WHEN I WAS LITTLE MY PARENTS MADE ME DO KARATE.

I WAS REALLY GOOD AT IT. BUT I *HATED* IT.

AT THE TIME I DIDN'T KNOW WHY. LOOKING BACK, I SUPPOSE IT WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS SUPPOSED TO PLAY A ROLE TO BE ACCEPTED.

IT WAS A MICROCOSM OF MY ENTIRE CHILDHOOD IN THAT WAY.

I'VE ALWAYS *HAD* TO PLAY A ROLE:

MASCULINITY

IT WASN'T A ROLE I WANTED TO PLAY.

I WANTED TO PLAY WITH KIDS WHO DIDN'T HAVE TO PLAY THAT ROLE.

FIGHT!

hello! im here

KIDS WHO PLAYED WITH DOLLS AND PINK LEGO SETS.

KIDS WHO PUT CUTE PINS ON EACH OTHER'S HAIR.

IT FELT SO OFF TO ME THAT I WAS EXPECTED TO ASPIRE TO BE SOME HARD-BOILED MASCULINE HERO FIGURE WHEN I GREW UP.

AS A CHILD I WITNESSED THE MILITARISTIC VIOLENCE OF 1998 INDONESIA AS IT UNFOLDED ON TV. MASCULINITY, IT SEEMED TO ME, WAS NECESSARY FOR SURVIVAL. BUT IT WAS FAR FROM SELF-ACTUALISATION.

MAHASISWA SIAL-AN!!

POLISI

ALL I SAW WAS *VIOLENCE.*

TO BE A MAN WAS TO CONTROL, TO DOMINATE, TO OPPRESS OTHERS SO WE COME OUT ON TOP.

THE EXPECTATION FOLLOWED ME WHEREVER I WENT.

AND I REALIZED – ISN'T THIS HOW SOCIETY FUNCTIONS?

NATIONALISM. MILITARISM. PATRIARCHY.

THE STATE IS A FATHER FIGURE WHO KNOWS BEST! VIOLENCE IS JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF MAINTAINING ORDER AND DESTROYING THREATS!

I *HATED* THAT PREMISE.

AND SOON I WOULD FIND MYSELF PORTRAYED AS THAT VERY THREAT.

A BIG ONE:
I DIDN'T HATE MASCULINITY ANYMORE.

IT TOOK ME WAY TOO LONG TO REALIZE:
IF YOU WANT TO BE A GIRL, YOU CAN JUST ***BE*** A GIRL.

SO I DID—
AND MAGICAL THINGS STARTED HAPPENING.

I STARTED HANGING OUT WITH A LOT OF TRANS AND NONBINARY PEOPLE. MANY OF THEM WERE TRANSMASCS.

IF YOU'D SPOKEN TO ME YEARS AGO, I WOULD BEEN TOO REPRESSED BY MY OWN ENFORCED MASCULINITY TO UNDERSTAND ALL OF THESE NUANCES OF GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION.

BUT NOW EVERYTHING MAKES PERFECT SENSE.

I WASN'T CHAINED BY MASCULINITY.

I WAS CHAINED BY ***PEOPLE*** IN THE NAME OF MASCULINITY.

THERE'S VULNERABILITY TO MASCULINITY...

...JUST AS THERE'S STRENGTH IN FEMININITY.

THERE'S BEAUTY EVERYWHERE IN THE GENDER SPECTRUM IF YOU'RE HUMBLE ENOUGH TO SEE THEM.

AND NOW, NO LONGER BOUND BY ANY NARROW EXPECTATIONS OF GENDER ROLES:

I GET TO EXPLORE ***ALL*** OF THEM.

CLICK!

I DIDN'T HATE MASCULINITY ANYMORE.

PERHAPS I NEVER DID.

WHAT I HATED WAS HOW PEOPLE ALWAYS TRY TO FASHION IT INTO A CAGE.

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UNTIL I MET PEOPLE WHO UNCAGE IT INTO FASHION—AND LIBERATION.

A QUESTION STILL LINGERS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND:

HOW MANY STILL SUFFER FROM THAT GENDER CAGE?

A SAD FACT: THE MOMENT PEOPLE STARTED SEEING ME AS A WOMAN WAS ALSO THE MOMENT I STARTED GETTING SEXUALLY HARASSED.

TRANSMASC FRIENDS TOLD ME SIMILAR STORIES: THE MOMENT PEOPLE STARTED SEEING THEM AS MEN WAS THE MOMENT THEY STARTED PUTTING UP WALLS.

REAL MEN:
- ✓ sweaty
- ✓ rough
- ✓ loud
- ✓ violent
- ✓ forceful
- ✓ threatening

YOU'VE HEARD IT A THOUSAND TIMES: THERE'S A MALE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC.

I CAN'T SPEAK FOR HOW TRUE THAT IS, BUT IT RESONATES WITH SO MANY OF US.

AS A CAGE, THE SKY-HIGH BUT NARROW EXPECTATIONS OF MASCULINE GENDER ROLES HURT NOT ONLY WOMEN BUT ALSO MEN.

THOUGH THEY TEND TO REACT IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS.

THERE'S NOTHING NATURAL ABOUT GENDER.

THE WAY WE INTERNALIZE AND PERFORM IT IS ALWAYS ALREADY POLITICAL.

THUS IT SHOULDN'T BE ALL THAT SURPRISING HOW YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY POLARIZED IN THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS.

2005 2010 2015 2020

Male vs Female Brain

SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT IT IS, BUT I CAN TELL YOU IT STARTS BY DISMANTLING THE IDEA OF GENDER AS AN ESSENTIAL, NATURAL, BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE.

MASCULINITY ≠ DOMINATION

FEMININITY ≠ DOMESTICATION

MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY'RE AFRAID OF US— THE QUEERS, THE ENBIES, THE GENDER OUTLAWS.

BECAUSE DEEP DOWN, THEY'VE REALIZED A PROFOUND TRUTH:

ONCE WE WIN THE FIGHT FOR TRANS LIBERATION...

...IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE WIN THE FIGHT FOR UNIVERSAL LIBERATION.