I am what I am



waxaan ahay baan a hay • я тот кто я есть • أنا هيك • 난 나야

Denne bokens tekster og illustrasjoner er laget av ungdommer i Skeiv Verdens ungdomsgruppe. De ønsker å dele sine historier og sitt arbeid, men ønsker å være anonyme. Vi takker Helene Guåker for veiledning i skriveprosessen, og prosjektledere i Skeiv Verden Same Samhaar Yassin og Maruwa Kerella Ibrahim.

Boken er gitt ut med støtte fra Integrering- og Mangfoldsdirektoratet.

I AM WHAT I AM

Skeiv verden er en organisasjon for og av skeive personer med etnisk eller religiøs minoritetsbakgrunn. Vår ungdomsgruppe består av personer mellom 14 og 25 år. Vi treffes jevnlig for å dele erfaringer, bli kjent med andre skeive ungdommer og få støtte når vi trenger det.

Er du nysgjerrig på Skeiv Verden og vår ungdomsgruppe eller trenger noen å snakke med om tanker og følelser du har? Ta kontakt med Skeiv Verden på facebook eller e-post: post@skeivverden.no.

Skeiv verden/Queer World is a national association for LGBTQI+ people with minority ethnic background in Norway. Our youth group has members between the ages of 14 and 25. We meet regularly to share experiences, get to know other queer youths and to support eachother.

Are you curious about Skeiv Verden and our youth group, or in need of someone to talk to about thoughts and feelings? please contact Skeiv Verden on our facebook page or through an e-mail at post@skeivverden.no

Forord

Vi er ungdomsgruppa til Skeiv Verden.

Dette er våre historier. Det er historier om de skeive, de unge, de eldre. Det er historier om de sterke, og hvor sterk man må være for å være svak.
Det er historier om håp.

Vi vil at du skal lære oss å kjenne gjennom historiene våre. Vi har vært gjennom mye, men vi holder hodet over vannet, holder oss flytende - og vi ler, vi elsker, vi danser, vi puster.

Vi vil du skal vite at du ikke er alene. At du er spesiell. At kjærlighet er sterkere enn hat. At det går bra.

Vi er ungdomsgruppa til Skeiv Verden. Vi er fremtiden. Kanskje du ikke kan se oss, men vit at vi er her.
Vit at vi er.

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Vi er mange

Jeg heter R, jeg er 18 år gammel, og jeg er homofil. Det har jeg visst siden jeg var 11 år.

Da jeg kom til Norge i 2016, bodde jeg en stund på Asylmottak. Det var mange folk fra hjemlandet mitt som bodde på på Asylmottaket. Dette gjorde dette meg redd. Jeg visste ikke at det er lov å være homofil i Norge. Derfor var jeg redd for at noen skulle finne ut at jeg er homofil.

En dag skulle jeg ha en samtale med kontaktpersonen min. Hun ville snakke med meg om mitt hjemland og hvordan det er i Norge. Under møtet fortalte hun først litt om seg selv og så spurte hun om jeg kunne fortelle litt om meg selv. Jeg fortalte henne alt.

"Du vet i Norge er det lov å være homofil" sa hun. Når hun sa det klarte jeg først ikke å forstå hvordan det var mulig. Jeg ble veldig veldig glad. Det var utrolig!

En junidag fortalte kontaktpersonen meg at det til helgen skulle være Oslo Pride.

"Oslo Pride - hva er det?" spurte jeg. Hun fortalte at på Pride samles mange folk - og mange homofile - for å gå i tog og feire at de kan være seg selv.

Jeg gledet meg hele uken og når helgen endelig kom så dro vi til Oslo Pride. Det var det mange folk som vår homo, lesbisk, trans osv. Fra den dagen har jeg visst at jeg ikke er den eneste gutten som har følelser for gutter, det er mange andre som meg.

Senere har jeg blitt kjent med mange av disse gjennom Skeiv Verden. De har en ungdomsgruppe der det er andre som er homo og noen som er lesbiske eller trans. Til og med fra mitt hjemland. Vi kan forstå hverandre fordi vi har opplevd mange lignende ting. Det føles veldig bra.

The journey to being all of me

Growing up as gay in Somalia was not easy. I remember waking up in the middle of the night praying to Allah to make me/turn me straight. I remember crying every night and thinking that hell was waiting for me.

I was a very feminine child and it was obvious for many people that I was different. I never got any hate from my family, but all of the neighbors and other people in the village who knew me hated me. No one wanted to have any contact with me, and I felt like I had to act like a different person.

