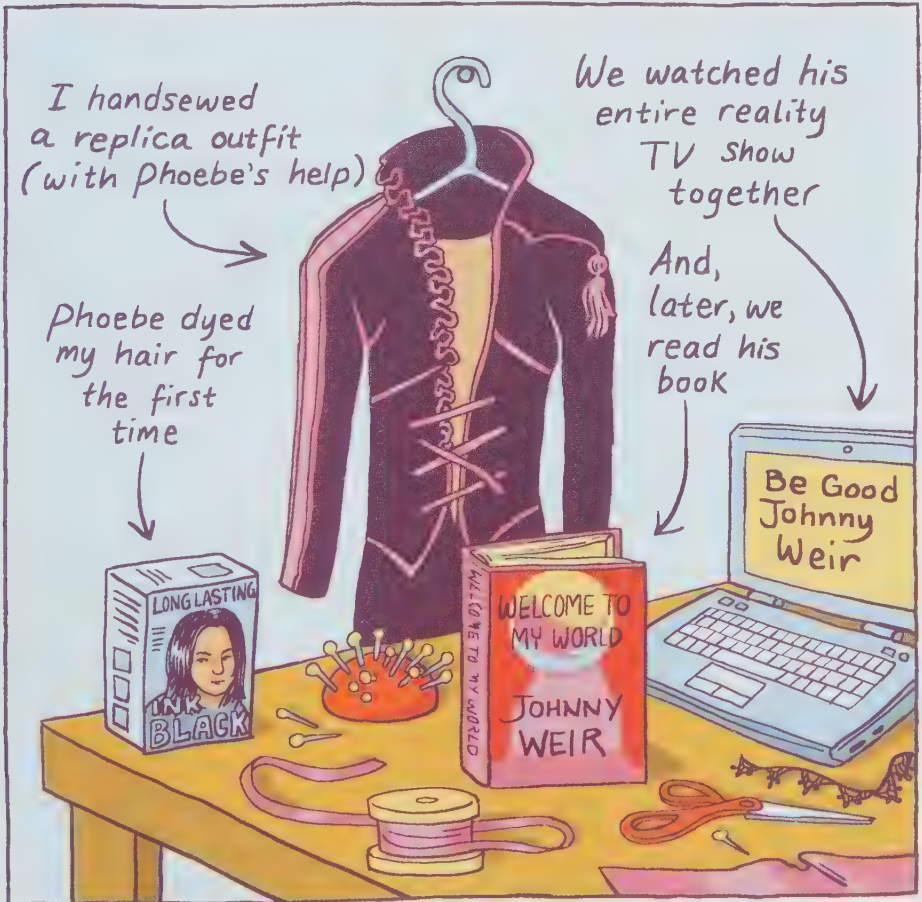
I NEED  
RHINESTONES!







I WENT ALL OUT FOR MY COSTUME.

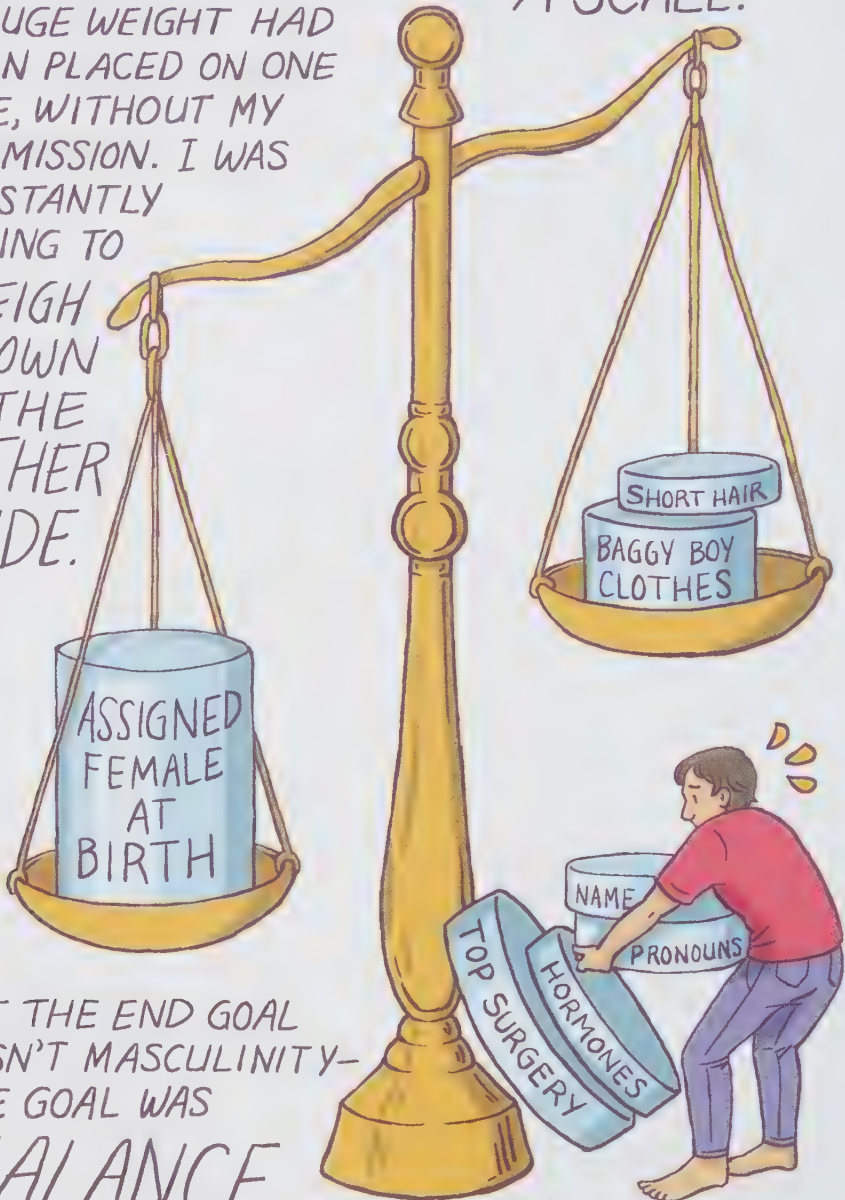


# THE CLEAREST METAPHOR

I HAD FOR MY OWN GENDER IDENTITY IN COLLEGE WAS THE IMAGE OF A SCALE.

A HUGE WEIGHT HAD BEEN PLACED ON ONE SIDE, WITHOUT MY PERMISSION. I WAS CONSTANTLY TRYING TO

WEIGH DOWN THE OTHER SIDE.



BUT THE END GOAL WASN'T MASCULINITY—THE GOAL WAS

BALANCE.

DRESSING UP AS A MALE CHARACTER LET ME PLAY WITH THE IDEA OF HOW I WOULD CHOOSE TO PRESENT MYSELF IF THE WEIGHT OF ASSIGNED SEX HAD BEEN PLACED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SCALE.



If I had been born a boy I would play with this stuff EVERY DAY!

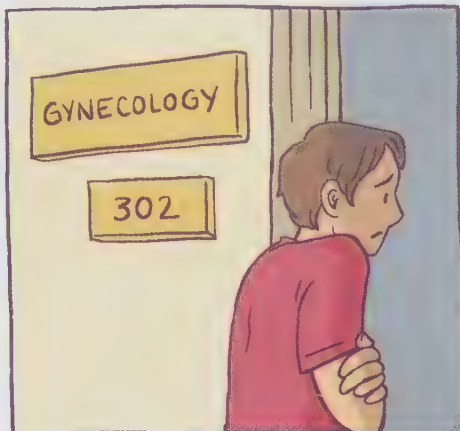
I was 21  
when I wore this  
costume. I  
felt more  
sexy,

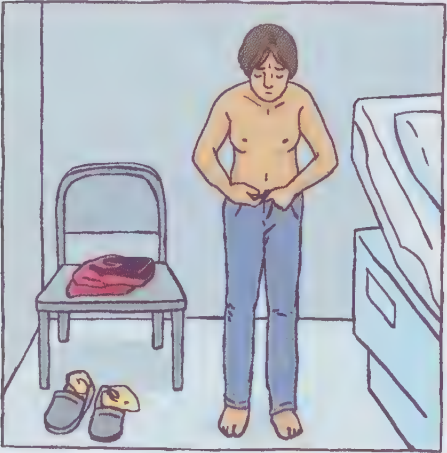


and  
more  
joyful  
than  
I had  
in a  
long  
time.

I had to be  
"Johnny Weir  
on Wheels"  
because I cannot ice skate to save my life.

# REALITY REINSERTED ITSELF.





Hi there! Is this your first papsmear exam?

yeah.

Let me ask you a few questions first. Do you drink?

No.

Do you smoke?

No.

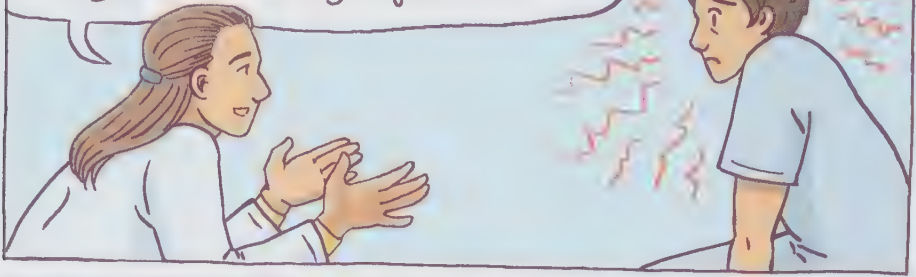
Do you exercise regularly?

No.

Have you ever been sexually active?

No.

So, what I'll be doing today is opening your vaginal canal with a speculum, then collecting just a little sample of cells. Mainly we are screening for cervical cancer. Do you have any questions?



Yeah,  
why don't I  
feel like a  
girl?

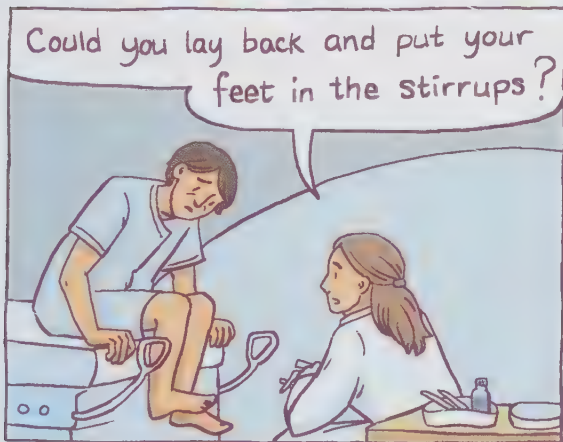
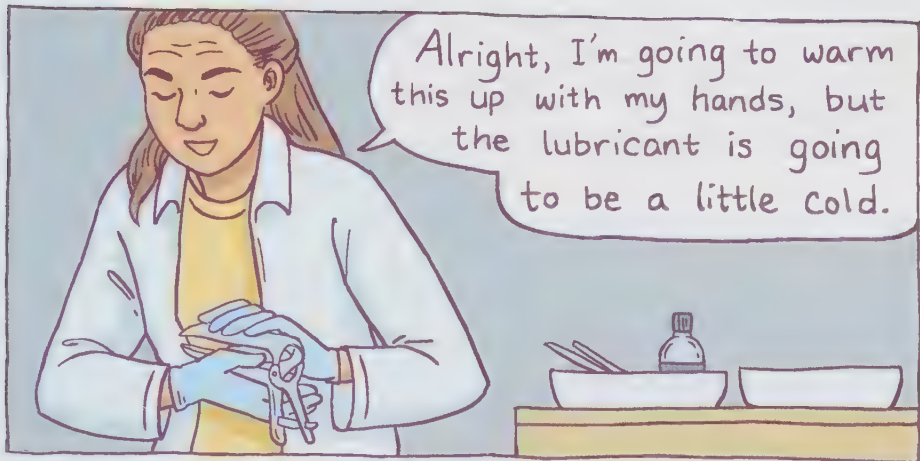
Why do  
I get so  
turned on  
by gay  
sex?

Is there  
a physical  
attribute of  
my body, like  
an overlarge  
clitoris  
or something,  
that makes  
me feel like  
I should have  
a penis?

No.



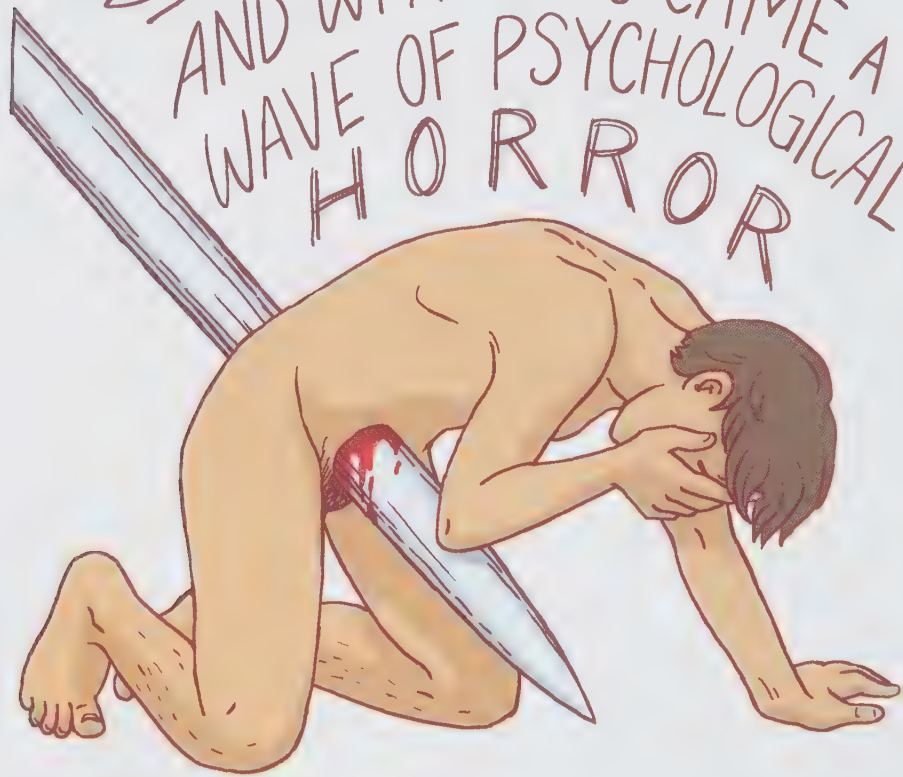




WHAT I EXPERIENCED NEXT WAS 45 SECONDS OF THE MOST EXCRUCIATING PAIN OF MY LIFE.



AS IF I FELT  
BEEN STABBED  
THROUGH MY  
ENTIRE  
BODY  
AND WITH THIS CAME A  
WAVE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL  
HORROR

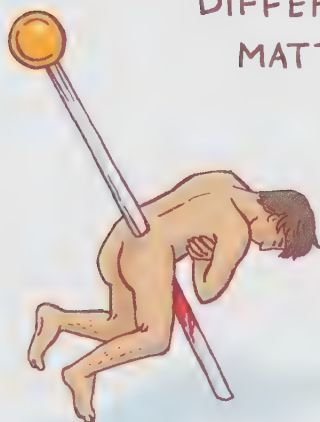


AT THE REALIZATION THAT THINGS CAN  
GO INSIDE MY BODY

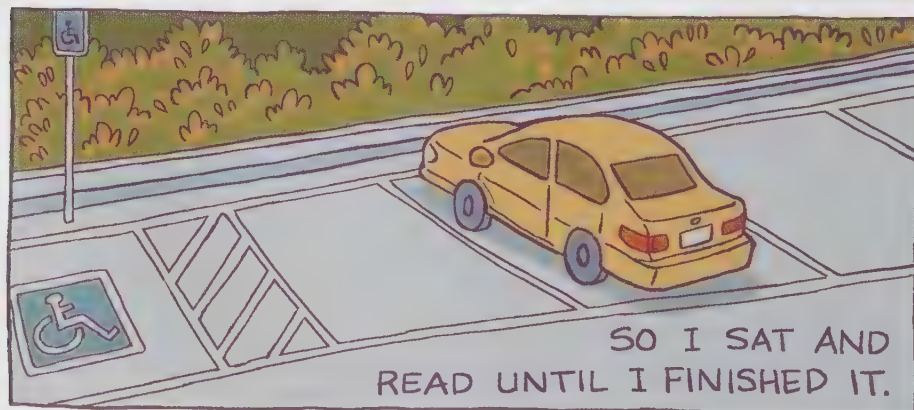
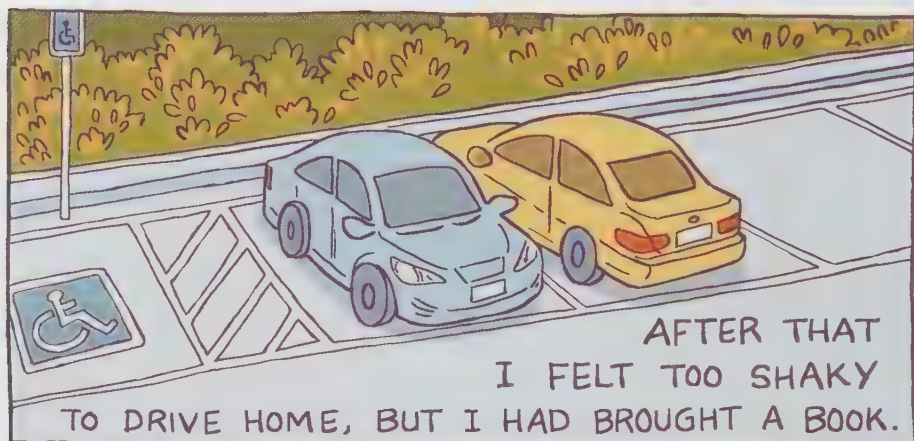
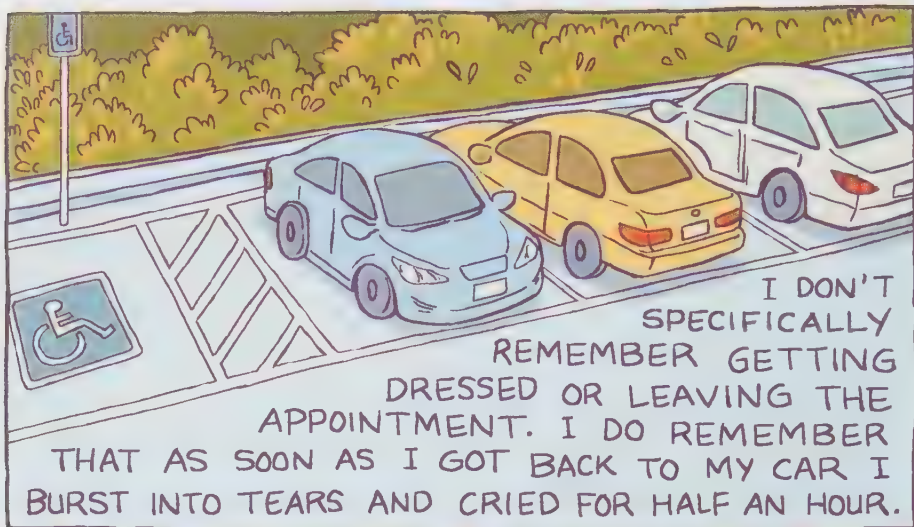
OF COURSE I ALREADY  
KNEW THIS FACT INTELLECTUALLY;

