Personal Stories of

"HOW I GOT INTO SEX"

Leading Researchers, Sex Therapists, Educators, Prostitutes, Sex Toy Designers, Sex Surrogates, Transsexuals, Criminologists, Clergy, and more . . .

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Coming of Age in the Land of Two Genders[1]

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I AM HONORED to be asked to contribute to this book of personal histories of sexologists. I consider it a milestone not only in my own life, but also in the history of transsexual people, for until recently, no matter what our credentials or talents, we were too marginalized to be considered anything more than curiosities. We had no significance beyond the fact of our transsexualism. I have great respect for Vern and Bonnie Bullough for their ability to see me as a professional first, and as transsexual second.

In order to do my story justice, it was necessary to provide it with a political and historical framework. Thus, the chapter moves from the general to the specific, from a description of the marginalization of transsexual people to an explanation of the work I do, and how I came to do it.

Part I: Gender Politics

Until recently, all major theoretical papers, all of the descriptive studies, and all of the textbooks about transsexualism were written by nontranssexual persons. This situation is analogous to the study of black history and identity without the

1. Portions of this chapter have already appeared in *The News* (Atlanta, Ga.) and *Empathy: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Persons Working to End Oppression on the Basis of Sexual Identities,* and are reprinted with permission.

involvement of black scholars, or of gay and lesbian history and identity without gay and lesbian scholars.

The problem was not that transsexual persons are unable to write. Indeed, some of our most talented and beloved authors, including Carson McCullers, Daphne Du Maurier, and Ernest Hemingway,[2] seem to have had significant transgender tendencies (it's often impossible to tell, because transgender status is so often a well-kept secret). No, the problem was that those of us who were out—that is, who were honest and open about our transsexualism—were marginalized. We were kept so busy with our struggle to understand and cope with our condition, and with defending ourselves against those who acted with hysteria and malice to us when we dared to disclose our transsexual natures (often our own family members as well as the professionals to whom we had turned for help), that we had little time or energy to expend on anything more than simple survival. What we have published has been, until late, because of our curiosity value (the ubiquitous transsexual autobiography), or materials distributed more often than not at our own expense in order to help other transsexual people through the very difficult process of self-discovery and self-invention.

From the late 1960s until the mid-1980s, most transsexual people—that is, men and women who wished to change their bodies to more closely resemble those of the other sex—knocked on the doors of gender clinics that offered a one-stop, one-size-fits-all approach which was nevertheless very obstructionistic; only those transsexual people who fit the clinics' frequently inaccurate and sexist notions of what they should be like were provided with services, and then only by jumping a rigorous set of hurdles designed to discourage them or turn them into highly stereotyped caricatures of nontransgendered men and women (Bolin, 1988; Denny, 1992; Kessler and McKenna, 1978).

Many clinics, citing confidentiality restrictions, actively discouraged transsexual people from interacting with each other. Except for brief and usually anonymous contact with others in therapist-led support groups, transsexual people were isolated, unable to communicate with each other, and forced by the clinics and by societal and peer pressure to assimilate as "normal" men and women in the larger world. This prevented the formation of any type of community. The insistence of the clinics upon assimilation—putting one's transsexualism "behind oneself" after transition—was an additional factor in preventing community.

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2. In *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century,* Gilbert and Gubar discuss the extensive erotic transgender imagery in Hemingway's *Garden of Eden.* Garber (1991) notes that as a child, Ernest Hemingway was cross-dressed by his mother, and that apparently this went somewhat beyond the custom of the times (for instance, Garber describes a photo of Hemingway at nearly two years of age which bears the title "Summer Girl").

According to Margaret Forster, a biographer of Daphne Du Maurier who had the cooperation of her children and full access to the author's unpublished works, Du Maurier, who was intensely homophobic, had private fantasies of being emotionally a male. Similarly, Virginia Carr, a biographer of Carson McCullers, concluded that like the somewhat transgendered main character in McCullers's *A Member of the Wedding,* McCullers desired to be a man.