It was too difficult for me to play different roles: dating girls and acting was the worst. I hated not being able to be myself. But even when I tried to act straight it was not good enough and people in my village would call me "Naag Naag" which means feminine dude/lady boy. That word used to hurt me like nothing else could. I used to stay home often and not socialize because of the hate and abuse from the people outside my house. The people outside my house made me not want to live. The situation made me weak and I was in place where I could not defend myself. So I just tried to deny my sexuality and become angry if I heard anyone calling me gay.

> « I remember the first time I fell in love with a guy. He was the cutest person I ever met.

I remember the first time I fell in love with a guy. He was the cutest person I ever met. I wanted to hang out with him all the time, just be with him. I was in love with him and I couldn't tell anyone. I remember one night when him came over to my house to visit me and my family. That evening I was sweating, stressing and was super emotional. I was so afraid for what he would say. My heart was busting like I was getting the death sentence. For hours I was planning to tell him how I felt, but suddenly it got late and he wanted to leave. My mother told me to follow him to the door and close it after he left. I asked if he could wait a few minutes because I wanted to tell him something. I told him how I felt and that I have been feeling like this since we met. I also asked if this please could stay between us. He didn't say a word and just started running. I didn't know if I should run after or not, and after a few minutes I ran after him but he had disappeared. That night I couldn't sleep. I was scared and felt stupid that I expected something back from him. The next day I was afraid to go to school. I was afraid to see him and what if he had told everybody? Luckily I didn't meet him because he didn't come to the school. I was getting nervous, didn't have any energy and it was hard to focus, so I went back home. In the afternoon when I was on my way to the Mosque because I wanted to pray, I met one of my friends. He asked why I would ever choose to like boys, and then he said the name of the boy I was in love with. I could not breathe and it felt like my body was falling apart. He said everything I had told the boy I was in love with. I was speechless. Then word got around and everybody in my village knew the story. I didn't know what to do. I was humiliated! I remember going to school and the boys threw stones at me, and thank God did none of them hit me. In the classroom my teacher asked me what made me be this way, especially since I was handsome and could get any girl I wanted. I ran out of the class and never went back. I dropped school, stopped going out of my house. In almost six months, I was only indoors and too afraid to go out. My mother and my siblings have been super supportive and they were acting like nothing happened.