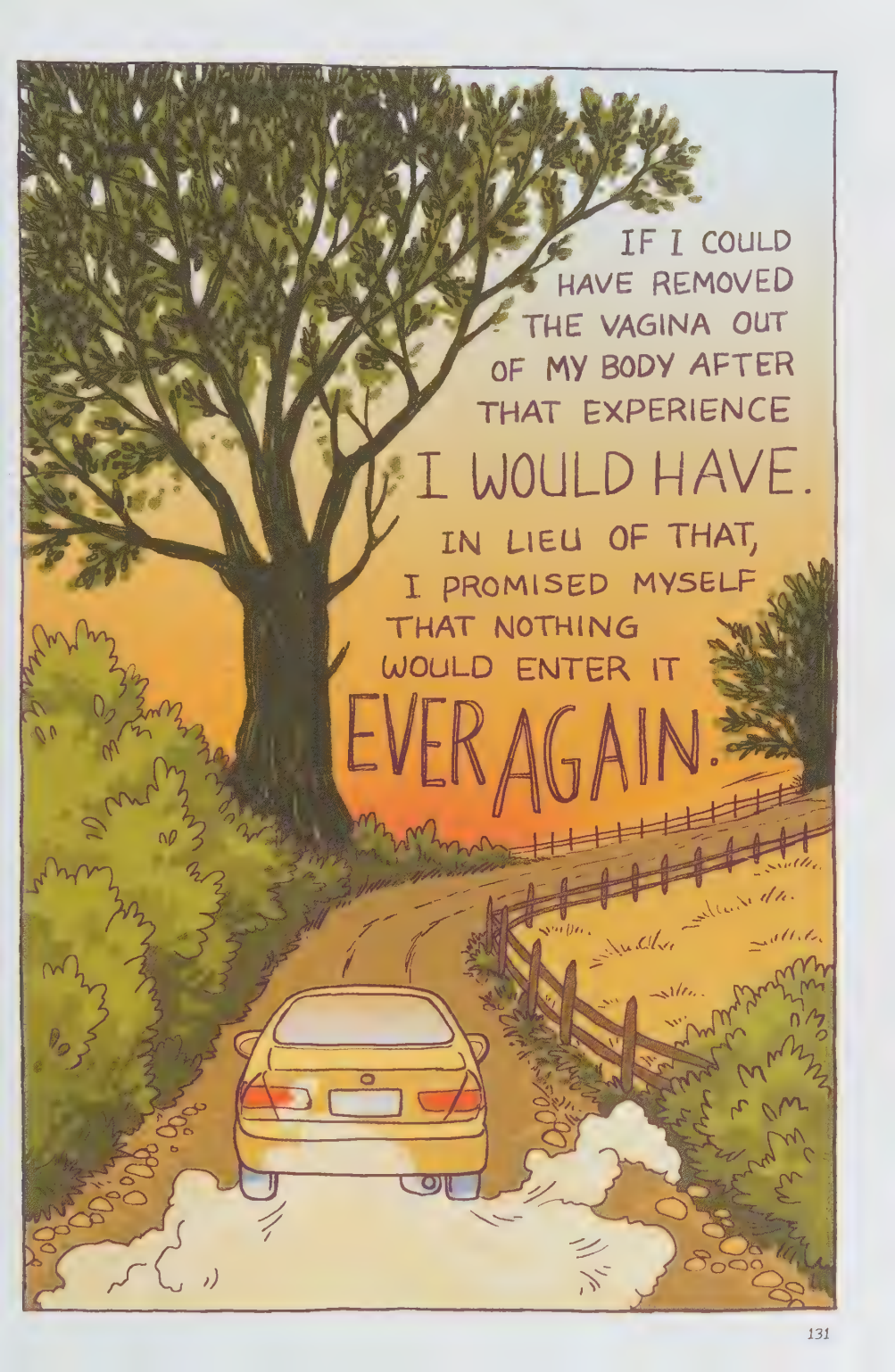
*embodied*

KNOWLEDGE IS  
AN ENTIRELY  
DIFFERENT  
MATTER.



WHAT MY BODY  
TOLD ME WAS THAT THIS  
INTRUSION OF THE OUTSIDE  
WORLD INTO MY INTERNAL PHYSICAL  
BEING WAS WRONG ON A LEVEL  
TOO DEEP FOR WORDS.





IF I COULD  
HAVE REMOVED  
THE VAGINA OUT  
OF MY BODY AFTER  
THAT EXPERIENCE  
I WOULD HAVE.

IN LIEU OF THAT,  
I PROMISED MYSELF  
THAT NOTHING  
WOULD ENTER IT  
EVER AGAIN.

AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE, I TRIED TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH SOME OF MY FELLOW ART MAJORS BY GETTING TOGETHER WITH THEM ONCE A MONTH.



Hey Maia, can I ask you kind of a personal question?



Go for it.



Are you gay?



I WAS SURPRISED BECAUSE I THOUGHT I'D BEEN OUT IN COLLEGE. I'D MADE A POINT OF POSTING ABOUT IT ON FACEBOOK EVERY YEAR ON NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY, AND I WENT TO PRIDE IN THE CITY. I GUESS SOME PEOPLE MISSED THE MEMO.

Bi, actually.

Very cool.



High five!

Haha



My gaydar is so bad. Before my little brother came out to me I had NO CLUE he was gay!

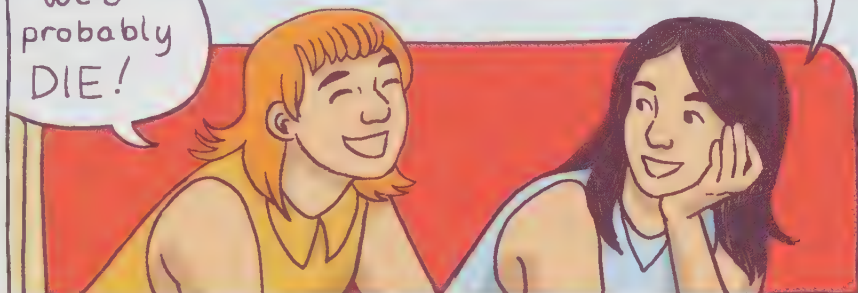


And we're only 16 months apart —almost like twins!



Can you imagine being bi? What if we were both just as crazy about girls as we are about boys?

We'd probably DIE!



I'd bet I'm less than half as interested in boys and girls combined than you are in boys alone.



Lol, maybe not even 25%.



WHEN I WAS 14 OR SO I TOLD A CLOSE FRIEND

I think I'm asexual.

You can't be,  
I've seen you  
lust after people.

Well.

Yeah.

But not very  
often and I  
don't enjoy it.

I REMEMBER MY FIRST YEAR AT S.F. PRIDE  
THINKING THAT THE ASEXUAL GROUP HAD  
**THE BEST SIGNS.**





ALISON BECHDEL WRITES IN FUN HOME ABOUT DISCOVERING MASTURBATION SOON AFTER HER FIRST PERIOD (PAGE 170).

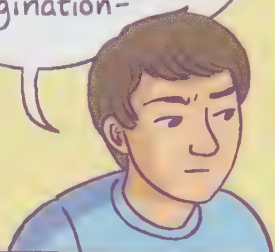


I DISCOVERED IT AT AROUND THE SAME AGE, FOLLOWED BY THE FURTHER REALIZATION THAT MY ABILITY TO BECOME AROUSED WAS GOVERNED BY A STRICT LAW OF DIMINISHING RETURNS.



THE MORE I HAD TO INTERACT WITH MY GENITALS THE LESS LIKELY I WAS TO REACH A POINT OF ANY SATISFACTION. THE BEST FANTASY WAS ONE THAT DIDN'T REQUIRE ANY PHYSICAL TOUCH AT ALL.

I've always thought I had a fairly vivid imagination-



But around age 16 I felt like I'd run through literally every sexual fantasy. I'd used up all of my material.



This led to the first time I gave up wanking.

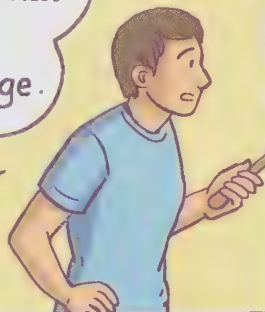


2005

Jan	Feb	Mar	April
May	Jun	July	Aug
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

= months I wanked  
 = months with no wanking (yes, I kept track)

In 2005, this hiatus was intentional. But (next slide please) I had two more unintentional hiatuses in college.



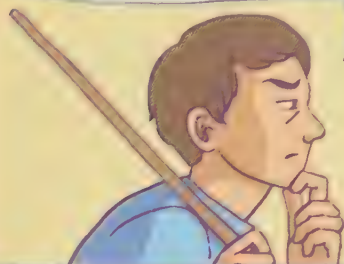
2007

Jan	Feb	Mar	April
May	Jun	July	Aug
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

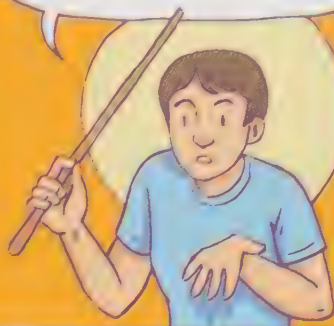
2008

Jan	Feb	Mar	April
May	Jun	July	Aug
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

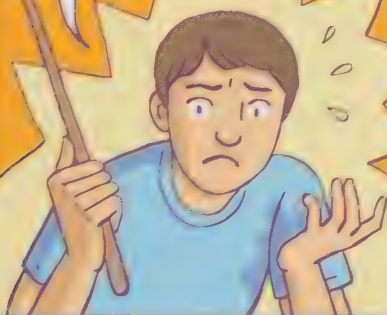
I had no idea what to make of this annual pattern of asexuality.



Was it a hormone imbalance?



Was I malnourished?



Was my body operating on a seasonal sexual cycle, LIKE A BIRD?



Obviously, I was WAY TOO EMBARRASSED to ask anyone about this.

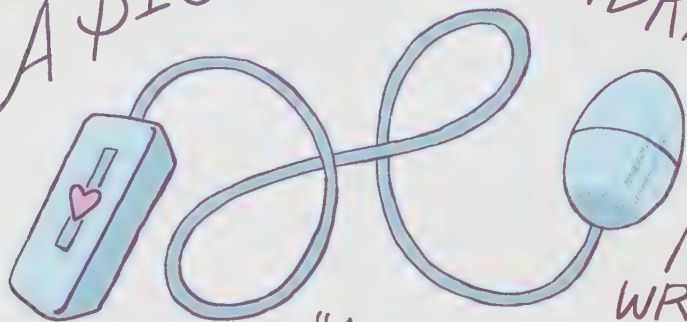


Eventually I got tired of thinking about it and I just stopped keeping track.



IN 2013, I DISCOVERED  
ERIKA MOEN'S WEBCOMIC OH JOY  
SEX TOY. IN A COMIC FROM NOVEMBER  
OF THAT YEAR SHE TALKS ABOUT THE  
FIRST SEX TOY SHE EVER PURCHASED

★ A \$10 BULLET VIBRATOR ★



MOEN  
WRITES:

"My first orgasm is still  
one of my most vivid, lovely experiences.  
It was the first time I ever loved my body."

The way she talks about  
orgasms makes me  
wonder if actually  
I've...never...  
had one...?

I guess I should  
get one of these  
and try it!



A  
FEW  
WEEKS  
LATER  
I  
BOUGHT  
ONE.



I remember leaning in  
my bedroom doorway,  
imagining how good this  
vibrator was going to  
make me feel.

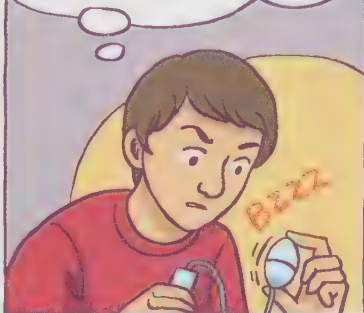
*I GOT  
OFF*

by pressing  
the front  
of my  
jeans,  
the  
unopened  
box in  
my  
hand.



BUT WHEN  
THE TIME  
CAME TO  
ACTUALLY  
TURN IT  
ON ...

I'll try the lowest  
setting? That's  
what Erika used  
in the comic...

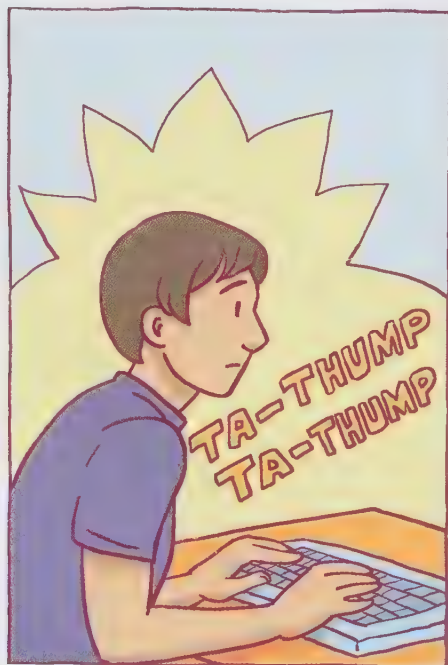
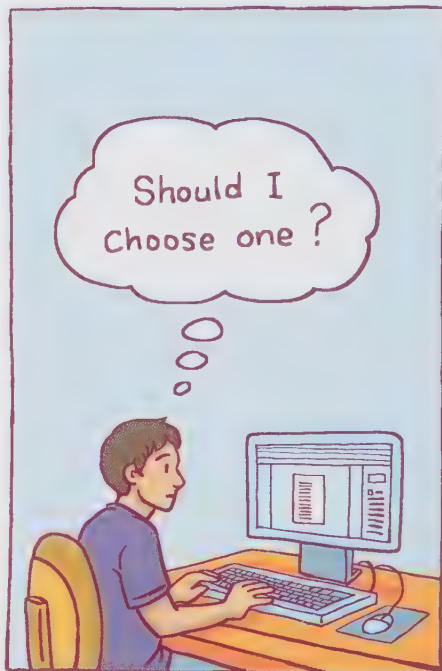
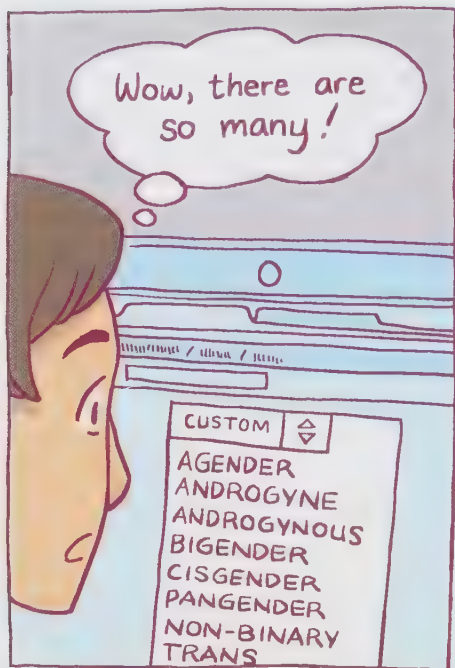