In 1979, the Gender Identity Clinic at the Johns Hopkins University, which had taken the lead in the study and treatment of transsexual persons since its inception in 1967, abruptly shut down as the result of a scheme concocted by psychiatrist Paul McHugh (McHugh, 1993) and carried out by Jon Meyer, the head of the clinic, who submitted a study of the effectiveness of transsexual surgery to the journal *Archives of General Psychiatry* (Meyer and Reter, 1979). Meyer called a press conference to announce the findings, namely, that surgery made little difference in transsexuals' lives, which was conveniently timed so that psychologist John Money, the primary power behind the clinic, was out of the country (Ogas, 1994). This study was immediately and soundly criticized on a number of fronts, but had its intended effect; the clinic was closed due to political pressures brought as a result of the publicity campaign mounted by Meyer.[3]

The closing of the prestigious Johns Hopkins clinic had a domino-like effect on university-affiliated gender clinics. By 1991, of the more than forty programs in the United States, all but two had closed their doors (Denny, 1992). However, market pressures brought to bear by thousands of men and women seeking sex reassignment led to the development of a transsexual grapevine which channeled those who wanted sex reassignment to private practitioners willing to provide services.

Riding piggyback on the support network that had arisen for heterosexual cross-dressers, or attending one of a very few support groups for transsexual people which had sprung up across the country, transsexuals began to come into contact with one another in the early 1980s. Most, however, remained firmly in the closet of assimilation. In 1986, Merissa Sherrill Lynn founded the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). Although Lynn frequently and loudly proclaimed that IFGE was not an umbrella organization, it served admirably as such, bringing into frequent and often conflict-ridden contact with one another both cross-dressers and transsexual people, and a newly emerging class of people who did not fit either category—transgenderists, who lived full-time as the opposite sex, but without genital surgery.

To the consternation of Virginia Prince, who had coined the word "transgenderist" to refer to people like herself, who lived across genders without genital surgery, "transgender" soon came into use as a global term for the entire community. It has recently gained wide recognition in the gay/lesbian/bisexual press, largely because of the activities of activists like Riki Anne Wilchins and Phyllis Randolph Frye. Transsexual and transgendered persons are now officially included in the mission statements and names of many organizations which once actively excluded us. Incidentally, many transsexual persons do *not* identify as transgendered, but simply as men or women. However, the term transgender, especially when considered to be shorthand for "transgressively gendered" (Bornstein, 1994),

3. There is no doubt there was a conspiracy. In a 1993 article in *American Scholar,* McHugh noted that his intention upon coming to Hopkins in the mid-1970s was to terminate that institution's participation in sex reassignment. See Ogas (1994) for the story of the closing of the Johns Hopkins clinic, and Blanchard and Sheridan (1990) for a devastating critique of Meyer and Reter (1979).

is the term most widely used to describe the wide range of transsexual people, transgenderists, cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, stone butches, passing women and men, and gender blenders who challenge binary gender norms.

As part of the increasingly recognized community of transgendered persons, transsexual and transgendered scholars and authors are at long last coming into prominence. Kate Bornstein and Martine Rothblatt, both of whom are postoperative transsexuals, have written books for general audiences (Bornstein, 1994; Rothblatt, 1994) which were released by mainstream publishing houses. Leslie Feinberg, who once identified as transsexual and now considers herself to be a transgenderist, has found enormous grassroots popularity with her semi-autobiographical novel *Stone Butch Blues* (Feinberg, 1993). When the president of Bradford College recently vetoed Feinberg as keynote speaker at graduation, angry students took over the administration building; after renegotiation, Feinberg spoke after all.

Transsexual scholars have been writing and presenting papers at scientific conferences for some years, but the first published contribution to the academic literature by an acknowledged transsexual person, so far as I have been able to tell, was an essay by Sandy Stone in Epstein and Straub's 1991 book *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity.* Stone pointed out some of the many ways in which transsexual people had been misapprehended and maligned by nontranssexual writers. Her essay, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," immediately achieved legendary status among the scholars of the transgender community.