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The price of freedom

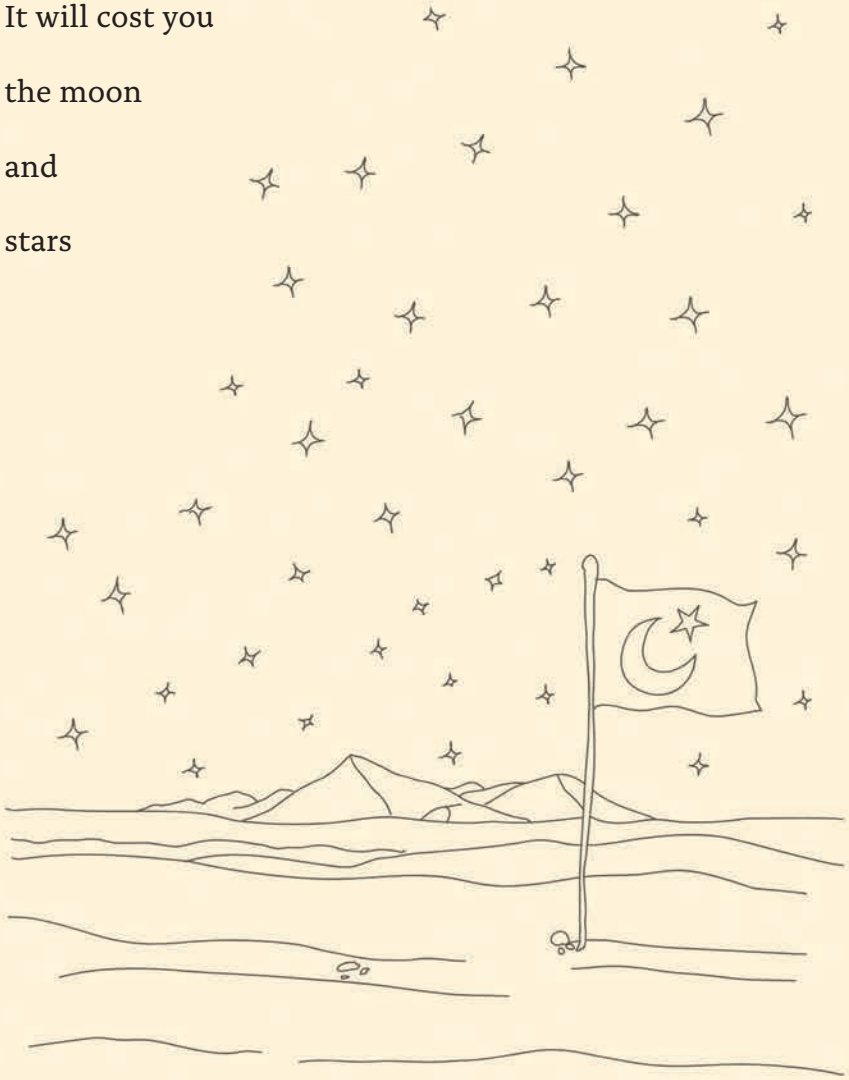
is not small,

It will cost you

the moon

and

stars



Liquid & Smoke

Today I found a letter from a memory long passed and it read the words Remember Poland. I stopped when realizing what I had found. Unsure if I wanted to read any further. If I was willing to revisit this grave. When the past is dug it feels distant, cold, dusty and faded, yet it still is clear as day. You disconnect yourself from what you used to be so much that you manage to forget it. In that case, a reminder would only bring you pain. Even though I knew this, a part of me wanted to read the letter. I took a deep breath before I continued reading.

> *Remember Poland. Remember me? I hope not. I'm writing to remind you what you used to be. I want to ask you if you finally became better. If you are free enough to be you. ...*

I was 13 years old when my parents told us we were going to Poland. I was thrilled. It was unusual for us to go anywhere different on vacation. If we were to travel my parents would always take us to the middle east. Needles to say, I was excited. I was finally going to see something else. I loved travelling and I also knew that this would be the best opportunity for me to get to drink for the first time. Prioritizing was not my best quality back then. I thought a drink would cure problem after problem. I was building it up in my mind. Ready for it to be perfect.

> *Then you showed up there and it was not so different after all. Parents argue even on vacation. A child is still no adult just because they are overseas and no new country can cure the void you feel.*

On the way there I was planning out the whole vacation in my head. I would drink and smoke and for once have fun. I would forget my problems for just one day and I would feel like any thirteen-year-old in a rebel stage.

« There was nothing to drink and nothing to smoke. Nothing to fill up the void that thirteen-year-old me was trying to avoid.

Not unusual and different. Not lost and alone. Not a child unsure of what she is. Scared to grow up and forget what she had seen. I was sure that I would grow up to be troubled. At least this trip would make me forget. But when we got there, I did not feel any different. It was the same old book but with a different cover. The same book that we read over and over. There was nothing to drink and nothing to smoke. Nothing to fill up the void that thirteen-year-old me was trying to avoid.

> *Then you found out you could not get what you wanted. It would not be as fun but maybe something would happen. You had no idea how right you would be. Then your brothers locked you out of the hotel room, it was a joke but you did not feel like taking it anymore. You got mad so you started hitting the door. Yelling and cursing because you were tired of nobody listening at all. You just wanted them to stop treating you like dirt. They should have cared. They should have known.*

I remember cursing once and hitting the door. I hit it as hard as I could. Then as I was about to say another word, I felt a hand striking my jaw. I fell back on the chair and looked up in fear. I saw familiar eyes staring back at me but with no emotion at all. Eyes that matched mine almost perfectly except angry and cold. A bitter old man that had turned violent

and dangerous. A man that did not hesitate. He grabbed my throat pressing it hard. I felt myself slipping. I was sure I would die. I tried to plead but could not speak. The words disappeared as he crushed my throat. I looked into his eyes but barely recognized the man. I looked at my father pleading with my tears until I realized that my father was gone. Then looked over at my mother on the other side of the room. She did not protest. She did not try to stop it. Not for a minute, not even for a second. I was sure that I would be dead but he eventually let go. That day I think I went a little cold. I will always remember Poland. How could I forget? It was the day that a part of me died. The day I spent years trying to forget. Hiding it behind tons of liquid and smoke.

> *Remember that day and how much you hated it? But you knew you did not want to forget it. You sat down and wrote yourself a letter. So now I am writing to see if you have changed. Did we finally get away like I was hoping? Did you become everything that I wanted to be? Did I ever become proud of being me? Remember Poland. It showed me that the only person I could count on was me.*

Today I found a letter from a memory long passed that seems distant and faded. A memory of myself crying in a room with nothing but a pen and paper. An apology cannot cure all and some things stay broken. A thought of a future where I would be free was my only reason to keep living. That future meant lying to everyone I know. Lying about friends, sexuality and religion. Something that should be mine. It would all be worth it one day, when I gain my freedom. So, I picked up the pen to write a letter that started with the words *Remember Poland*.