# A LITTLE WHILE LATER



BACK WHEN FB FIRST ADDED MORE GENDER OPTIONS



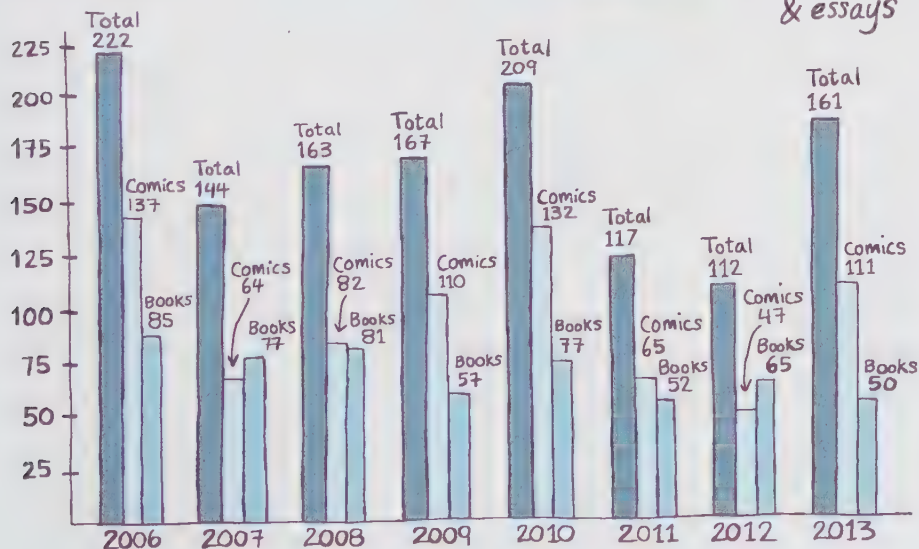
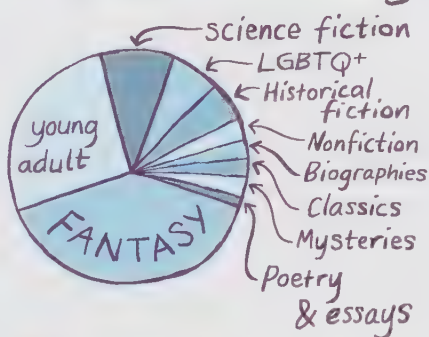
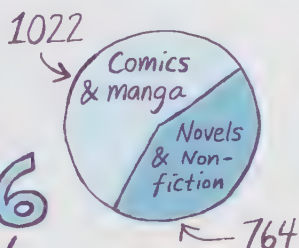


IN JUNE 2014, I CELEBRATED TEN YEARS OF KEEPING MY BOOK LIST BY DRAWING A SHORT COMIC ABOUT IT.



It featured statistics about my decade of reading:

IN TEN YEARS I READ 1786 BOOKS!



## MOST READ WESTERN AUTHORS\*

Neil Gaiman, 37 books read	* These numbers include re-reads
Terry Pratchett, 36 books	
Tamora Pierce, 28	
Lois McMaster Bujold, 26	
Mercedes Lackey, 18	
J.K. Rowling, 17	
Holly Black, 16	
J.R.R. Tolkien, 14	
Roger Zelazny, 13	
U.K. Le Guin, 12	

Between 2004-2014 I read most of the Harry Potter series twice & books 6 & 7 four times each

The Hobbit & the LOTR Trilogy read three times each

## MOST READ MANGA & MANHWA AUTHORS

CLAMP (a collective of four people) - 77 books
Kosuke Fujishima, 24 - Oh My Goddess!
Rumiko Takahashi, 22 - Ranma 1/2, Inuyasha
Masashi Kishimoto 15 - Naruto
Hiromu Arakawa 14 - Fullmetal Alchemist
Emura 14 - W. Juliet
Maki Murakami 12 - Gravitation
Higuchi Tachibana 12 - Gakuen Alice
Choi Kyung-Ah 12 - Snow Drop
Kiyohiko Azuma 12 - Yotsuba&!, Azumanga Daioh

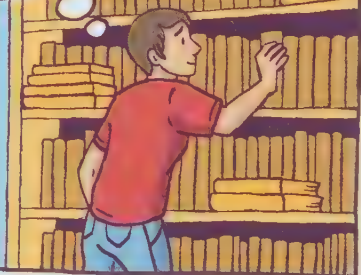
THIS COMIC WAS VERY WARMLY RECEIVED BY BOOK LOVERS, TEACHERS, AND LIBRARIANS, BUT I REMEMBER THINKING:



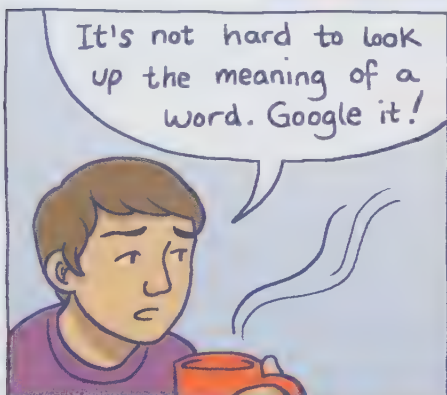
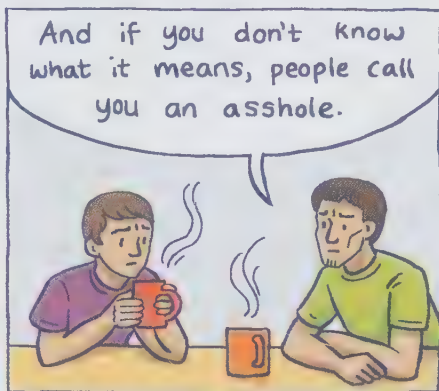
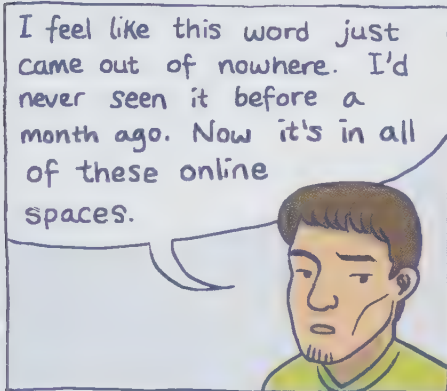
This is definitely the last autobiographical comic I will ever write.



The only thing I feel comfortable with strangers knowing about me is what I read!



NOT LONG AFTER THIS, I HAD A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE WORD "CISGENDER" WITH A CIS, STRAIGHT, MALE FRIEND FROM HIGH SCHOOL.



IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD SAID THAT OUT LOUD.



NATURALLY, I RELAYED THIS WHOLE EXCHANGE TO ANOTHER (QUEER, FEMALE) FRIEND.

... and then I guess I ended up coming out to him, completely by accident! I just said it.



# I DECIDED TO TALK TO MY MOM ABOUT IT.

I know I told you ages ago that I am bi, but I think now that I'm probably genderqueer too?



What do you mean?

Well - I'm still sorting out what it means and how to explain it.



But - like I've never felt female, or identified with being female.

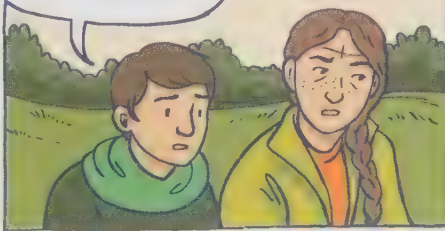


Specifically things like - having breasts or having a period ...



No one likes having their period.

I mean - I know -



But I feel it goes deeper than that for me? My whole life I've wished for a magical way to switch between genders.



So that you could be male sometimes?

Sort of, but not exactly. It's more about NOT being female than BEING male.



You don't have to be super-feminine to be a woman - I'm not.



I know.

But like... you don't hate having a vagina, do you?



No, of course not. I hope you don't hate your body!



No, I don't hate my body. I don't have chronic pain or any of the other health issues so many of my friends deal with.



The majority of my body is great. There are just ... a few bits I don't like.



For example, if I could just remove my entire reproductive system, that would be ideal.



But what about having kids?

Uhhg, I've told you A HUNDRED TIMES, I am NEVER having children!



I wish you wouldn't say that. You'd be such a good mom.



No I wouldn't! I'd be constantly resenting the kid for taking up all of my time!

I'm WAY too selfish for parenting!



plus, the thought of growing a parasite being inside my own body makes me want to vomit.

PARASITE?!



Hahaha —  
What? Haha



ABOUT  
24  
HOURS  
LATER

I want you to know I never thought of you as a parasite while I was pregnant.



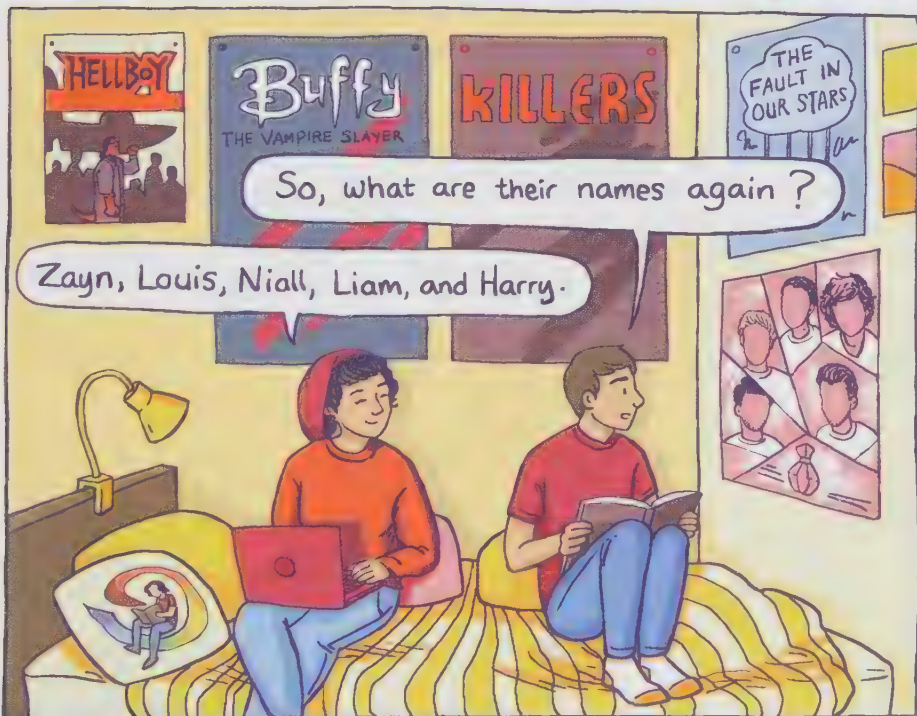
Oh—  
Uh, good!



A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE START OF OUR SECOND YEAR OF GRAD SCHOOL (JULY 2014), ASHLEY R. GUILLORY CALLED WITH AN IMPORTANT QUESTION:

Is it okay if I bring a One Direction poster for our dorm?

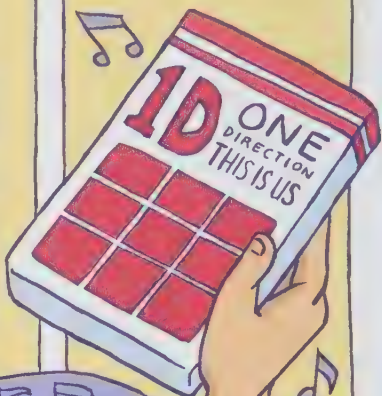
Yeah dude! You know I'm putting up all kinds of nerdy shit.

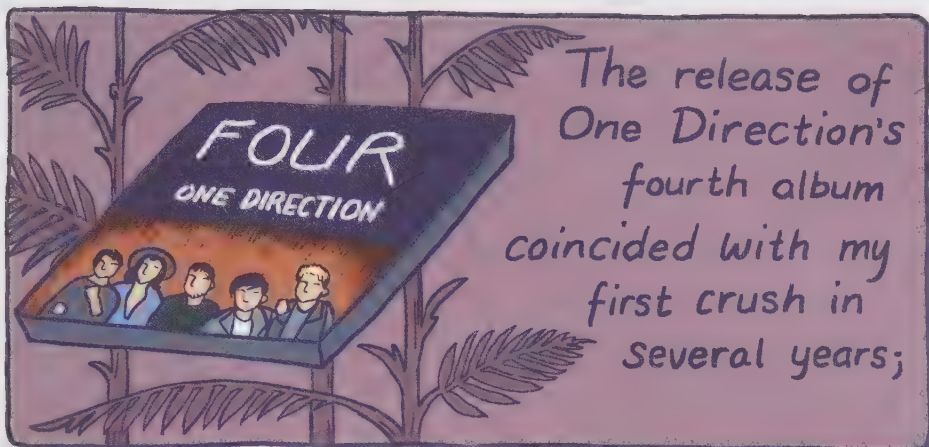


The music started to infuse our work sessions...

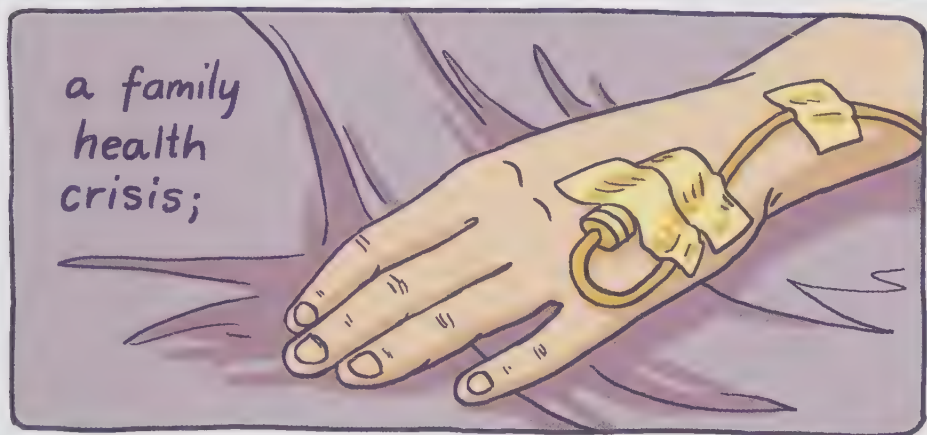
I started to be able to recognize the boys in tumblr posts...

Then we watched the documentary.



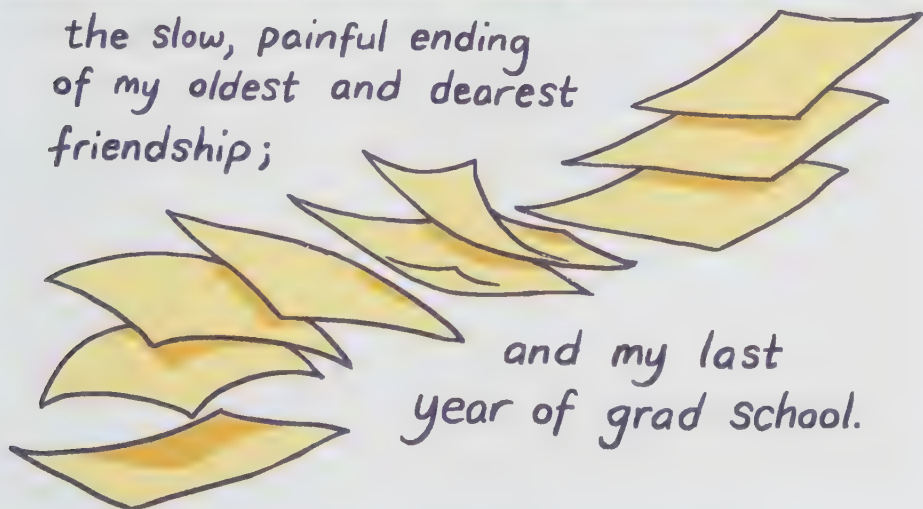


The release of  
One Direction's  
fourth album  
coincided with my  
first crush in  
several years;



a family  
health  
crisis;

the slow, painful ending  
of my oldest and dearest  
friendship;



and my last  
year of grad school.

LIKE MANY BEFORE ME, I Poured ALL OF MY FEELINGS INTO WRITING

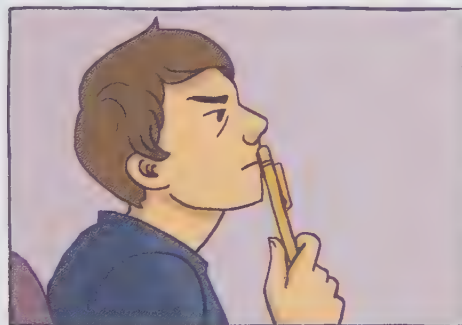
*fanfiction*.

In my story all of the 1D boys are lusting after each other and it is DESTROYING THEIR FRIENDSHIP.



OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS I PRODUCED NEARLY 100,000 WORDS.

BUT WHEN THE TIME CAME TO GIVE MY ANGSTY CHARACTERS A BREAK, AND FINALLY LET THEM MAKE OUT, I RAN INTO A SMALL PROBLEM...



Dude. Just upgrade your phone. I'm sure it's been more than two years.



