

A Journey

If you take a wander through my photo album you'll find countless pictures of me dressing up in skirts and dresses. When people see those pictures now they say,

"You were really breaking gender roles back then," things like that made me proud of my younger self.

You could find me playing with dolls and holding tea parties. I was pretty adorable actually but people thought it was weird when I went to play with the dolls instead of going outside with the other boys. My mother and father really didn't like that.

I knew I was a girl since I was 10. I don't know how I guess I just knew.

I would dress up in my mother's clothes and put on heaps of her make-up. My mother would laugh at me then wash it off as soon as she saw me covered in the stuff. She would say,

"Timothy, you are growing up and will soon become a fine *young man*! I don't want you dressing up like this," in a hushed tone, but I didn't stop.

Every time my mother would get madder and madder and each time she would say,

"Timothy Jones! I don't want people finding out about the things you're doing! You will bring our family to shame! Take a look at your brother, why can't you be like him?"

My teenage years, were by far, the worst years of my life.

By the time I was 13, I really started to question myself. I didn't feel like a boy. It felt wrong, my body felt wrong and I hated it. My parents made me dress in what was said to be 'clothes for boys'. I didn't understand why clothing had genders.

I once asked my mother to buy me a dress but she shouted at me, right there, with people watching.

"Timothy! I will *NEVER* buy you a dress, you are a *BOY* and you better start acting like one!" She screeched.

...I didn't like that moment at all.

When I turned 14, puberty hit me like a truck. I was covered in acne and my voice was getting deeper. I started to feel more and more uncomfortable. It was even worse because I went to an only boys' school. I felt like I didn't belong.

I didn't have many friends. Only one person, he was my first and last friend. I guess he didn't understand. I told him about how I feel like a girl and that I would've been more comfortable if I was born in a female body but he just replied,

"So, you're gay? Dude, if you were you could've just told me," I tried to explain to him but he wouldn't listen.

"No, I'm a girl!" I shouted at him but he wouldn't understand.

"No, you're a boy." I already knew how this would end.

"I'm a girl trapped inside a boy's body!" After I said that he started laughing at me. I felt so horrible. He didn't understand. No one understood...

I soon became depressed.

I felt trapped and lost in the world. I couldn't come out to my parents. I also didn't have any friends that I could turn to. I was alone. I wouldn't go out, I couldn't find that spark inside. My father would nag me every morning to get up for school but I couldn't, I couldn't find myself to do anything. I refused to eat and I refused to leave my bedroom.

My parents got really mad at me that I wasn't attending school. They thought education was the way to succeed in life. I was forced out of the house and into school again. I hated it. *All* of it.

I kept my head down when I walked through the halls and rarely talked in lessons. It felt like everyone was watching me. Like they were shooting daggers into my back. I could hear the whispers in my head. I had convinced myself that it was real. I was so insecure about my body and literally everything else about me. The only safe place I had conjured up was my internet life.

I was known as Tabitha to all my friends online. Oh, how I loved them all. They were the only ones that understood me and tried to help me. I also met other transgender girls my age that were going through the same things.

It was quite a happy time when I turned 15. I found out about this local LGBT+ youth centre and decided to go and check it out.

It. Was. Amazing!

I met people from different races and backgrounds. There were people of colour there and people of different religions. Also a lot of people of different nationalities. It was wonderful!

At first, I didn't really mingle with anyone and kept to myself. I was introduced to the group and everyone called me a 'she' and referred to me as a girl. Which is what I had always wanted. I felt so at home.

While I was there, I met a boy called Jesse. He wasn't much older than me. You could say, we sort of clicked. I instantly fell head over heels for him. You could say I was re-enacting the typical cliché of 'love at first sight'.

His eyes were an envious green and his hair was silky and cinnamon brown. His smile was captivating and warm like the sun. His freckles were scattered around his face like a pointillism painting. He lit up the room every time he walked in with his eyes shining. His voice sounded angelic almost and had a melodic sound to it. My heart skipped a beat almost every time our eyes met.

"Hey! Tabitha, is it?" A musical voice asked me. I closed in on myself and pulled my hoodie over my face.