« A thought of a future where I would be free was my only reason to keep living.

« Du sa at vi var muslimer og ikke trodde på sånne ting. Men jeg hadde en tro og det var å tro på meg selv og at det ikke var noe galt med meg.

Mamma

Jeg kom ut da jeg var 11 år
Jeg ville ikke komme ut men ville fortelle mamma det som plaget meg
Jeg ville fortelle alt og være fri
Min plan var aldri å "komme ut" og det uttrykket var fremmed for meg
Søsknene mine og jeg var veldig åpne mot mamma og pleide å kunne snakke om alt
Mamma hadde alltid sagt at hun skulle være der uansett hva
Jeg visste ikke at mine følelser hadde noe å gjøre med religion
Jeg visste bare at jeg måtte dele det med mamma og jeg stolte på det mamma hadde sagt
Jeg visste ikke at en jente kunne ha følelser for en annen jente på denne tiden
Jeg og mamma hadde hemmeligheter sammen før, hun pleide å gjemme unna litt penger til meg som jeg kunne bruke uten at de andre barna visste om det
Jeg gikk i 6 klasse da jeg fortalte mamma at jeg hadde crush på en jente i klassen

Jeg ville fortelle deg alt
Du sa: fortell meg alt kjære deg
Og kjære deg når jeg hadde sagt alt som plaget meg
da begynte du å kjefte
Og jeg fikk se en helt ny side av deg
Nei du er jente og du kan ikke ha crush på en annen jente
det må være noe galt med deg
Etter det ble det bare kaos mellom oss
Du sa at vi var muslimer og ikke trodde på sånne ting
Men jeg hadde en tro og det var å tro på meg selv og at det ikke var noe galt med meg

