

Rethinking Normal

Chapters 1-3 Summary/Reflection

The first three chapters discuss the beginning of Katie's transition from male to female. She described the beginning of her transition and the dysphoria that came with it. Katie described that her personal dysphoria was not just that of her using different pronouns and name. She had experienced major body dysphoria as well. She made the decision to have breast implants, feminization surgery, and gender confirmation surgery. Additionally, Katie describes her first real relationship, with Arin, after she began her transition.

Many of the youth that I will be focusing on within my inquiry could be struggling with gender dysphoria as well. It is extremely important that I learn as much as possible about how a youth could potentially be feeling while this is occurring. This will allow me to best help them find the resources they need to feel at home in their body and expression. I am looking forward to hearing more about Katie's story.

Chapter 4-7 Summary/Reflection

Throughout these chapters, Katie explores her time during childhood ages two through eight. During this time, Luke (Katie's name at birth) struggled tremendously with depression as a result of his body not matching how he felt on the inside. He did not know exactly what he was feeling but he knew it was different. As a result, Luke found it difficult to make friends and connect with family. He desired deeply to not be seen so much so that he wished he would die.

Overall, Katie described that both of her parents have experienced multiple traumas within their life both before and after she was born. With that said, there were many instances

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when child protective services (CPS) could have intervened. During these interventions, CPS could have addressed the alcoholism of Katie's father and the depression Katie felt as a child. I do not believe either instance would have resulted in a removal, however, I do believe some intervention would have helped stabilize Katie's family situation.

Chapter 8-9 Summary/Reflection

Katie's family had gone through a major transformation of the course of such a short time. The family had decided to relocate to a different part of Oklahoma as Katie entered middle school as Luke. Also, during this time, Katie's parents decided to divorce and move into different houses. However, this time was also filled with major positive life changes for Katie. She had made three friends whom she had become close to. Most importantly, Katie has come out to her mother as transgender. During this conversation the two were extremely emotional. Katie's mother was extremely supportive. They had created a "pact": Katie's mom would help her with whatever she wanted/needed done to feel happy as long as Katie promised she would not attempt to take her own life.

Way too often have I heard stories of queer youth, transgender folks especially, struggling with their identity in conjunction with their religion and family values. There are many youth who struggle with depression as a result and sometimes it may even get the best of them leading the youth to die by suicide. Thankfully, Katie's mother was extremely supportive and there for her during her transition allowing her to flourish.

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Chapter 10-11 Summary/Reflection

Katie begins these chapters with her list of wishes in transitioning from male to female. Her list includes changing her pronouns and name legally, finding a support group other than her mother, beginning hormones, and having gender change surgery. Additionally, Katie explains her first experiences of going to support group, going out into public as Katie, and going to the doctor for hormones. As time went on, Katie described her first boyfriend and her first time.

Every trans gender journey is different. Some folks may wish to only change their pronouns and name. Some may choose to also go on hormones and not have surgery. Some may decide that they would like to have surgery in addition to the preceding. Katie was one of the extremely lucky ones. She and her family were able to afford hormones, therapy, and surgery. Many trans folks might not be able to afford the above. I am hopeful that society will evolve and hormones and surgeries will become more readily available.

Chapter 12-13 Summary/Reflection

Katie described the beginning of her junior year. This was the first time that she went to school as Katie. This proved to be extremely difficult for her. Katie decided after a few days that she no longer wanted to attend school and she preferred the virtual setting. However, after the first semester had concluded, Katie realized that was not the case. With her boyfriend now living with her family, the two of them attended public school once again. But, this did not come without difficulties. Katie and her mom had a hard time with the school accepting Katie and ensuring her safety. However, once Katie's mother explained to the administration their legal

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obligation to educate her and ensure her safety, Katie was accommodated and ensured her safety. Katie was given the privilege of using the faculty restroom and had the anti-bullying club looking out for her, even if it only helped a little. As time went on, Katie became more confident subsiding the bullying she was a victim of. Additionally, Katie was gaining more and more friends as a support system.

In addition, Katie was asked to be the feature of an article and video that would be broadcasted and printed in a local Oklahoma paper and website. She jumped at the opportunity to educate others as well as advocate. Katie recognizes her growth in such a short amount of time and is proud.

Chapter 14-15 Summary/Reflection

Chapters 14 and 15 are especially transformative, and not just for Katie. During these chapters Katie is told that someone has anonymously offered to cover her gender reassignment surgery and college as a result of her strength and continued activism. In addition, Katie received a leadership award. At the ceremony, Katie's father had attended, being the first time he had shown support towards Katie's transition. Additionally, Katie had asked her father if she wanted to dance. He simply replied, "a father-daughter dance." It is absolutely incredible to see her father's transformation in conjunction to her own.

Alongside this part of her life, Katie had begun a new relationship with Arin who was also transgender. Arin had understood Katie in a way that her previous boyfriend had not. With this, Arin stuck by Katie through her gender reassignment surgery which had taken place the day after her 18th birthday in California.

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Katie is extremely lucky to be given the opportunity to have gender reassignment surgery along with taking the proper hormones, having her name legally changed, and the support of her family. I do believe that Katie recognizes this and is one of the driving forces of her continued activism.

Chapter 16-17 Summary/Reflection

Katie describes the beginning of her freshman year at Tulsa University. During this time, her and Arin have signed a one-year contract with a media company that has ensured they will be able to share their stories and educate others all over the world. However, Arin and Katie's relationship had become rocky due to the misunderstanding of college vs. high school and other various miscommunications. In addition to their complications, Katie had begun to have feelings for a friend of hers, Todd.

The budding friendship into slight romance has caused rifts in Arin and Katie's relationship. This has led Katie to try to break up with Arin twice but he has successfully talked Katie into giving him another chance each time. Also, Katie has met Todd's family and gone on a picnic date with him in the woods where he professed his love for her.

Chapter 18-19 Summary/Reflection

Katie wraps up her memoir discussing her relationships with both Arin and Todd. She explains that she broke up with Arin because the relationship was just genuinely not working for either of them anymore. Additionally, she had stopped things with Todd because she had missed

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the friendship she had with Arin. About a year after breaking up, the two went back to Colorado with Arin's family for another vacation. Except this time, there was no skiing involved, just a mountain climb. Katie described that she felt the same way during the mountain climb as she did during her transition: scared and worried at the beginning, not knowing if she would make it to the end. But, she persevered, stayed strong, and kept her head up and made it to the end. She was a proud changed person.

Katie went on to thank all of those who have supported her journey. She also described how lucky she was to have the means to transition and was continuously thankful to the anonymous donor. Lastly, Katie described that transitioning was not about becoming normal, it was about redefining what normal was for her.