"Yes," I replied back very quietly then started fidgeting with my fingers.

"You're awfully quiet," He chuckled and slid closer to me. I shrugged and hugged my knees, "I think it makes you more mysterious," He whispered.

When I reached the age of 16 everything started crashing down. The depression I had from my early teenage years had gotten worse. I can't say that I didn't try to hurt myself but I won't say I did. At 16,

I also had exams to worry about. With that stress and everything else happening, I was spiralling out of control. I had stopped going to the LGBT+ youth centre and trapped myself at home.

I remember the day I had missed one of my practice exam papers and the school had called home.

"Timothy! I thought you were at school! I thought you were doing practice for your upcoming exams!" Her voice echoed through the whole house. The anger inside me had boiled to the brim and was ready to explode.

"See, Mother, you thought! You didn't know! You thought! You thought that your *son* was at school and was getting ready for *his* exams! You don't care where I am, you never check on me! Well, guess what, I'm not your precious son, I'm your daughter!" I started breathing heavily with tears welling up in my eyes. My mother shook her head and clenched her fists.

"No, you are my son, Timothy! You will never be a daughter to me. You were born a boy and that's how you will stay!" I grit my teeth and dug my nails into my palms.

"My name is Tabitha, Mother, and I am a girl!" I screamed.

"You have a boy's body! You can't change that! Stop being so delusional, this is just a phase!" She raised her hand and struck me across the face. I stepped back and whimpered.

"Phases don't go on for 6 years, Mother!" I cried out, a hand on my burning cheek. "Why can't you accept me?" I spoke quietly with tears gushing down my face.

"You have no place in this household if you think you'll ever be a girl. I suggest you pack your bags and leave." She mumbled the last part then turned on her heels and left, slamming the door shut behind her.

I was emotionless and in pain. I couldn't live on the streets all alone. I was scared and lost. I wanted to cry but I couldn't. I was angry, no, I was mad, no, I was *furios*. My mother, and assuming my whole family, had just disowned me. I was only 16 at the time, how could they ever think I could survive.

I packed some of my clothes a few necessities. I wrote a note for my big brother stating I wouldn't be coming back for a while. Me and my brother never really mixed with each other. I don't remember the last time we actually had fun together, heck, I don't think we ever had fun together!

I decided the only safe place I had was the youth centre. I knew that it would be open until late. I hoped that there would still be people there.

"Tabitha?" A red-headed girl, her name was Clementine, with vibrant grey eyes ran over to me, as I walked in, with a worried look, "What heck happened? Your cheeks are pulsing and your eyes a puffy," She quickly embraced me in a hug and walked me over to a seat.

"I...she..." I quickly felt tears in my eyes again. The red-headed girl rubbed circles on my back and handed me a tissue.

"It's okay, darling, take your time. I can stay here all night if I have to." She said warmly.

It was a long night...

"It's okay, babe, is there anyone I could call? Someone who can take you in for the night?" I shrugged and wiped my eyes for the 100th time.

"Can't I stay with you for the night?" I croaked in my hoarse voice.

"Oh, sugar, you know I'd love to but I have my whole family visiting this week." I sighed and nodded, understanding. She wrapped an arm around me and smiled, "Hey, I was some spare clothes in the back that might fit you, why don't you try something on?" When she said that I actually smiled.

After a few different things, I settled on a peach dress that reached just below my knees.

"Oh, cupcake, you look gorgeous!" I smiled and twirled around.

"For once, I feel it too," I patted down the dress and smiled while looking into the mirror. Clementine placed a headband on my head and pushed my hair back. It was already kind of long, more like a bob.

"Now a bit of..." She gently applied a nude lipstick to my chapped lips then smiled, "You look so beautiful, Tabitha." I smack my lips together and smile from ear to ear.

"Thank you, Clem, you're amazing," I sigh.

With the help of the youth centre, I changed school, it was pretty much a miracle that I was able to change schools so close to my exams. My friends helped me get ready for my exams but that doesn't mean I didn't have any stress. I had been super stressed out! I had panic attacks daily but refused to see a therapist.