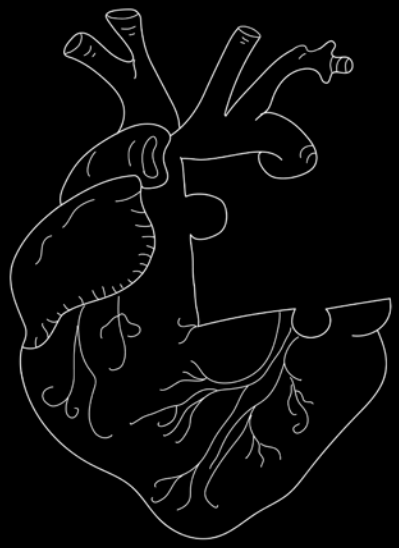


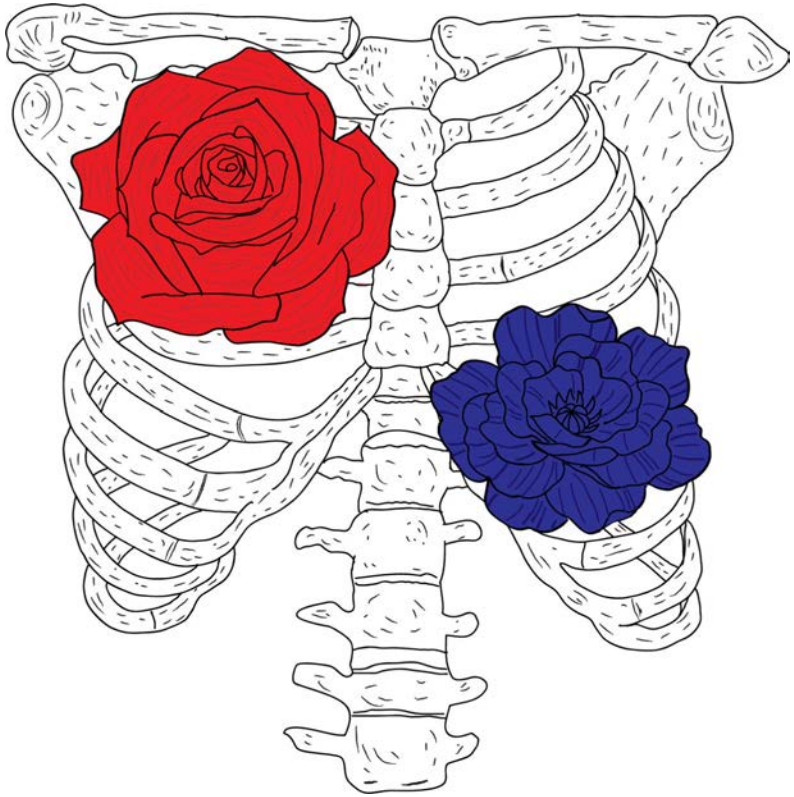
23.04.19

Jeg våkner opp trøtt og sliten, ser at sola skinner og det er vår ute. I dag kommer til å være en god dag, første vårdag. Alt virker mulig i dag. Jeg lager meg en kopp te og spiser brødskive mens jeg ser på tv. Jeg bestemmer for dra ut en tur. Kan ikke sitte inne når det er så fint vær ute. Jeg får fikset mange praktiske ting som jeg hadde utsatt fordi det var kjedelig, men ingenting er kjedelig når det er så fint vær ute. Etter en lang dag med ærender og kafebesøk med venner tar jeg turen hjem for å lage meg middag. Klokken 20.00 ringer telefonen min. Det er han som ringer.. Jeg orker ikke å ta den. Jeg har sagt til han at jeg ikke vil treffe han igjen. Han fortsetter å ringe, jeg setter opp volumet på tven for å overdøve mobilen. Endelig slutter det å ringe. Nå har han begynt å sende meldinger. "Hvor er du?" Jeg svarer ikke. "Ta telefonen!" Jeg svarer ikke. "Er du redd for meg? Haha" Jeg svarer ikke! Telefonen slutter å vibrere og jeg slutter å holde pusten. Jeg legger meg på sofaen og ser på tv. Mobilen vibrerer. "Kan du komme ut. Jeg står utenfor leiligheten din". Jeg slutter å puste. Jeg tar på meg skoene og går ut. Åpner døra til porten og ser han foran meg. "Hva vil du?" Spør jeg "Du kan ikke plutselig bare dukke opp på døra mi." Han forteller meg at jeg er syk og at jeg er ekkel fordi jeg liker menn. Han begynner å skrike til meg! Jeg forteller han vi to er ferdig. Jeg vil ikke holde på med han mer. Jeg kan ikke være med noen som skammer seg så mye, og som oppfører seg sånn her. Jeg snur, begynner å gå fra han. Plutselig kjenner jeg en stikkende smerte i ryggen. Han har en kniv. Han stikker meg flere ganger i ryggen og roper dø dø dø dø. Jeg klarer ikke å puste. Jeg prøver å krabbe bort fra han. Alt virker umulig nå. Heldigvis ringer noen ambulansen. Drapsforsøk, du er heldig som overlevde sier de. Jeg føler meg ikke heldig. Jeg lå på sykehuset i 8 dager og på sykehuset bestemte jeg meg for å flytte til en annen by. Starte på nytt! Jeg kom meg til Oslo og fikk kontakt med Skeiv Verden. Det er fortsatt vanskelig å puste men nå får jeg hjelp.

My first love

I always knew there was something different about me at the age of 11. Growing up people often wondered why I was so dozed off and kept to myself. I was 12 years old when I found out I was attracted to the same sex. The first time I fell in love was a woman who was close to my cousin. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever met. I always looked forward to seeing her. My cousin lived with us at the time and every time she come to visit her I got butterflies in my stomach. She always wore this nice perfume that I could smell from far away. I often wondered what it was about her that made her so special. She had the most beautiful eyes and I dreamt about us living together and having kids but there was no way that was gonna happen because we were both from religious families and we lived in a country where homosexuality was not allowed. Sometimes I just wished I could elope with her and live far away where would be no setbacks. I would pray to god and ask why I had to be gay and live with fact that I would never be with or marry the woman I love without having to loose my family and friends. That was just the beginning of many relationships that I had to hide and keep to myself. Ramla was my first love, nine years later and I still think about her. She moved to Somalia and got married to a man. I often wonder how she is doing and if she is happy. I wish I could see her one more time and get some closure or I wish I could turn back time and cherish every little moment I had with her. I often pray for her happiness and live with the thought that maybe we will meet in the next life where we can be together. It's hard when you meet the right person but the timing is wrong. I know that if me and her met today we could be together because I am more open with who I am and live in a place where I can marry whom I want. The 20 year old me wonders if I am just as naive as I was when I first met her. But the feelings I had for her were true feelings. They say you never forget your first love and Ramla is a woman I will never forget. I hope to meet her again one day, maybe see her in the streets of Somalia or at a coffee shop. I still dream of her eyes and her scent.





Infeksjon

Jeg har infeksjon i øynene
Øyeinfeksjon på godt norsk
Blikket mitt støter
Og rammer
Angriper din personlige sones komfort
Nei, jeg vil ikke voldta deg
Ville du tro meg?