I have ... never upgraded.



You are still using your first phone? How old is it, five years?



It's only four!



I am taking you to the Verizon store tomorrow.



Yay! Will you also help me set up a Tinder profile?



I need to make out with someone soon, for the fanfiction.



Omg. Yes!



TO PUT THIS COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH INTO PERSPECTIVE— OTHER THINGS I DID IN SERVICE OF MY FIC INCLUDE:

Watched 10 hours of live college modern dance performances.



Toured the SF Armory, which at the time housed the filming studios of KINK.com.

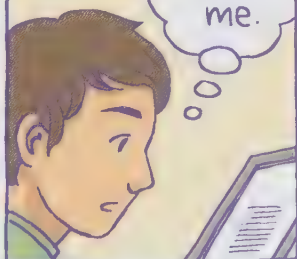


I ALSO SCROLLED THROUGH MANY "YES/NO/MAYBE" LISTS ONLINE, TRYING TO DECIDE IF MY SHIPS WERE SEXUALLY COMPATIBLE (AS YOU DO). ONE DAY I FOUND THIS KINK DEFINED ON WIKIPEDIA:

## AUTOANDROPHILIA:

Refers to a person assigned female at birth who is sexually aroused at the thought or image of having male genitalia or being a man.

Wow. I never knew there was a word for that.



# My Very Brief Tinder JOURNEY,

I matched with  
Six women.



I sent all of  
them a first  
message.



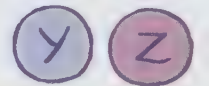
Four of them responded.



Two of those responses  
developed into conversations.

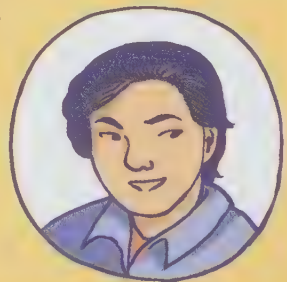


I asked if they wanted to meet in  
person, and they both said yes!



SO I PICKED A TIME TO MEET  
CANDIDATE Y.

*She had come off as shy in our  
messages. I tried to get a sense  
of her hobbies, interests, and  
aspirations but she seemed  
hesitant to reveal them.*





Candidate Y arrived 30 minutes late.

I waited because it was my first ever date.

It soon became clear that every activity in her life revolved around alcohol.

Her dream was to get her bartending license.

Her hobby was drinking to blackout multiple times per week.

The reason she was late was that she had totalled her car the night before.

And so, had to walk to the coffee shop.

Within 45 minutes it seemed clear that we had NOTHING IN COMMON.

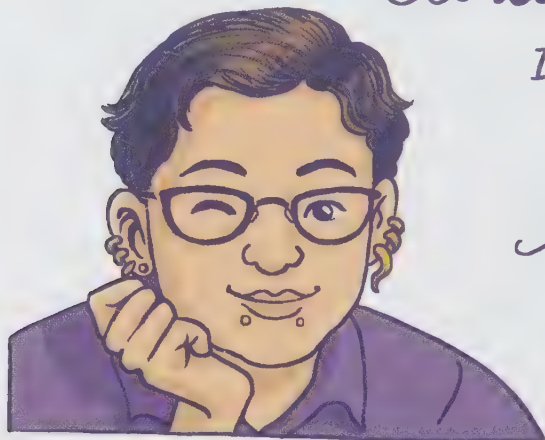
Which didn't stop her from asking if I wanted to go back to her place.

Maybe she just wanted a ride back to her apartment.

But I said no.

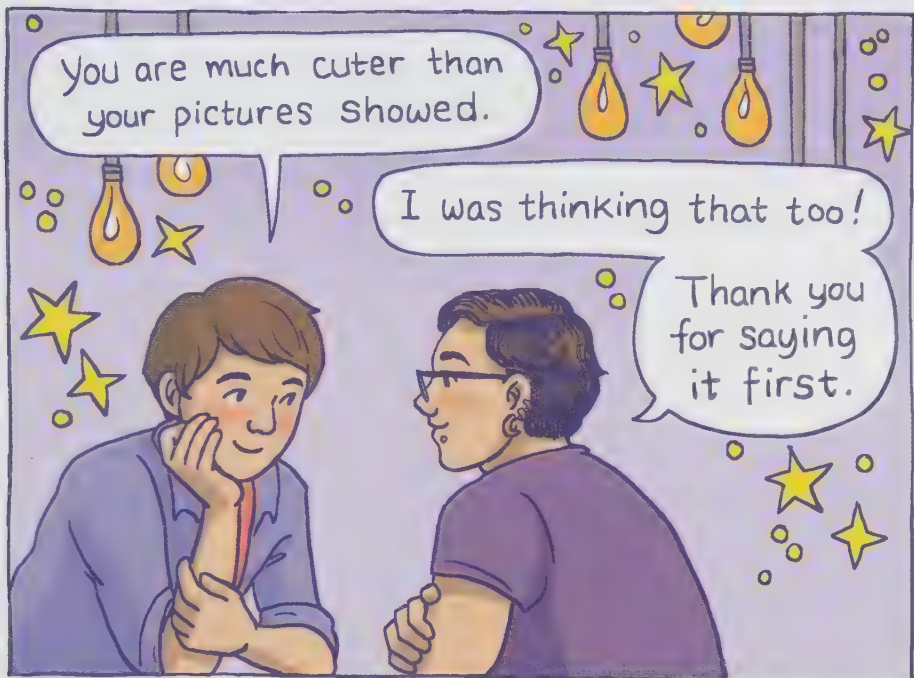


SINCE THAT DATE CONSTITUTED 100% OF MY DATING EXPERIENCE, I WAS MORE THAN A LITTLE NERVOUS FOR MY MEETING WITH *Candidate Z.*



I NEEDN'T  
HAVE BEEN.  
SHE WAS  
*AMAZING.*





AS I DROVE HOME I REMEMBER THINKING:



We planned a second date.

In the interest of transparency,  
you should know I'm 25 years old  
and I've never had sex.

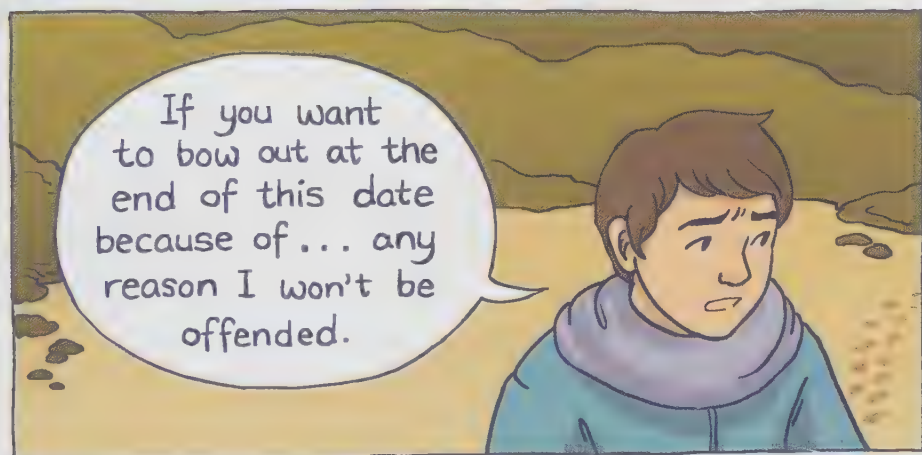
I haven't kissed anyone  
since elementary school.

My main kink is  
autoandrophilia.

Penetration is a **HARD NO** for me.

And I'm weirdly  
grossed out by some bodily  
fluids, so, unfortunately,  
I probably wouldn't feel  
comfortable going  
down on you...









FAST-FORWARD: WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR TWO MONTHS. WE'VE MADE OUT, WE'VE HAD SEX, WE'VE MOVED ON TO SEXTING AT WORK.

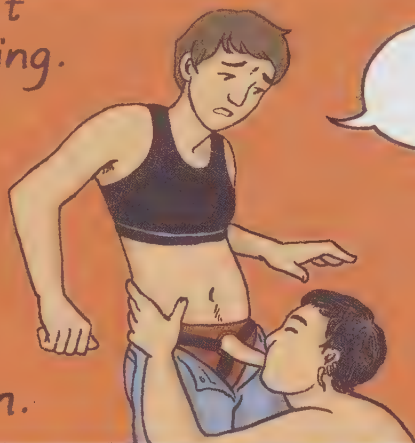






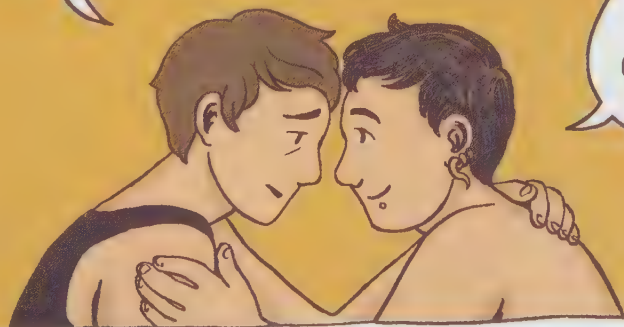
This is  
the visual  
I'd been  
picturing...

But I can't  
feel anything.  
This was  
**MUCH  
HOTTER**  
when it  
was only  
in my  
imagination.



Hey,  
Z...


Let's try something else.



Of  
course.  
♥

Everything we did today  
was a good experience.

But now that I've had sex a few times,  
I'm not sure I really need any more?  
Trying to get off in front of  
someone is kind of weird.



I think when I  
do orgasm, it's not  
because of my body  
but in spite of it.

# A FEW DAYS LATER

I think the fact that I don't see myself as, or understand myself as, a female person



But that most of the people I interact with do ...



...is actually damaging all of my relationships, even ones with family and friends.



Sex just throws this into high relief because it involves contact with genitals.



This whole dating thing is making me more and more confused and less and less happy.

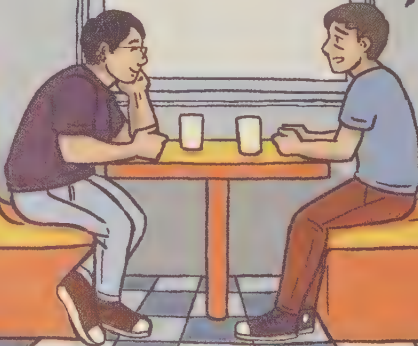
I don't think I want to do it anymore.



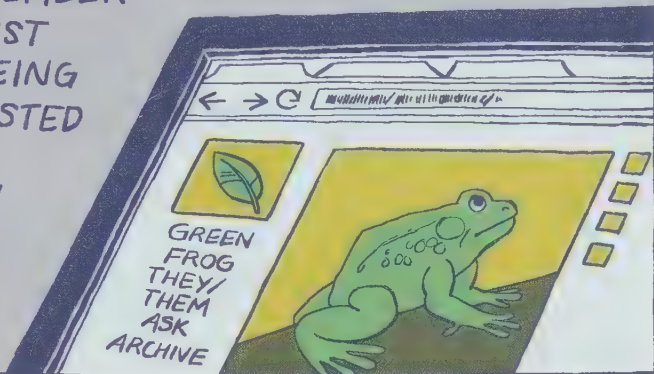
SO WHEN SHE TOLD ME:

I'm starting to get a real crush on you.


I'm really sorry but I need to stop dating for a while. I have too much gender stuff to figure out first.



I CAN'T REMEMBER  
WHEN I FIRST  
STARTED SEEING  
PRONOUNS LISTED  
ON PEOPLE'S  
PROFILES ON  
TUMBLR—  
2015?  
EARLIER?



BUT THE FIRST PERSON I REMEMBER  
GETTING TO KNOW WHO USES THEY/THEM  
PRONOUNS WAS ONE OF MY CCA TEACHERS.



MELANIE  
GILLMAN

They are:

- A comics professor
- Author of As The Crow Flies
- An all-around excellent person

MY CLASSMATES AND I WERE DETERMINED  
NOT TO MISGENDER THEM BUT WE MADE  
FREQUENT MISTAKES.

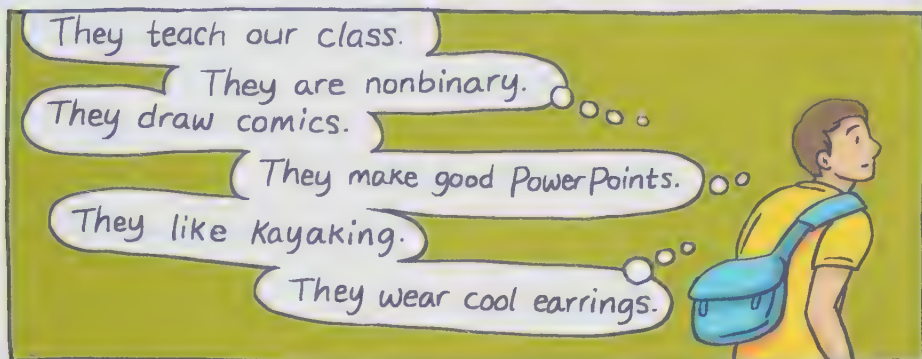
I  
WOULD  
CORRECT  
PEOPLE



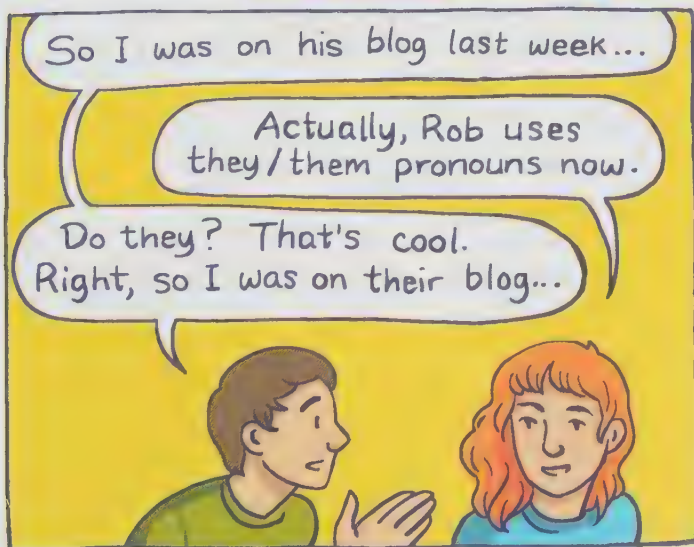
ONLY TO TURN AROUND AND MAKE THE EXACT SAME MISTAKE 30 SECONDS LATER.



LEARNING TO USE NEW WORDS IS HARD AT FIRST. BUT I PRACTICED ALL SEMESTER.

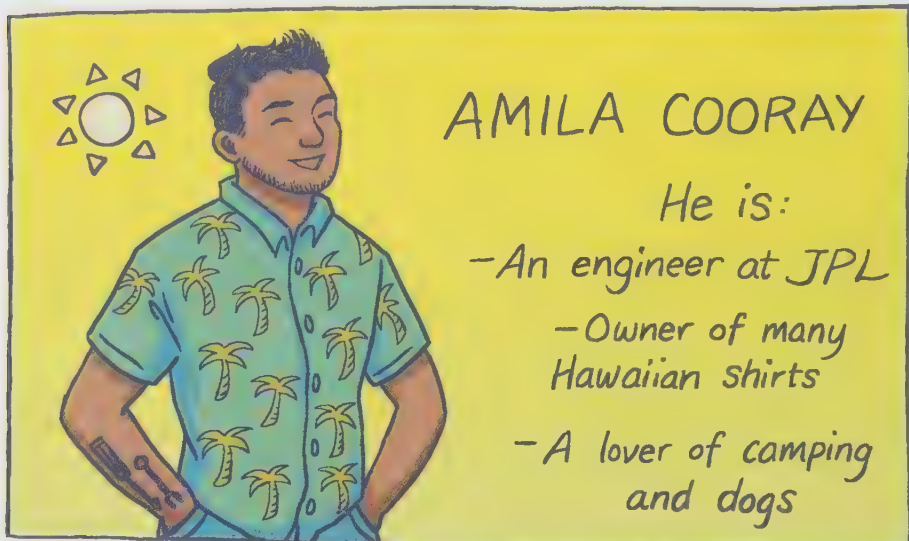


SOME-  
WHERE  
ALONG  
THE  
WAY  
IT  
CLICKED.

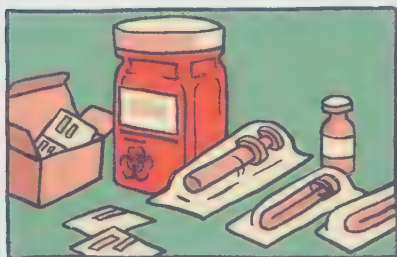


AND IT  
BECAME  
EASY.

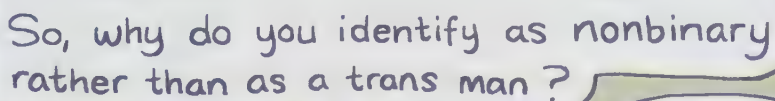
AT THANKSGIVING IN 2015, MY SISTER BROUGHT HER NEW BOYFRIEND TO STAY WITH ME AND MY PARENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME.