I also stayed with Jesse, his parents are really open and accepting. They said I could stay with them. My crush for Jesse had been there for a year now and had no sign of disappearing.

When I got my results I was over the moon. I didn't think I'd pass. Mostly As and Bs but I was really happy.

At 17-years-old, Jesse convinced me to see a therapist. He knew that I was in a really bad state.

"I know you've been going through so much in your life. You should see a therapist. It might help." He saying one night while getting ready for bed. I chewed the string on my hoodie.

"I'm fine, there's nothing wrong with me."

"Clearly you aren't. You had a panic attack a few hours ago." I kept chewing on the string. He sighed and lied down on his bed then turned off the bedside lamp.

"Jesse," I whispered and crawled to his bed, "Jesse?" I said again and shook him gently.

"What it is, Tab?" He grunted and rolled over.

"Maybe you could take me tomorrow?" I questioned.

"Go to sleep." He murmured before starting his rhythmic snoring. I sighed and curled up on my bed, quickly falling asleep.

I also started gender therapy. That was my start to becoming a young woman.

When I turned 18, I started taking the female hormone, oestrogen. At first, I didn't notice anything different but I was feeling great. I was on the road to becoming me, Tabitha. The girl that I should've always been.

When I had almost reached a year of being on hormones. I felt like the real me. I also started doing voice coaching to make my voice higher.

"Tabitha!" I brushed off the crumbs from my dress and jumped up.

"What is it?" I shouted and started walking towards the turquoise headed boy.

"Come and play with me!" I was babysitting Jesse's little brother while he was doing his driving test.

"What do you want to play?" I asked when I reached him.

"I don't know, let's just talk to each other!" I giggled and watched him plonk down on the soft grass.

"Alright, what is it you want to talk about?" I sat down beside him. He tapped his nose and looked up at the sky.

"Well, I wanted to tell you that you are very pretty." He gushed. I couldn't help but smile.

"Did your brother tell you to say that?"

"I never listen to Jesse!" I giggled and sighed. "I'm telling you the truth, Tab, I would never tell a lie!" He shouted at the end and jumped up pointing at me. I started laughing and ruffled his hair.

"You are really adorable, Riley." I cooed.

When I turned 20, you could really make out differences. I wasn't the person I used to be, that person was gone and was never coming back. I legally changed my name. I was called the correct pronouns, sometimes there would be small slip-ups but that's rare now.

I felt and looked more feminine. My voice is more feminine and what I've always been was now accepted. My dysphoria used to be so bad when I was a teenager but all that was gone now and I was finally me.

"Tabitha Jones, you are the most wonderful and beautiful girl I have ever seen." I clapped my hands and felt my cheeks go red. Jesse jumped down from the wooden fence and bowed.

"That was a very good speech."

We walked down through the meadow. It was autumn and the leaves were all tumbling down gracefully.

"Tabitha Jones," he stroked his chin.

"What's wrong?" I pondered.

"I don't like your last name."

"Excuse me?"

"It should be Tabitha *Beckett*," He laughed. I growled at him and smacked his arm.

"Ouch, that hurt." He whined then pouted.

"Good."

We walked in silence for a while until Jesse spoke up.

"So, you know how you've been meaning to get surgery?" I nodded my head. "Well, I've been saving up since we were teenagers and I thought I could use the money to pay for your surgery?" I gasped and started jumping up and down.

"No way! I love you so much, Jesse!"

Now, I'm 21. I can confirm that I am a fully-fledged woman of society. I must say, it was really hard for me to reach this point. I don't think I would've made it without a few people, such as Jesse and Clementine. I haven't spoken to my parents since the night my mother kicked me out. I've lost all contact, sadly. I would've loved to see my brother again.

Me and Jesse are together now if you were wondering. Mr and Mrs Beckett treat me like I'm part of the family, it's amazing. Riley really looks up to me, I don't know what I did to seem inspirational to him, though. I'm happy about where I am at the moment. I wouldn't change it for the world.

My name is Tabitha Jones and this was my journey as a transgender woman.