So far as I know, the first submission by an admitted transsexual published in a psychological journal or book (excluding "what it's like to be transsexual" articles) was a letter I wrote to the editor of *Archives of Sexual Behavior,* which was published in that journal in 1993.[4] However, one of the authors in Blanchard and Steiner's (eds.) 1990 *Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorders in Children and Adults* was written by Maxine Petersen, a transsexual woman, under her former name (Clemmensen, 1990). Recently (1995), Petersen used her new name as co-author of an article in a peer-review journal which frequently publishes articles about transsexualism (Petersen & Dickey, 1995).[5]

My work for Garland Press, *Gender Dysphoria: A Guide to Research,* is, so far as I know, the first academic book-length contribution by an out transsexual author. It

4. Previously, the label of transsexual had been the cause of immediate rejection. As a single illustration of this, Bolin (personal communication, 1994) told me that when a rejected manuscript was returned to her, one of the reviewers had penciled "Obviously a transsexual" on his copy. The reviewer had apparently felt that no transsexual could possibly have anything relevant to say about transsexualism!

Bolin is not transsexual, but she has been outspoken in her criticism of the medicalization of transsexual persons. In this instance, challenging the orthodoxy of the literature got her branded as transsexual and silenced.

5. It's ironic, but hardly surprising, that those most attracted to the field of transgender studies have frequently had their own unacknowledged issues with gender and/or sexuality. There's no telling how many authors have been secret cross-dressers, or secretly transsexual, or secretly or openly gay or lesbian. And there's little doubt, at least in my mind, that many clinicians and researchers are in the field because they are morbidly fascinated with or sexually attracted to transgendered and transsexual persons.

is a voluminous (over 650 pages) annotated bibliography of the literature of transsexualism and cross-dressing, published at the suggestion of Vern Bullough, one of the editors of this book (Denny, 1994a). However, even though I am extremely visible, both locally and nationally, as a transsexual woman, I did not mention my transsexualism in the book. I *am* planning to discuss it in my forthcoming edited text for Garland, *Current Concepts in Transgender Identity: Towards a New Synthesis* (Denny, in press).

The year 1995 was a watershed year in the emergence of transsexual scholars. In February, a historic conference took place in Van Nuys, California. The International Congress on Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Sex Issues, hosted by the Department of Sex Research at the University of California at Northridge, was attended by more than three hundred scholars, transgendered (many of them transsexual) and nontransgendered alike. For the first time, transgender credentials were as important as academic credentials. I was proud, at a workshop I gave on the first day of the conference, to proclaim that my *first* credential was as a transsexual woman.

It was something I could never have done before.

Part II: My Work, in Brief

Although I have worked in the helping professions since 1971, I had no notion that I would end up doing sexological work. However, as I went about the business of confronting my gender identity issue, I was struck by the astounding amount of misinformation about transsexualism and a concomitant lack of support for transsexual persons. Perhaps that would have been enough to eventually draw me into my present activities, but I'll never know, for I was drafted. In the fall of 1989, as I was preparing to live full-time as a woman, Lynn and Jerry Montgomery, who had been running a support group in the Atlanta area, convinced me to direct the group. I reluctantly accepted, and did so for a year. In 1990, I founded Atlanta Educational Gender Information Service, Inc., which quickly took on a national prominence and a new name: American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS).

AEGIS is a national clearinghouse for information on transsexual and transgender issues. We operate a help line which receives calls from transsexual and transgendered people of all ages, races, and social classes; parents and children of transsexual people; employers; journalists; and helping professionals who have transsexual clients. AEGIS publishes *Chrysalis: The Journal of Transgressive Gender Identities* and a newsletter, maintains the National Transgender Library and Archive, and advocates for common sense and reason in the medical and psychological treatment of transsexual people. In 1995 we published our first book, *Recommended Guidelines for Transgender Care,* by Gianna E. Israel and Donald Tarver, M.D.

