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## On the (L)edge of Transition: The Reyes Family

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"Don't jump!" the security guard yelled from the other side of the school rooftop. Dakila Reyes, a slim, 14-year-old Filipina teen, was teetering on the ledge, mascara tears gathering at the corners of her eyes, her long hair slick with sweat. She was sick of the teacher who gave her nasty looks and blamed her for a fight she didn't start; she was tired of feeling guilty for what she was putting her parents through. Eventually, the school principal and a few of her more sensitive teachers talked her off the ledge. Shortly afterward she was taken to a hospital where she was evaluated in the emergency room and then admitted for suicidality.

This event was a turning point. Assigned male at birth, Dakila had been wearing feminine clothing at school for over a year. Everyone was acting like she was gay, but she really didn't think so. She now felt ready to talk.

The Reyes family lives in a home owned by Dakila's paternal grandparents, Mary and Angelo, situated in a small farming town in Northern California. Her mother, Tala, and father, Julio, had immigrated from the Philippines to California in their early teens. Tala has a warm smile and bobbed hair and works as a book-keeper for a local supermarket. Julio is a loving father who takes great pride in his family. A few years ago, he sustained an injury in a factory that left him struggling with depression and chronic back pain. In addition to the grandparents, who also live in the home, is the mother's younger sister, Gizelle, age 28. Tagalog is their primary language, though Dakila, her sister, Angela, age 12, and both parents speak English.

Dakila had felt like a girl her entire life. As a young child, she loved women's fashion and frequently draped towels across her head, pretending she had long, lustrous hair. At an early age, Dakila spoke with a more feminine inflection, and once she was old enough to voice a preference, she begged to wear more androgynous clothing. As Filipinos from conservative, Catholic backgrounds, her parents did not expect this behavior from their first and only son and were confused. Dakila felt accepted by them as a feminine boy—until she hit puberty.