Jeg har infeksjon i kroppen
Kroppsinfeksjon på godt norsk
Du ville helst stå til side
Seks meter unna
Vendt tilbake med ryggen
Klemme en annen gutt
Og le "No Homo"
Det føles som ran for meg
Men for dette - kommer ingen, heller ikke jeg
til å ta deg

Jeg har infeksjon i sinnet
Sinnsinfeksjon på godt norsk
Jeg burde ha skammet meg
Av tankene mine
Av drømmene mine
Av mine personlige trekk
Kommer du til å hjelpe meg?
Når du sier jeg trenger hjelp

Jeg har infeksjon i ånden
Åndsinfeksjon på godt norsk
Og det føles ikke så riktig
Riktignok vil jeg aldri være viktig
For deg

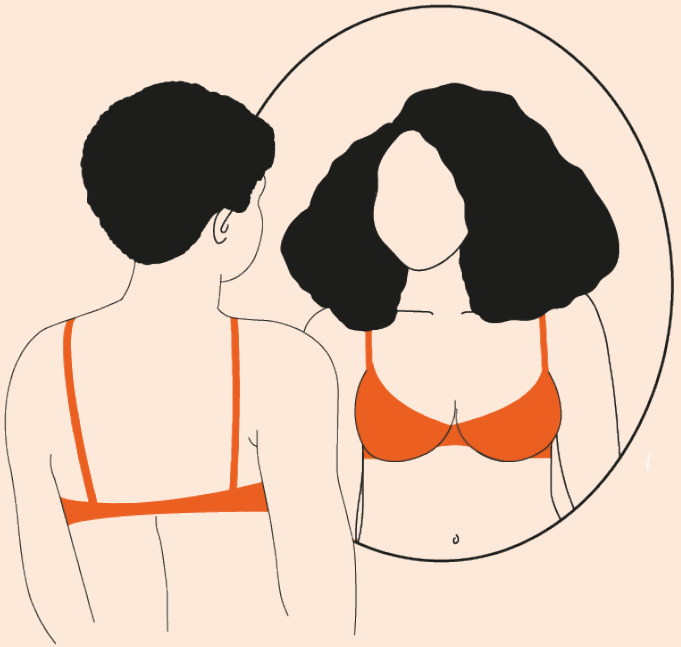
Ut i verden

I 1999 blir et barn født i Saudi Arabia, Jeddah. Det fineste landet der hvor alt er hellig. I oppveksten skjønner barnet at det noe spesielt med det, og at dette barnet er annerledes fra alle de andre gutta, søsknene sine. De andre barna liker å spille fotball og være med gutta, mens dette barnet hadde ingen interesse for det. Barnet tenker ofte: Hvorfor er jeg ikke som de andre guttene? Hvorfor er jeg så feminin? Kanskje gud har straffet meg? Eller kanskje det er noe unikt ved meg? Barnet blir større og blir mer og mer usikker rundt legningen sin. Det opplever mobbing fra venner og familie og får kjeft for å være feminin. Barnet har alltid elsket å leke med dukker, alltid likt å pynte seg.

Etterhvert som tiden går føler barnet seg mer og mer sikker på at det er en jente. Barnet visste ikke hva det var å være trans. Det prøvde å se på tv og se om det fantes noen som var lik. En dag ser barnet på Ru Paul dragrace og begynner å tenke at oj dette her er jo meg! Samme dag bestemmer barnet seg for å ta på seg jenteklær og ta masse bilder. Mens barnet tar bilder i kjole kommer søsteren inn. Hun blir kjempesint og kjefter på barnet og sier at hun aldri vil se barnet sånn igjen. Men barnet hadde aldri hatt det så bra som når det fikk ha på seg jenteklær og endelig kunne være seg selv.

Barnet forstår at det ikke kan fortsette å leve sånn og bestemmer seg for å dra. Barnet legger igjen alt av klær og verdisaker, men tar med seg et familiebilde av moren og søsknene sine og går ut i verden og uvissheten. Ut i den frie verden, hvor man kan være seg selv.

Jeg var redd, men jeg turte. Og selv om det er vanskelig og tøft, og man må tåle å gjennomgå mye, så har det gjort meg sterk også. Det å kunne være seg selv er gull verdt, det betyr så mye. Ja, det kommer oppturer og nedturer i livet, men ingen burde aldri ikke få lov til å være seg selv.



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Jeg vil ha frihet

Det er ikke lett å være skeiv og fra Somalia. Kulturen gjør at folk ikke vil akseptere deg. Det er stort problem med familien hvis du ønsker å fortelle historien om deg og om hvordan du har det. Du kan få store problemer, du kan bli kastet ut, du er skam for familien.