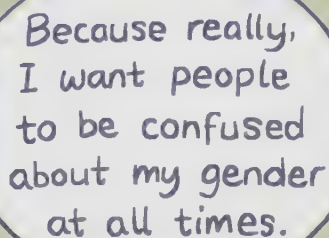
AMILA IS THE FIRST PERSON I'VE WATCHED TAKE TESTOSTERONE.







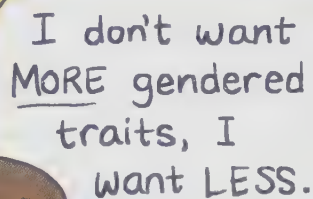
So, why do you identify as nonbinary rather than as a trans man?



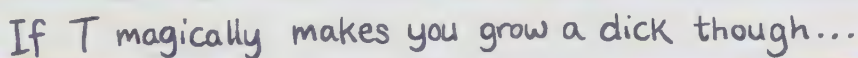
Because really, I want people to be confused about my gender at all times.



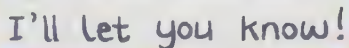
I don't want a beard, and I don't want my voice to change.



I don't want MORE gendered traits, I want LESS.



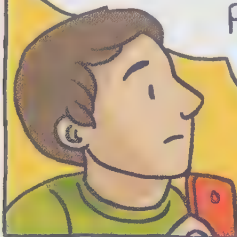
If T magically makes you grow a dick though...



I'll let you know!

A FEW MONTHS AFTER BREAKING UP WITH Z, I PONDERED REOPENING TINDER.

I don't regret trying out the whole dating/romance thing because now I have some context for what people talk about all the time.



Do I want to try out romantic emotional commitment with someone else?



Honestly?



No.



But I never figured out how to end my fanfiction.



Hmm...



Hey Ashley - would you please write all of the sex scenes for my fic?

Obviously I'd credit you as a co-author on AO3 and owe you eternal gratitude.



I have been **WAITING** for you to ask!



I have several thousand words written already, I'm emailing them to you now.

Type  
Type  
Type



OMG! I am SO excited to read them, thank you, thank you!



Ah, perfect. Problem solved.

DELETE TINDER?

▶ YES



I REMEMBER  
WHEN I FIRST  
REALIZED  
I NEVER  
HAD TO HAVE  
CHILDREN.



It  
was  
like  
walking out of  
a narrow alley

into a wide open field.



I never  
have to get  
married.



I never have  
to date  
anyone.



I don't even  
have to care  
about sex.

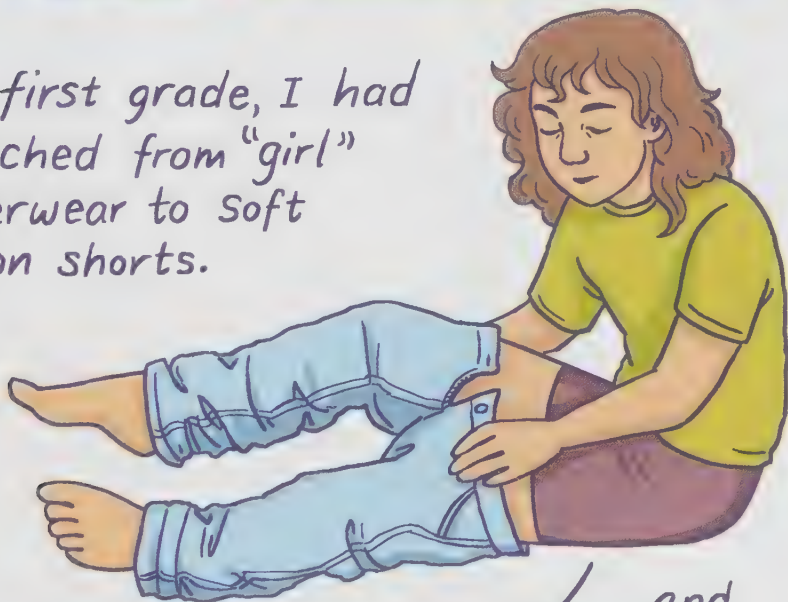


THESE REALIZATIONS WERE LIKE GIFTS  
THAT I GAVE TO MYSELF.



There is a photo of me at about age four posing with a kitten - unaware or uncaring that my mermaid undies are also on display.

By first grade, I had switched from "girl" underwear to soft cotton shorts.



My mom called these "bike shorts"

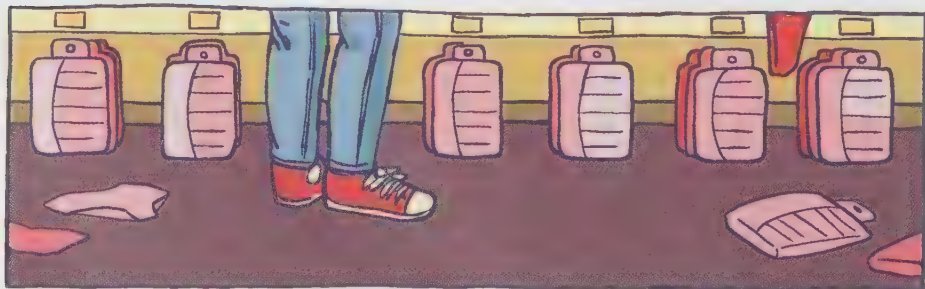


and bought them for me without comment.

WHEN I STARTED MY PERIOD, I QUICKLY  
REALIZED THAT PADS AND SHORTS WERE  
**NOT COMPATIBLE.**



VERY RELUCTANTLY I RETURNED TO  
THE "GIRLS' SECTION."



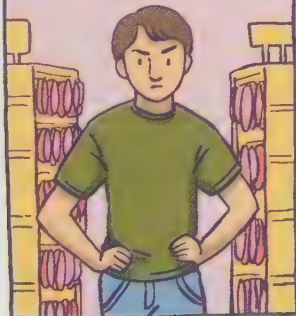
# I BOUGHT ESSENTIALLY THE EXACT SAME ONES FOR 15 YEARS.

*I'd pull out  
the inevitable  
pink & purple  
pairs and  
give them  
to Phoebe*

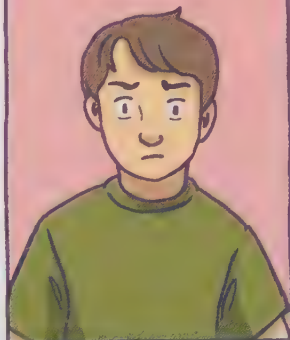


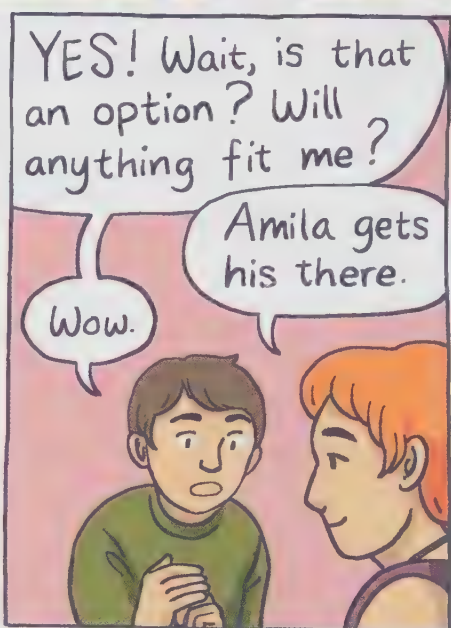
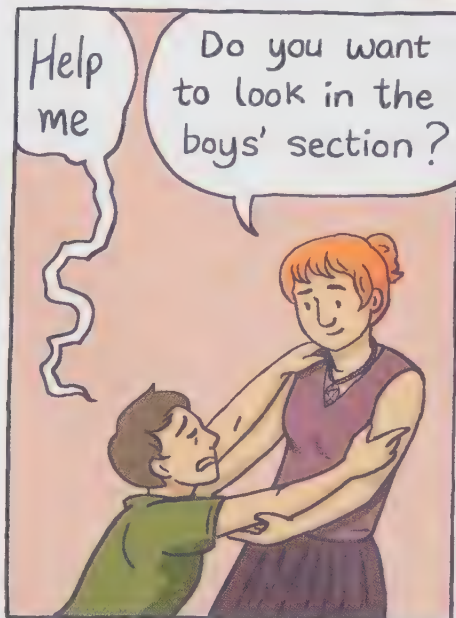
*Keeping  
only  
the  
dark,  
neutral  
colors  
for  
myself.*

Where are  
you, Hanes  
cotton bikini  
cut six  
pack?



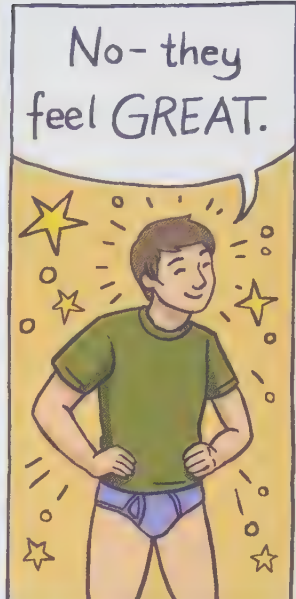
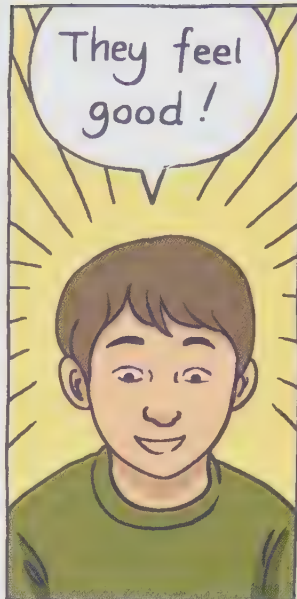
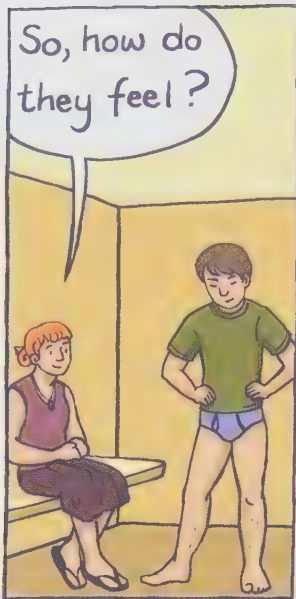
It's—  
not here?





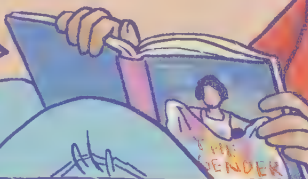






How would I help support a young person who came to me with the same feelings I have about gender?

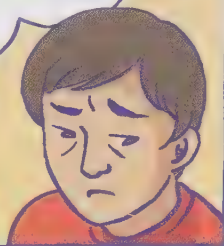
Reading *The Gender Creative Child* by Diane Ehrensaft



Obviously I would listen and believe them. I'd ask if they wanted to do some level of social transition.



If the kid hadn't hit puberty yet, I'd say try hormone blockers, but it's too late for that for me, sadly.

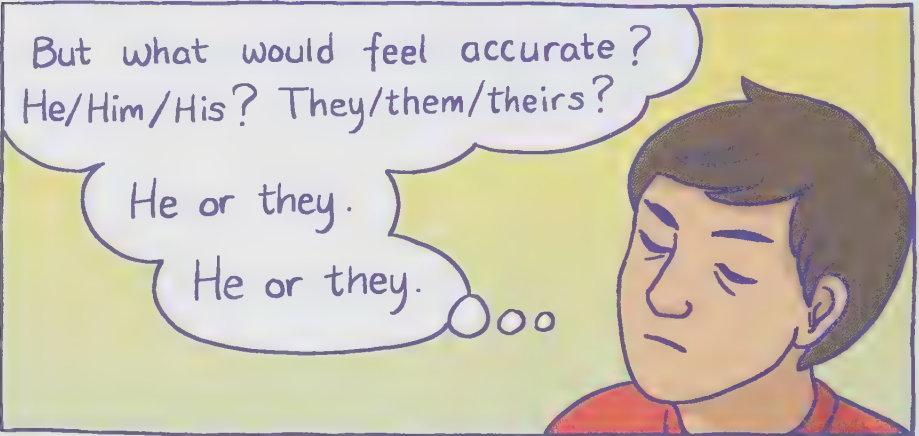


I already have short hair, and I've been wearing non-gender-specific clothes for years.

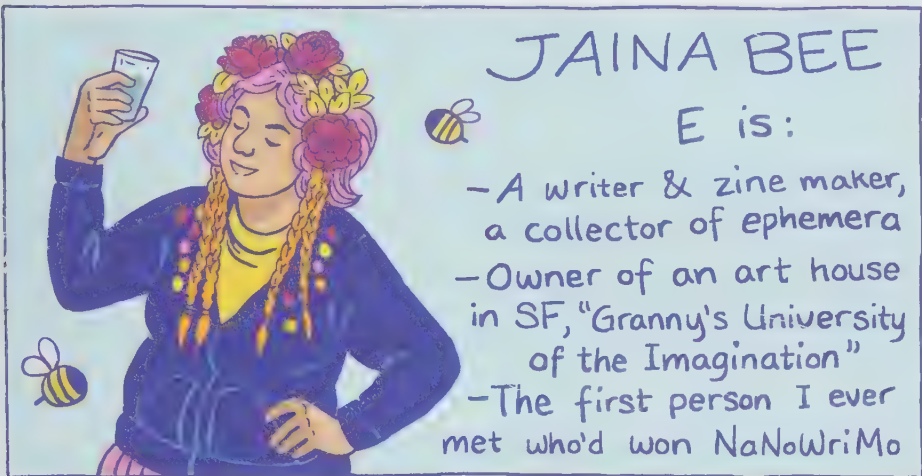


I don't want to change my name, but I like the idea of changing pronouns.





I FIRST MET JAINA BEE AT GALEN'S FAMILY'S ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY IN 2003 WHEN I WAS 14.



## JAINA BEE

E is:

- A writer & zine maker, a collector of ephemera
- Owner of an art house in SF, "Granny's University of the Imagination"
- The first person I ever met who'd won NaNoWriMo



What is NaNoWriMo?

National Novel Writing Month!  
You try to write a whole 50,000 word book in just 30 days.



WHAAAT?  
You've done that?

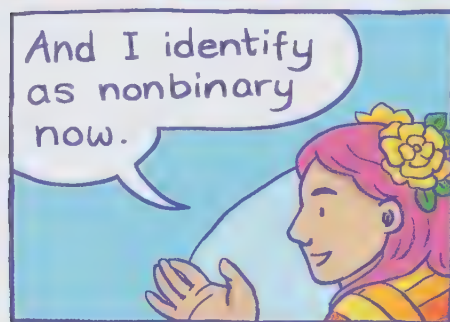
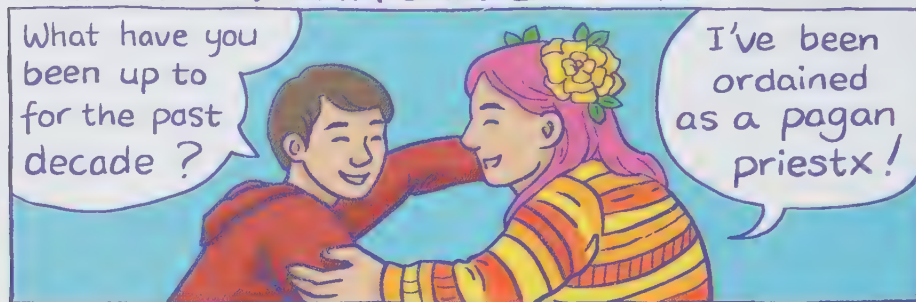
More than once!



50,000 WORDS  
IN ONE MONTH!!

MY  
MIND  
REELED

JAINA AND I LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER AND ONLY RECONNECTED AT THE NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY IN 2015.



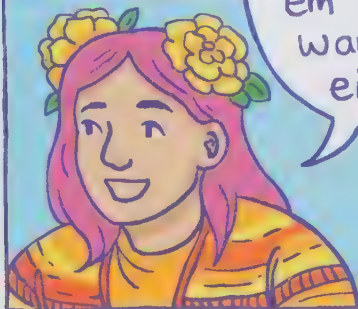
I've been thinking about switching to they/them pronouns but for some reason that doesn't feel quite right.



What pronouns do you use?



I use the Spivak pronouns e, em, eir, as in "Ask em what e wants in eir tea."



E, em, eir?



I LOVE those pronouns! I just got the biggest tingle down my spine.



That was my reaction too!



Asking people to start using new pronouns for me seems like such a huge request though...



I know people will mess up, and then what do I do? If I correct someone, will they get mad?



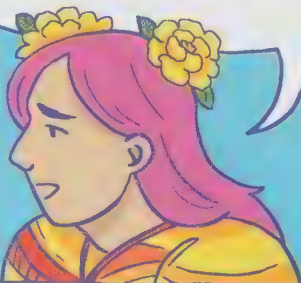
I'd love to use these pronouns but I don't want to inconvenience people...



So instead of asking people to do something to make you feel more comfortable, you'd rather just feel a little uncomfortable all the time?



You'd rather internalize and carry that discomfort every time someone who loves you misgenders you?