Jeg er skjult ingen vet at jeg er skeiv. Jeg har veldig lyst til å være åpen en dag men jeg er redd for at folk skal finne ut om hvem jeg er. Jeg vil ha frihet i mitt liv.

Submission

Being originally form Dubai, there has been a lot of lifestyle changes I had to get used to. Going from having everything handed to and having the privilege in society to being a refugee in Norway felt like a major downgrade in life. It was most prominent in the way people treated me. I experienced racism for the first time and going through that made me open my eyes and I am more empathic and I see the world through a different lens now. It made me regret not doing more back home, for example instead of throwing away Aed 2000 on clothes I should have given them to the housemaid whose salary was around Aed 700 a month and at the time that amount was pocket change to me. I feel like a spoiled privileged kid who did not think about less fortunate until unfortunate circumstances came around and I did not have a choice but to seek asylum. Now I understand refugees and the working class more and how race is linked to that. It's so much harder starting from zero than to have everything your ancestors worked for inherited to you. You get a jump start in life that makes not appreciate what went into achieving all of that.

I always felt like I didn't fit in anywhere, no matter how hard I tried and pretended to be like everyone else. Being transgender and having the expectation to present yourself the opposite of how you felt was constantly draining. I felt like I was playing a role every day and it was never good enough. I was always being criticized for not being girly enough in my expressions and mannerisms. 'Close your legs', 'do not sit like a man', 'don't talk like that', 'be more passive', 'be obedient and do not ask why' these are just a few comments my parents would say on a daily basis and I wasn't exactly an easy kid to deal with because I questioned everything and pushed boundaries all the time.

I had long hair that was to my legs, I wasn't allowed to cut it or choose any clothes without the approval of my parents mainly my mother. I would wear a beanie in my room and imagine what it would be like if I had short hair. I would take my brother's clothes without him knowing and trying them out, I wished if I can only do that all the time. When we would have family weddings my mom would get me to try dresses. I didn't care about

which one I would eventually have to wear. I just wanted to get it over with and would just tell her to pick whatever she feels is good enough. We would go to the salon to get our hair and make-up done. I didn't even recognize my reflection, I just felt like a guy in drag. Even after going through all that she would criticize the way I walk. We would have photoshoots at the wedding, and I felt like a puppet. People would instruct me on where to place my hands and how to stand up straight. I wanted to burn the photos so bad. People would complement me on how beautiful I looked and how they envied me on how skinny I was. It seemed like I had a body a lot of girls wanted to have but I would give anything to change that. Why did I feel like that? Why couldn't I enjoy it like others would? My life seemed perfect on paper, living in a huge house with housemaids, a driver, getting money whenever I asked for it. What was wrong with me? Why was I still unhappy?

One day it was just too much to handle and I was done being the golden child. I just chopped my hair in the bathroom. My mom had a breakdown and was screaming with everyone else in the house just staring. My dad asked me if I thought I was a boy, but I denied it knowing it would not be a smart thing to admit to. 'How can I take you around family now?' My mother only cared about her image and her reputation. I slowly started to dress how I wanted but the public's reaction wasn't an easy one to handle. I stopped wearing the hijab and abaya after a long battle with my parents. Strangers would harass me and say some comments while they're passing by. I didn't like walking with my parents because I didn't want to embarrass them. People would judge their parenting. I would hear people talking and trying to figure out if I was a boy or a girl. Some would see me as a boy until I opened my mouth and spoke, my high voice would give me away. Then they would apologize. You were right the first time, I thought in my head.

Once I went out with some friends after a long time of being anti-social. While we were walking together, police stopped us and asked for ID's. They said they were not sure if I was a boy or a girl, so they wanted to confirm that. After looking at them they asked me to go to the police station with them. After hours of lecturing and harassment. They made me sign

a pledge to be able to be released promising that I would not continue looking like that in public because it was violating the culture and customs and it offended people.

I'm very determined and stubborn, I had to come up with a plan to get out of this situation. It wasn't realistic to live like this for the rest of my life. After doing a lot of research I came to the conclusion that there's no possible way for me to continue living in my home country so I decided to come to Norway because I had a friend living here and it would be easier than moving somewhere knowing no one.

But I had one issue I didn't have my passport, my parents did, which they kept in their locked room at all times. I had to come up with a plan to get it back. I applied for a job and I got contacted for an interview. 'Perfect' I thought in my head. My parents offered to accompany me to the interview even though I had my own car and a driving license. I think they were feeling suspicious. The day of the interview came and my parents handed me my passport with all the documents required for the interview. Once I was done, they wanted to take the passport back but I offered to hold on to it. We stopped by a store to do some grocery shopping. My dad told me to go and help my mom while he waited in the car. I hid the passport in the chair pocket behind my dad and got out of the car. After we finished shopping, we got back to the car, I went to check for my passport. It was gone! My heart dropped. I felt so hopeless, I went through all that trouble for nothing, I didn't even want that job. I gave up at that point. After going back home, everyone was called to the dining room for lunch. I passed by the kitchen and saw my mom's handbag. I was compelled to go through it for some reason. There was my passport. My heart started beating so fast and I was terrified of being caught. I sprinted to the living room, the coast was clear. I swiftly went back to the handbag and took my passport and hid it in my pants, went to my room and hid it in my closet between some clothes. Before I joined my family for lunch, I made sure I wiped all my sweat and calmed myself down. I had to book my flights fast before they would notice it missing.



The day of the flight was there, it was in the early morning. I pondered and stared at everything from furniture, my family's faces, to the view out my window. Not knowing if I'll ever be able to be back here, I wanted to remember as much as I could.

I waited for my parents to come back home and go to sleep. My sister knew about my plans beforehand since I was closest to her. I informed my other siblings that I'll be leaving. They didn't want to get involved so they just said they'll pretend they didn't know anything if my parents asked. My brother gave me his hoodie as a souvenir. After I said my goodbyes to everyone my sister drove me to the airport. It was really hard to look at her face while I was leaving, so I didn't.

I was shaking from head to toe the whole way, from my house to the airport, in the plane, to Oslo airport. It wasn't long before my parents found out I was gone. They contacted my friend's family and started harassing them. To this day I don't know how they got their phone numbers from just knowing their names. They blamed everyone else but me for influencing me down the 'wrong path'. They think I'm so naive and gullible that I can't make my own decisions, which is hypocritical of them because that's exactly how they raised me. But now they have a problem with it since it's not according to the plan they had for my life, which is eventually them choosing my husband and then having kids.

I went to the police station and informed them that I wanted to seek asylum. They took my belongings and took me for an interview. I told them my reasons and why I feared for my safety. After the interview I was taken to a reception centre in Råde. I stayed there for a few days then I was transferred to an asylum mottak in Sinsen. I was there for about 8 months, I was then transferred to another mottak in Vang. My parents called me no more than 5 times since I came to Norway and since my voice changed, they no longer wanted to hear my voice. It went against their religion and everything they stand for. They didn't approve nor support me unless I did whatever they wanted. It felt like I was just keeping myself alive. Nothing to live for and an unknown future.

As time passed, it was harder for me to wait and my mental health declined a lot in that period where I contemplated suicide a few times. My sister was the only thing holding me back, otherwise no one was worth me having to suffer for. I stayed at the mottak in Vang for about a year and 5 months until my asylum got accepted and I finally got the residency. It was the first time I cried from happiness.

At first, I was really open expecting people to be accepting due to Norway being one of the top European countries accepting of LGBT people, at least that is what I concluded from researching online. Unfortunately, reality was different. Before starting my medical treatment, people didn't respect my pronouns and had a lot of invasive questions. I felt like I had to prove and explain myself all the time. Even after starting treatment, when people would find out, they would usually say, ''Oh, but I thought you were a boy!''

I started to slowly hide again and not disclosing this to anyone, just to be treated like everyone else. I just wanted to feel normal instead of this abnormal creature, which can also have its own challenges and can also feel like you are not being your authentic self. I'm always worried about being outed to the wrong people.

Adjusting my binder to look as flat as possible, dealing with the pain even if it feels like it's digging into my skin and I can't breathe. Adjusting my packer to have the right amount of bulge. Sometimes it moves and it looks like I have a boner, which you can imagine can be inconvenient and makes you look like a creep trying to adjust it discretely. Most of the time, I just have to look for the closest bathroom.

Even talking about your past can give you away, so I have to change the story to make it seem that I'm cis. In a way my life didn't begin until a few years ago and it still doesn't feel like I'm actually living and thriving yet, but rather preparing and sorting shit out to start my life properly without anything that can hold me back.

I am what I am.

my family came here
for the hopes of a better life
this is not what they had in mind
their own daughter
and sister,
ex- muslim and gay
Is this the life
my mother dreamed for me?
Is this what they had in mind
as they sailed
across the ocean
with just the cloths
on their backs
this is what you sacrificed
everything for
mother,
father,
brothers,
and
sisters,
for me to be whatever
I want to be?

For me to be who I am.



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