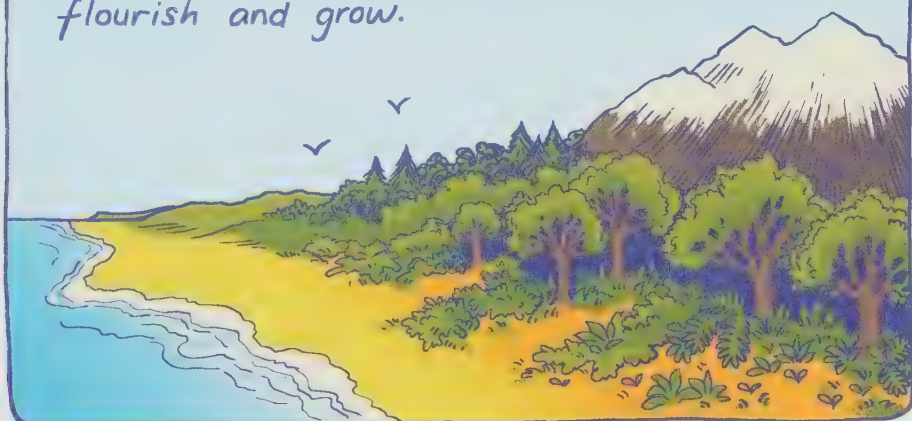
Well, when you put it that way...





AS I PONDERED A PRONOUN CHANGE,  
I BEGAN TO THINK OF GENDER LESS AS  
A SCALE AND MORE AS A LANDSCAPE.

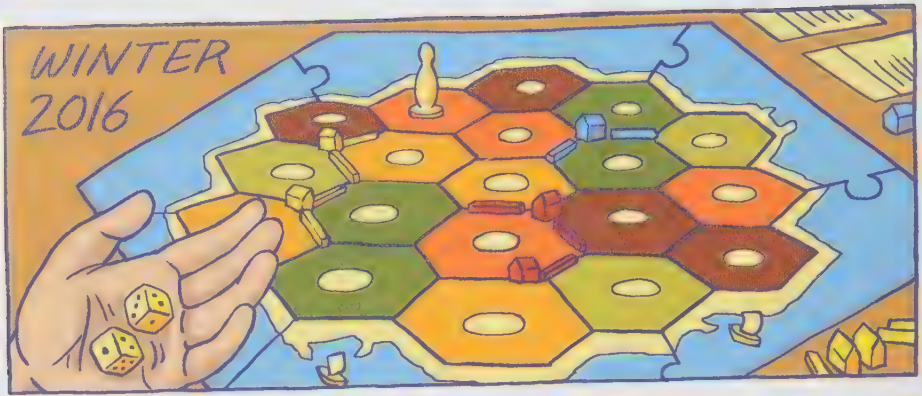
Some people are born in the mountains,  
while others are born by the sea. Some  
people are happy to live in the place they  
were born, while others must make a  
journey to reach the climate  
in which they can  
flourish and grow.

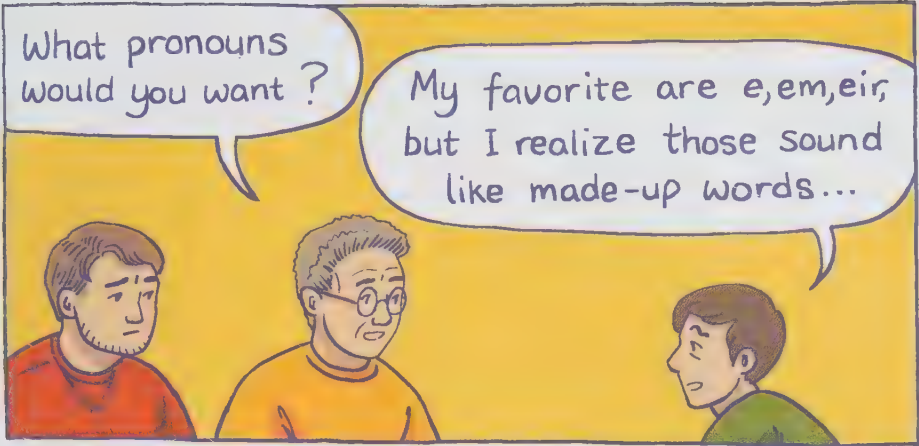


Between the ocean  
and the mountains  
is a wild  
forest.

That is where I  
want to make  
my home.









What pronouns would you want?

My favorite are e,em,eir, but I realize those sound like made-up words...




Everyone in this family loves and supports you, so I'm sure they will give it their best effort.

But we will also mess up a lot.

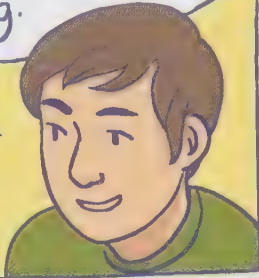


What's more important: people changing the words they use for you,



or changing how they think about you?

If people could just switch to thinking of me as gender nonbinary that would be amazing.



But the only way I can think of to initiate a switch in thinking is to start with a switch of words.



If you ask me to start using new pronouns for you, of course I will.

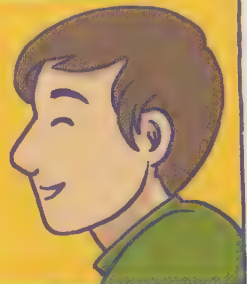
But I'd like you to explain why. Right now I don't understand and I'm going to keep asking until I do.

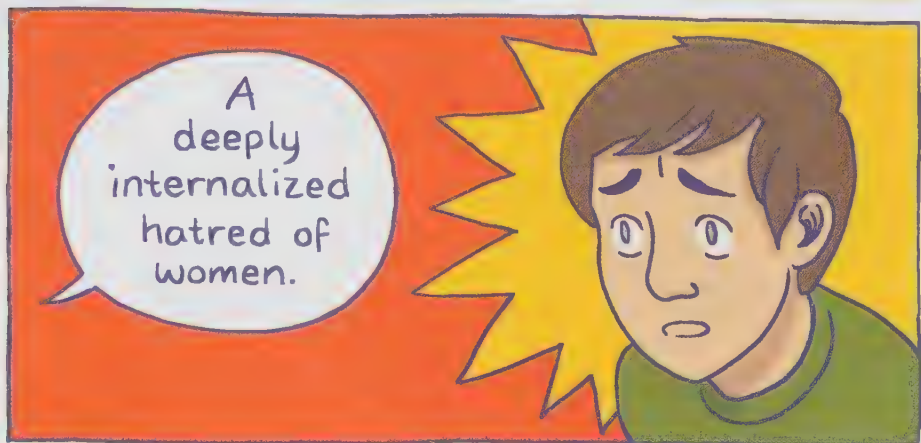
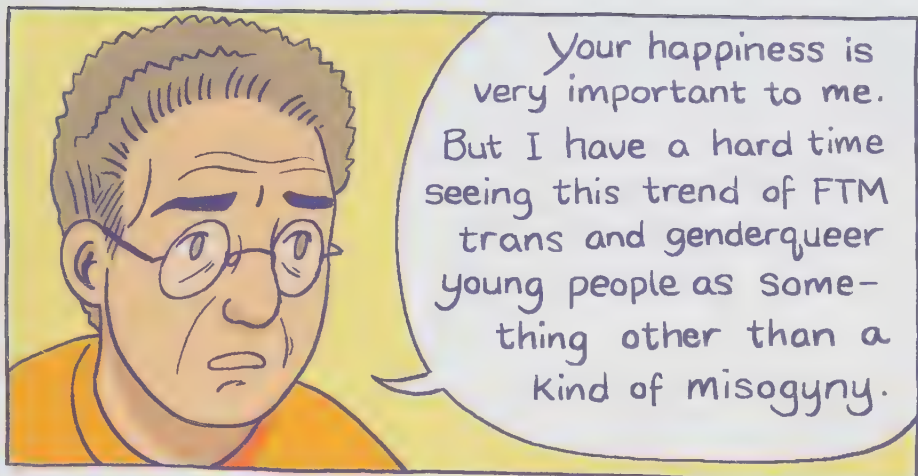


What if I'm never able to explain, but I can tell you that it would make me happy.



Would that be reason enough?





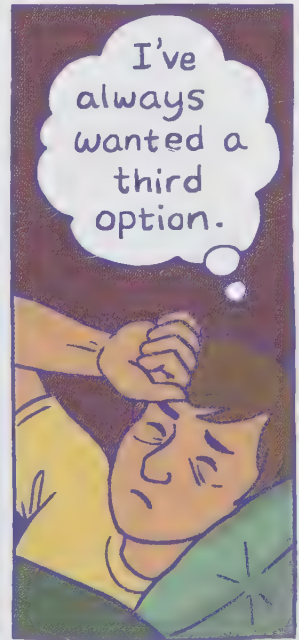
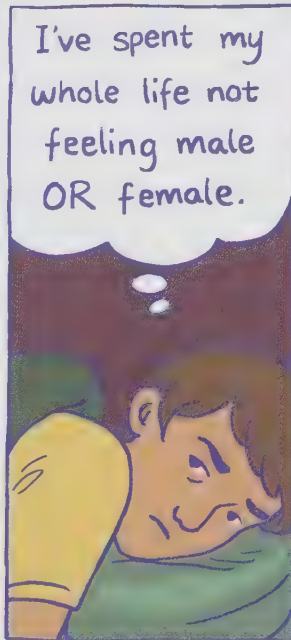
THIS CONVERSATION LASTED UNTIL PAST 1AM. WHEN I WAS FINALLY GETTING READY TO GO



AS I DROVE HOME



AT HOME I TOSSED AND TURNED OVER SHARI'S MISOGYNY COMMENT.

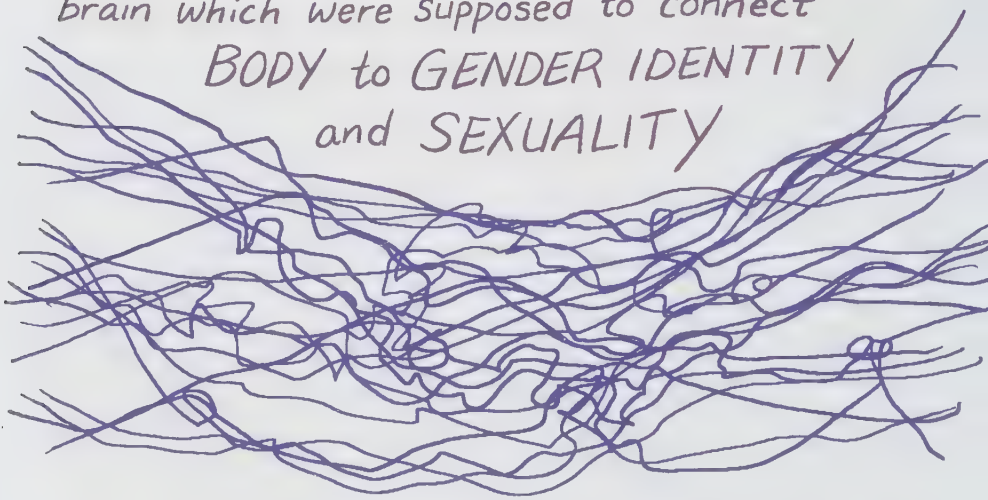


BUT WHY AM I LIKE THIS???  
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE MY SEXUALITY  
IS BROKEN  
AND MY GENDER  
IS BROKEN.



I feel like there are all these wires in my  
brain which were supposed to connect

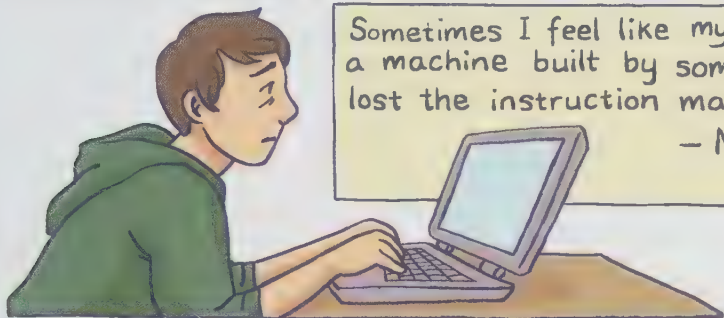
BODY to GENDER IDENTITY  
and SEXUALITY



But they've all been twisted into a  
HUGE SNARLED MESS.



# I CONFIDED THESE FEELINGS TO A LONG-DISTANCE FRIEND.



Sometimes I feel like my brain is a machine built by someone who lost the instruction manual.

- Maia



I feel that way sometimes too. You should check out a book that my aunt wrote, called Touching a Nerve: Self as Brain. When I read it I was fascinated and weirdly relieved - hope you will be too.

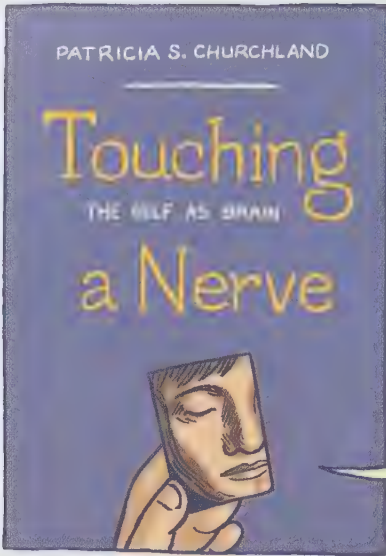
- Marian

## PATRICIA CHURCHLAND, Ph.B.

IS AN ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHER NOTED FOR HER INVENTION OF NEUROPHILOSOPHY. HER CREDENTIALS INCLUDE:

- PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT UC SAN DIEGO
- ADJUNCT PROFESSOR AT SALK INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL STUDIES
- RECIPIENT OF A MACARTHUR FELLOWSHIP
- FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES





IN 2013 SHE PUBLISHED  
TOUCHING A NERVE

WHICH EXPLORES THE  
QUESTIONS:

Where in the physical structures of the brain are morality, empathy, aggression, free will and identity based?

READING CHURCHLAND IS LIKE LISTENING TO AN ENGAGING UNIVERSITY LECTURE.

Normally, when a sperm fertilizes an egg, the resulting human conceptus has 23 pairs of chromosomes [...] either XX (genetic female) or XY (genetic male).

CHURCHLAND, pg. 132

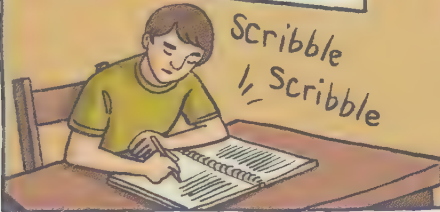
HOWEVER:

- 1 in 650 born with XXY (Klinefelter syndrome)
- 1 in 1,000 born with XYY
- 1 in 5,000 born with solo X (Turner Syndrome)
- 1 in 20,000 born with XXYY

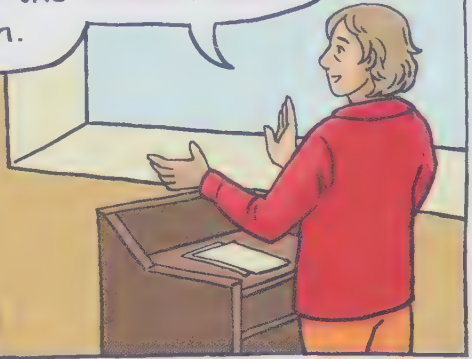
Churchland pg. 138 and U.S. National Library of Medicine, Genetics Home Reference

In the early stages of development, the sex organs (gonads) of the fetus are neutral, but during the second month of fetal development, genes on the Y chromosome produce proteins that transform the neutral gonads into male testes. Absent this action, the gonads grow into ovaries. [...] Testosterone produced by the fetal testes is released into the bloodstream and enters the growing brain.

CHURCHLAND, 132



Scribble / Scribble



Small but important correction: once it passes from the blood into the brain, some testosterone is transformed by an enzyme into a more potent androgen, dihydrotestosterone. And some of that is changed into estradiol, which goes on to masculinize the brain.

CHURCHLAND,  
134



Paradoxical though it may seem, estradiol, a female hormone, is crucial to the masculinizing development.

Biology is funny that way.

CHURCHLAND,  
134

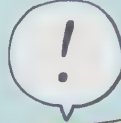


Finally, the masculinizing of the gonads (making testes, penis, and prostate) occurs before the masculinizing of the brain.

CHURCHLAND, 136

Sometimes the masculinizing of the brain does not follow the typical path and may be incomplete in various ways. You could have male genitalia and a female brain.

CHURCHLAND, 137



Once we know something about the many factors, genetic and otherwise, that can alter the degree to which a brain is masculinized, it is a little easier to grasp a biological explanation for how a person might feel a disconnect between his or her gonads and his or her gender identity.

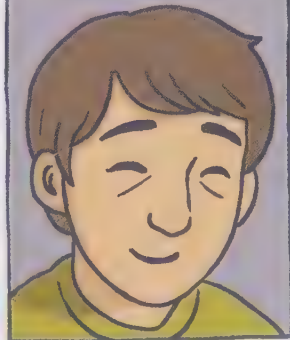
CHURCHLAND, 140



A huge part of who I am is due to the suite of hormones and neurochemicals present in the womb as my cells developed.

So Lady Gaga was right - I was born this way.

What a RELIEF.



IN THE SUMMER OF 2016, I TABLED AT THE QUEER COMICS EXPO IN SAN FRANCISCO.



LATER, I FOUND SCOUT TRAN'S PRONOUN PATCHES AT THE DEGENERETTE BOOTH.



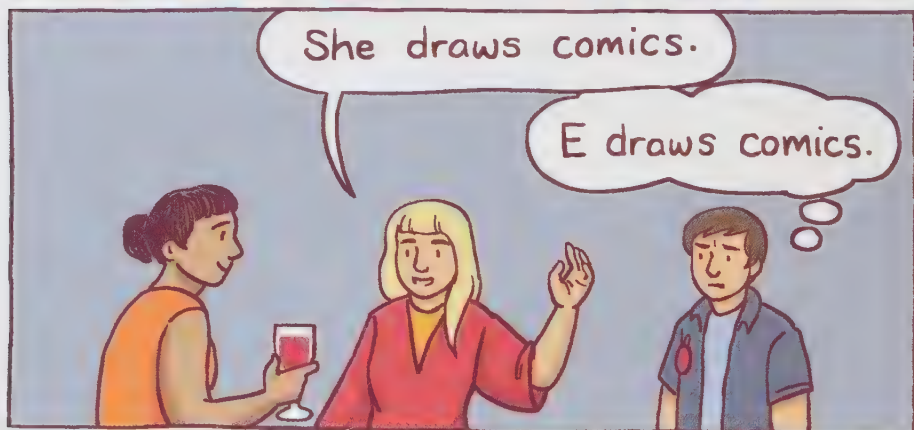
I HAD TO SIT WITH THE PATCH IN MY HAND FOR 20 MINUTES BEFORE I WAS ABLE TO PUT IT ON.



LATER, WHILE WEARING IT:



# SHORTLY AFTER, AT AN ART OPENING:





I FOUND MYSELF TURNING TO METAPHORS OF MILD PHYSICAL PAIN AS I TRIED TO ARTICULATE WHY I WANTED NEW PRONOUNNS.

Female pronouns didn't bother me when I was younger, but now they do. I know switching isn't easy, but please try.



Getting called "she" feels like discovering a rock stuck in my shoe.



Or getting scratched by the tag at the back of my shirt.



A SMALL SPIKE OF SOLVABLE DISCOMFORT.



ALSO IN 2016, ASHLEY AND I WERE INVITED TO SIGN AT A PUBLISHER'S BOOTH AT COMIC CON FOR THE FIRST TIME.



# IT HAPPENED AGAIN.



# IT HAPPENED A THIRD TIME.



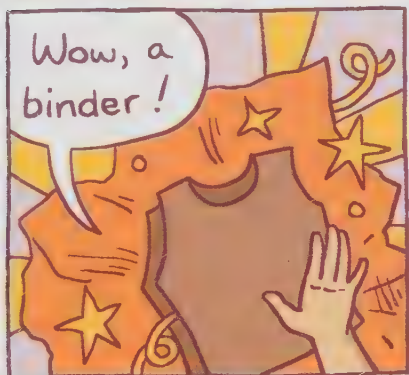


# PHOEBE & AMILA CAME TO STAY IN WINTER 2016. ON CHRISTMAS EVE:

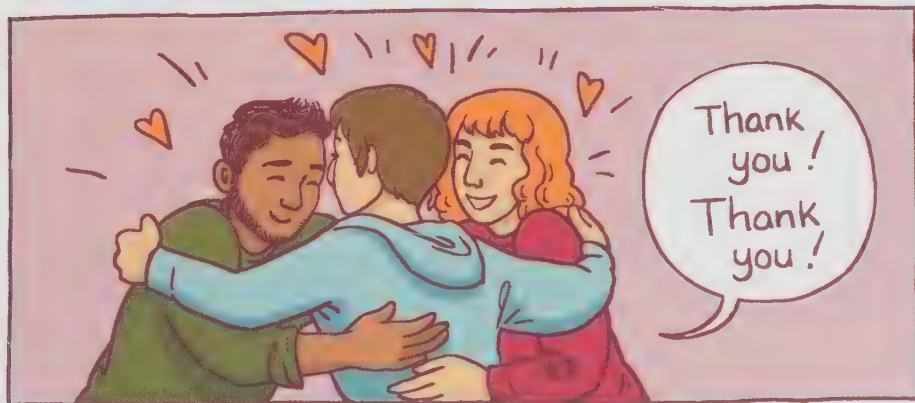
We have a present we wanted you to open before tomorrow.



Wow, a binder!



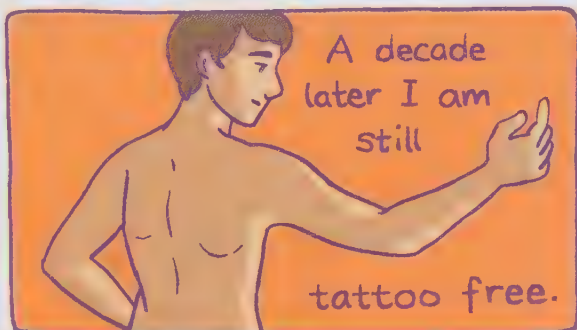
Wait - TWO BINDERS!



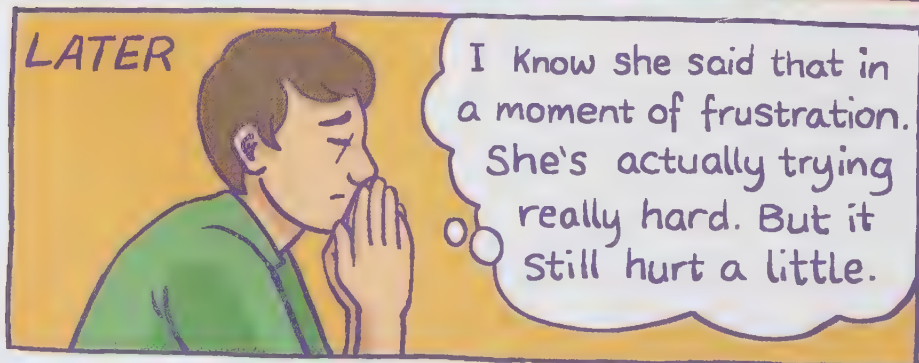
IN JANUARY, I WORE A BINDER  
TO WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME



AS SENIORS IN HIGH SCHOOL, I REMEMBER ALL OF MY CLASSMATES PLANNING WHAT TATTOOS THEY WANTED AS SOON AS THEY TURNED 18.



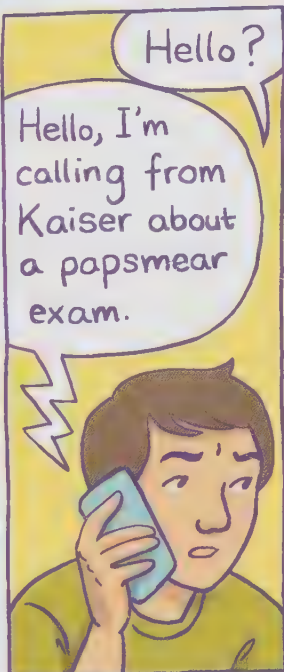
MY PARENTS ARE GETTING A LITTLE BETTER WITH MY PRONOUNS BUT THEY STILL SLIP UP





# THE FIRST TIME I SAW MYSELF REFERRED TO AS "E" IN A WORK EMAIL

*I experienced a startling wave of joy.*



Look ... I really don't want to have another paps exam.



Kaiser recommends that you have one every three years.



And according to our records your last one was over five years ago.



I am very well aware.



Have you been sexually active since your last appointment?



...  
yes.



Can I schedule you for an exam on the 26th?



I guess so ...

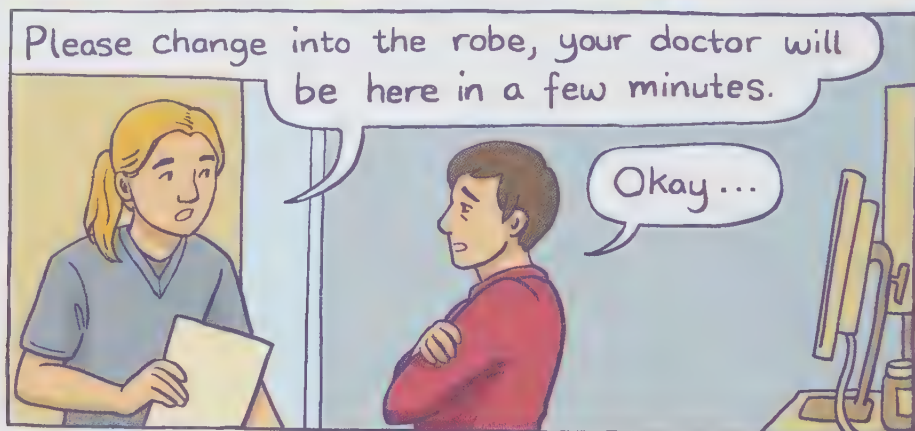
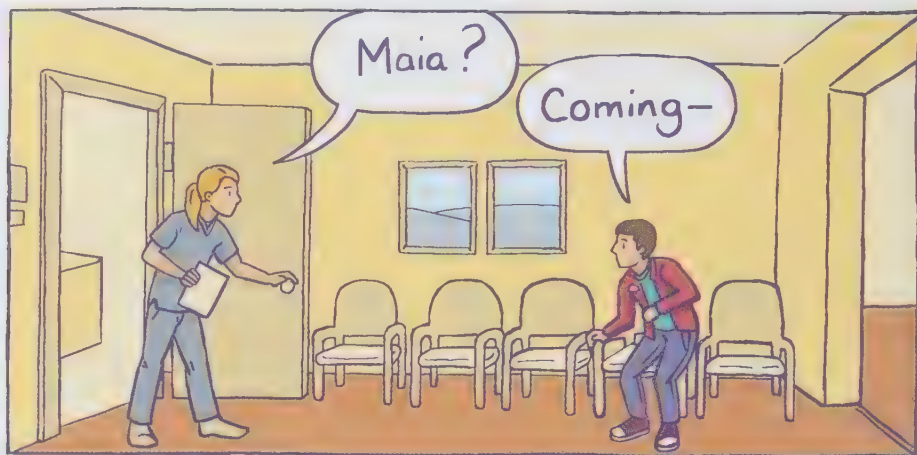
Great.  
I'll email a reminder.

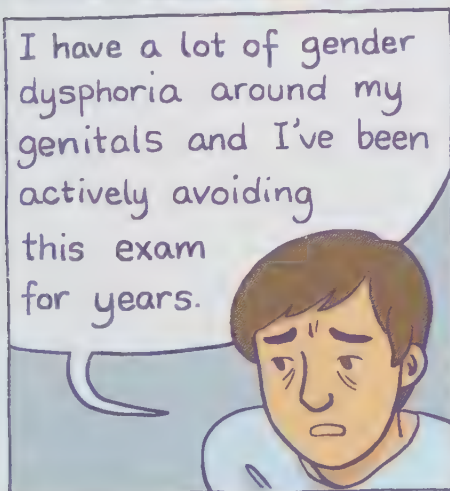
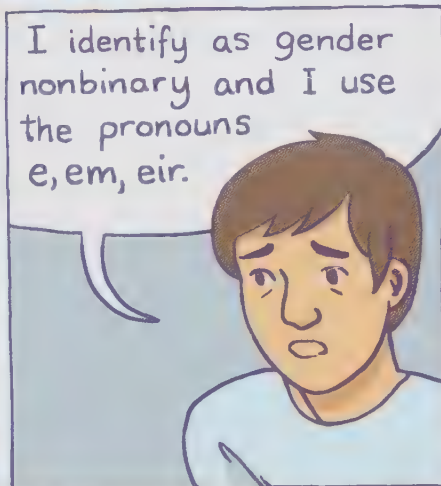


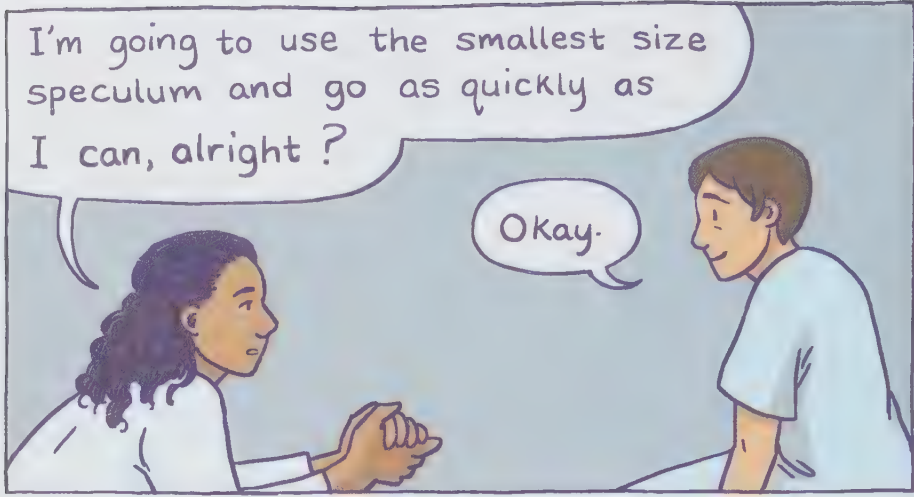


I DRESSED VERY CAREFULLY THE DAY OF MY EXAM EVEN THOUGH I KNEW I WOULD SHORTLY BE REMOVING ALL MY CLOTHES.

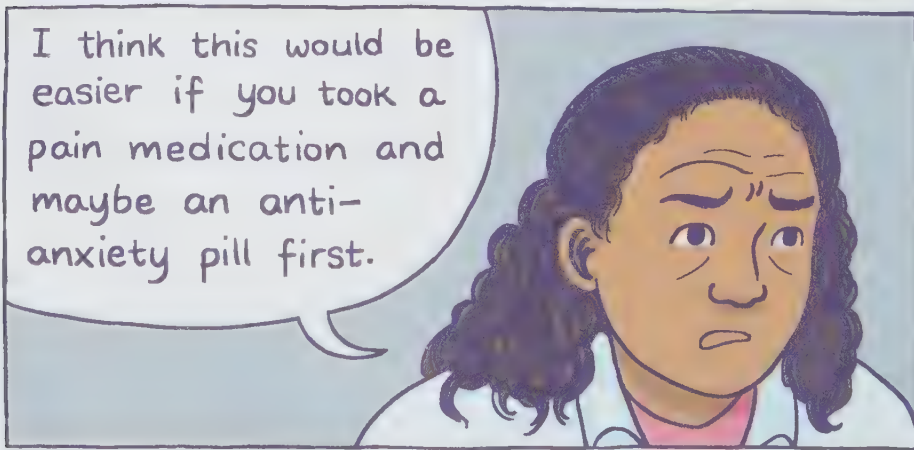








The speculum entering my body felt like a knife being shoved into my vagina. I screamed and immediately started sobbing. The doctor quickly withdrew.



I'm going to write you a prescription and make you a new appointment, okay?

Sniff

Sniff  
Sniff

OK

I'll leave so you can get dressed but I'll see you again in two weeks.

yeah...

I caught sight of the speculum as I shakily got dressed.

*It was bloody.*

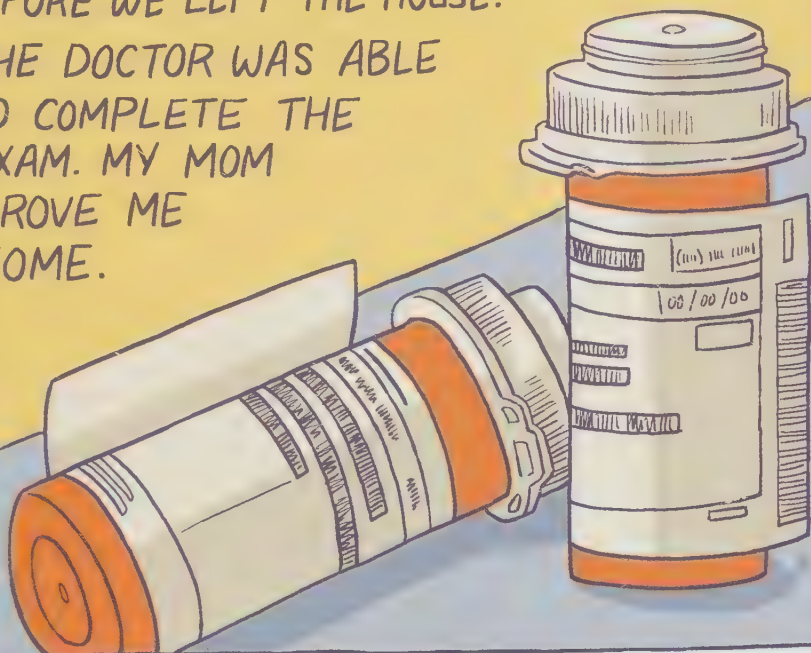
AT THE PHARMACY I RECEIVED 5MG OF OXYCODONE AND 1MG OF LORAZEPAM. THEN I WENT HOME.





MY MEMORIES OF THE SECOND APPOINTMENT ARE HAZY. I TOOK THE PILLS ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE WE LEFT THE HOUSE.

THE DOCTOR WAS ABLE TO COMPLETE THE EXAM. MY MOM DROVE ME HOME.



I THREW UP  
IN THE  
BATHROOM



THEN  
CRAWLED  
INTO BED AND  
SLEPT FOR FIVE  
OR SIX HOURS.



A FEW WEEKS LATER  
I RECEIVED A VERY SHORT LETTER  
FROM MY DOCTOR: THE RESULTS OF  
MY EXAMINATION WERE NORMAL.  
NOTHING TO REPORT.



IN SPRING 2017, I ATTENDED A MARCH FOR TRANS RIGHTS IN MY MIDDLE-SIZED LIBERAL HOMETOWN.



I knew we'd be walking so I dressed for comfort.



There was a chance of rain so I carried a raincoat.

WHEN I ARRIVED IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYONE HAD DRESSED UP EXCEPT ME.



I feel like a total square right now.  
Why didn't I wear something cool?



I don't want to spend  
this year looking straight.



But how do I look more  
queer, specifically more  
genderqueer?



I love florals! I love  
colors! But all I own  
are jeans and t-shirts  
in boring solid colors.



How did I end up with  
the wardrobe of a  
bland teenage boy?



I want to define myself by what I am instead of what I am not.



What would I wear, if money were no object?



Well, that's easy.

# ALEXANDER MCQUEEN



IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE HIGH-FANTASY-GAY-WIZARD-PRINCE LOOK OF MY DREAMS, I BEGAN GIVING MYSELF STRICT SHOPPING GUIDELINES.



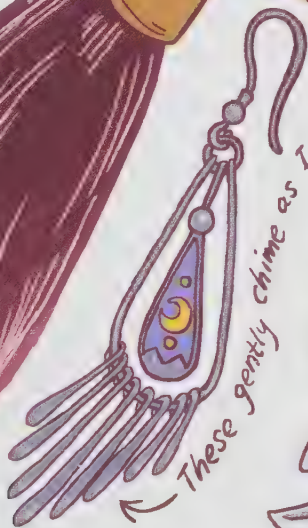
SLOWLY I BEGAN TO COLLECT  
THINGS THAT FELT QUEER & MAGICAL



Approximately actual size



These gently chime as I walk



These days  
every time I  
wear a floral  
out of the  
house



it  
feels like  
a small but  
meaningful  
victory.

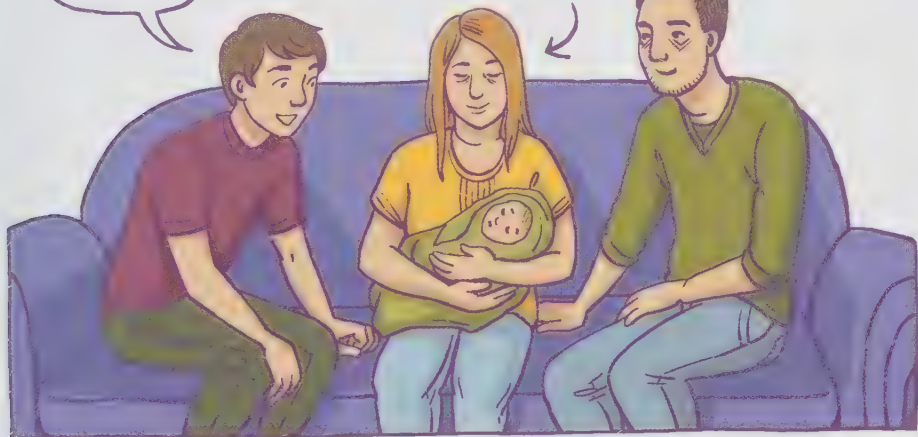


# MY FAMILY RECENTLY WELCOMED THE FIRST BABY IN OUR NEW GENERATION.

I can't get over how small he is!

Wow!

My cousin, Josh  
His wife, Faith



We were wondering what he should call you once he grows up?



I don't know a good gender-neutral term for "aunt."

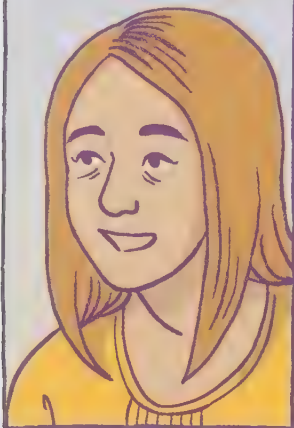
Can I be his Librarian? Or cartoonist?



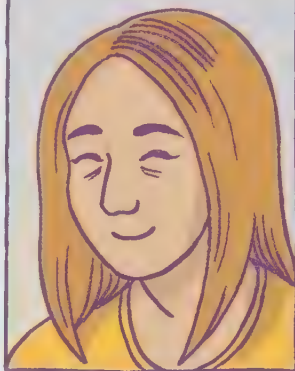
Maybe by the time he learns to talk we will have invented some new words!



Thank you so much for the email about your pronouns.



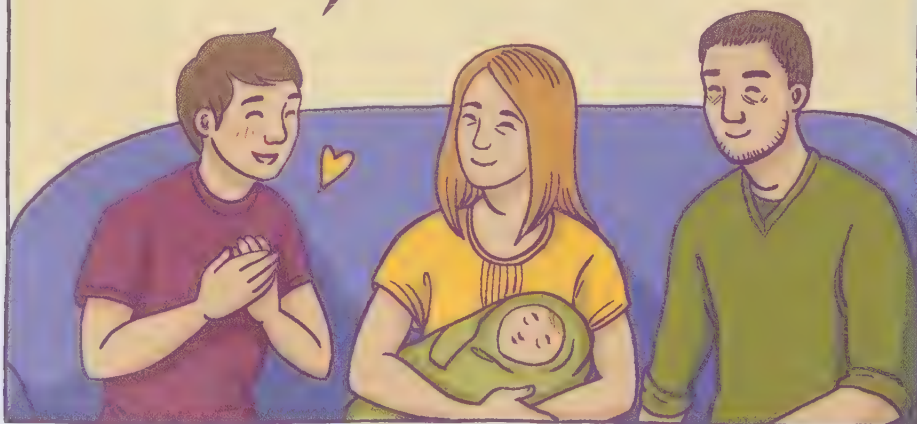
I am proud to be part of your family.



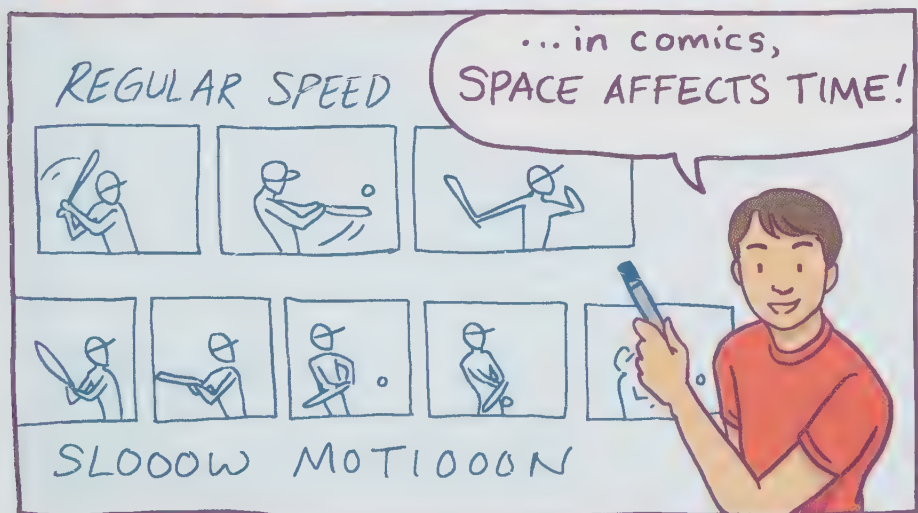
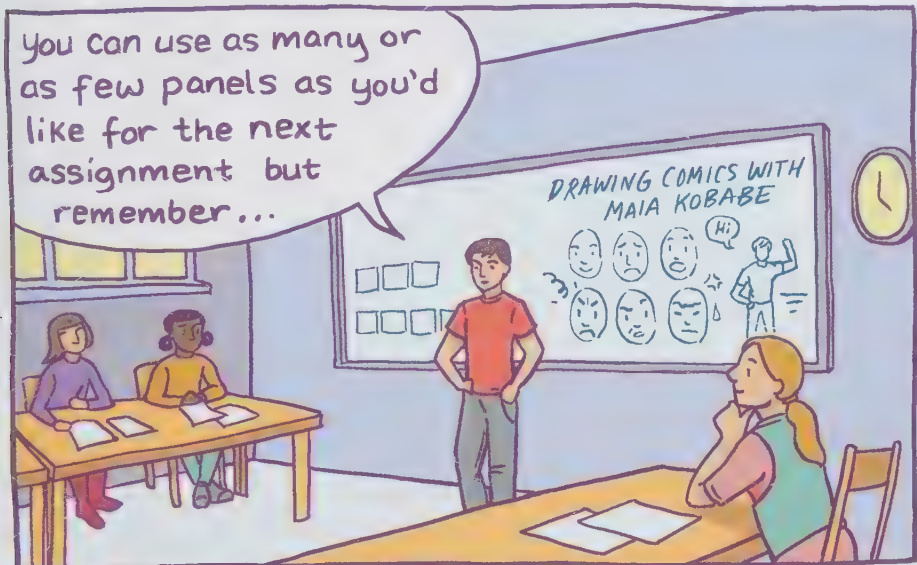
And I'm grateful that he will grow up knowing you!



That means the world to me.

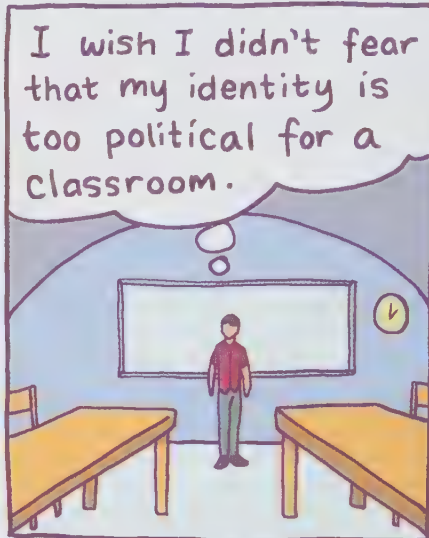


IN FALL 2017 I STARTED TEACHING SINGLE-DAY COMICS WORKSHOPS TO JUNIOR HIGH KIDS AT LOCAL LIBRARIES.



I HAVE EACH GROUP FOR JUST 3 HOURS. I PACK IN AS MUCH AS I CAN.

EVERY TIME I GET READY TO MEET A NEW GROUP OF STUDENTS, I WONDER:



# DURING THE SNACK BREAK OF A RECENT CLASS A MOM CAME UP TO ME:

My daughter loves to draw! I'm so glad she's getting to see a female artist role model.



When I was a girl I had no role models who looked like me... There were no women doctors, no professors, no CEOs...

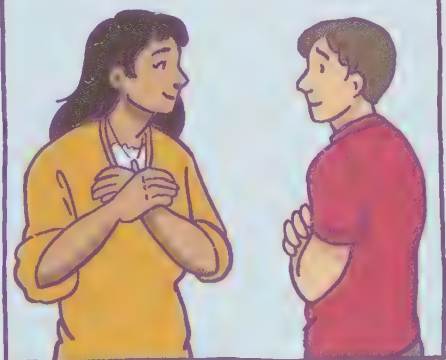


### I WANTED TO SAY:

I never saw role models like myself either! I didn't even meet another out nonbinary person until grad school.



But I feared that the truth would ruin her moment.

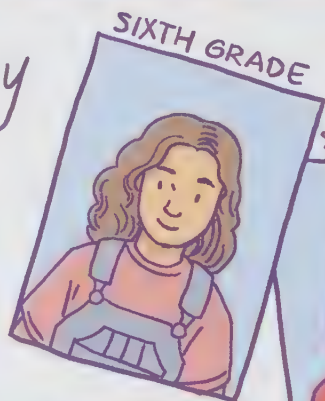


### I KEPT QUIET.

THE KIDS I TEACH ARE PRIMARILY A.F.A.  
AND THEY RANGE IN AGE FROM 11 TO 14.



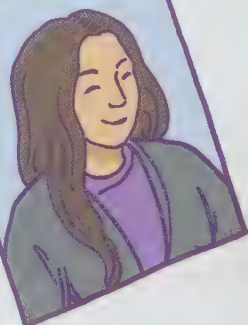
Those were my  
first big years  
of gender  
confusion,  
but I doubt  
anyone would  
have guessed  
just by  
LOOKING  
AT ME.



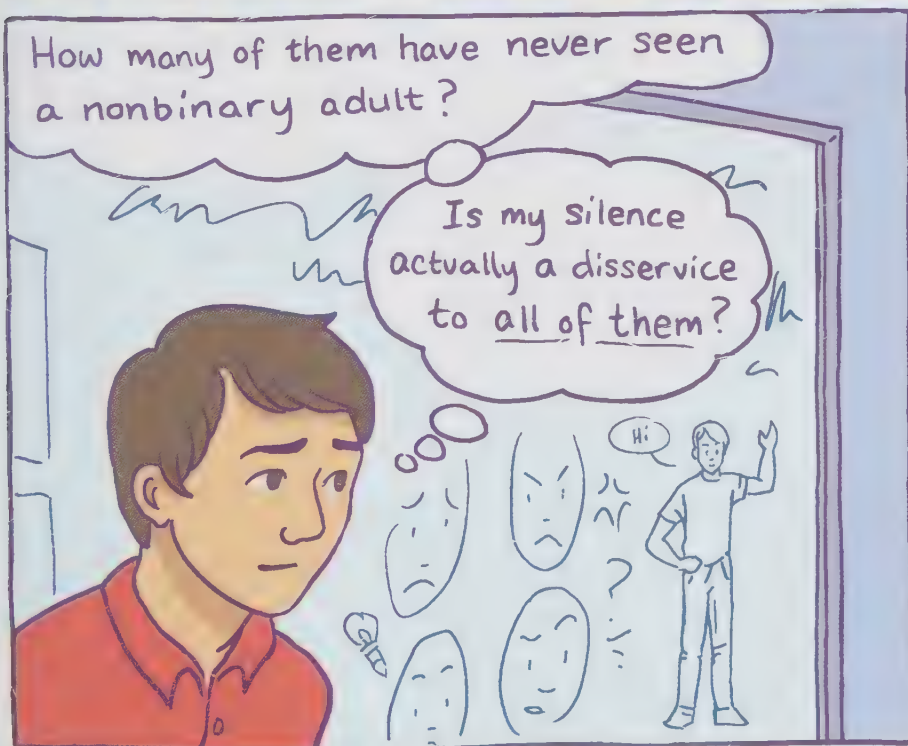
SEVENTH GRADE

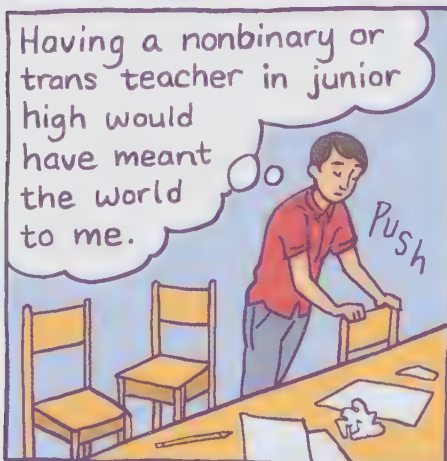


NINTH GRADE



# LOOKING AROUND MY CLASS TODAY:





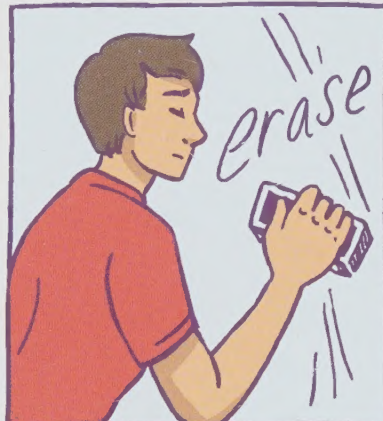


Their kids only have me for one day— if the parents hate me, they never have to see me again. And I think the administration would support me.

DRAWING COMICS WITH MAIA KOP



I think I'm carrying... more fear than I need.



Next time. Next time I will come out.





*A note to my parents:  
Though I have struggled with being your daughter,  
I am so, so glad that I am your child.*

*-MK*



**B**

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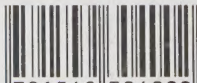
IN *GENDER QUEER*, MAIA KOBABE HAS CRAFTED AN INTENSELY CATHARTIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY ABOUT EIR PATH TO IDENTIFYING AS NONBINÁRY AND ASEXUAL, AND COMING OUT TO EIR FAMILY AND SOCIETY. BY ADDRESSING QUESTIONS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY—WHAT IT MEANS AND HOW TO THINK ABOUT IT—THE STORY ALSO DOUBLES AS A MUCH-NEEDED, USEFUL, AND TOUCHING GUIDE.



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