In addition to full-time employment as a behavior specialist in a day program for adults with developmental disabilities, I am executive director of AEGIS, which keeps me very busy. I've been active on a local level as well. In early 1991, I founded,

and remain active in, the Atlanta Gender Explorations (AGE) support group, which currently has about forty members, most of whom identify as transsexual. In 1994, I was appointed a senior advisor on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Affairs to Atlanta mayor Bill Campbell. Also in 1994, I became a member of Atlanta Pride, an event equivalent to Gay Pride Day, and serve as its secretary.

AEGIS has given me an autonomy that I could never have had in an academic setting. Because my salary is not dependent upon people being pleased with what I have to say; because I am a competent writer, and a prolific one; and because I have had sufficient determination and energy to address a lot of envelopes and lick a lot of stamps, I have been able to speak my mind and make myself heard, and I am proud to be a small part of the current reappraisal of what gender means in our society.

Much of my work has been geared toward reforming the professional literature of transsexualism. I've taken delight in pointing out the literature's many shortcomings, especially the ways in which clinicians' and researchers' naive notions caused them to make assumptions and ask research questions which nowadays seem silly enough to render much of their research irrelevant. I must confess that it has given me some delight to do so, especially since such "research" was once used by a gender clinic to deny me medical services which would have helped me to feminize my body; I was judged and found wanting because I was not dysfunctional enough to be transsexual (i.e., transsexual people are pathetic and marginal creatures, and I was employed and well educated; therefore, I could not possibly be transsexual). The truth was that the literature reflected research done only on those "transsexuals" who had been selected by gender clinics because they were severely dysfunctional; therefore, the research population was not reflective of transsexuals in general (Bolin, 1988; Denny, 1992; Kessler and McKenna, 1978). Unfortunately, in an age in which many transsexual people are physicians, physicists, airline pilots, attorneys, computer programmers, army officers, politicians, policemen, and college professors, we are left with dozens of such studies that will prove to be ultimately worthless.

Indeed, I have come to object to the term "disorder," as it seems to me, after living with and studying transsexualism for so many years, that it is more a blessing than a curse—at least it has been for me. It makes much more sense, and is much less stigmatizing, to view traits like left-handedness, transsexualism, and homosexuality as natural ways of being human, and not as unfortunate traits which should be eradicated. We no longer tie the hands of left-handed children behind their backs, and homosexuality is no longer listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (*DSM*). Why, then, should transsexualism continue to be considered a disorder?

Part III: My Personal History

The way I came to be involved in this field is simple: when I turned twelve (and a very naive twelve, at that), I found myself compelled to wear women's clothes.

There I was, an iron filing in the electromagnetic field of life, with a very strong magnet only yards away in my mother's room. When she was away, I would go through her lingerie drawer, silently memorizing the position of each guiltily borrowed garment so that I could fit it back in place like a piece from a nylon jigsaw puzzle. I had no idea why I, a boy of the highest ideals and purest character, who had always been strong of heart and unlined of brow, suddenly found myself drawn so powerfully to women's apparel, but I did know that I was possessed of something far stronger than I. Something had wakened in me, and it *would* have its way. I considered very briefly trying to fight it, but deep in my bones I knew that it would destroy me if I did. But I also knew that to share this desire with an unaccepting world would be disastrous (it was, after all, the South of the 1960s); my parents, with every good intention, would take me to be "fixed," and would damage or destroy me in the process, or I would destroy myself by internalizing the struggle. My solution was not to fight the temptation, but to yield to it secretly. I thought at the time that it was a purely hedonistic decision, but today, thirty years later, having seen the scars on many of my fellow transsexuals who did wage such an internal struggle, I realize now how very wise or lucky I was to reach the decision that I did at such a tender age.

On the infrequent occasions when I was alone in the house, I would slip on my mother's panties; tuck myself into a girdle that was already too small; pull on nylons, fastening them, in those pre-pantyhose days, to the girdle's dangling rubber thongs; struggle to snap a bra (the mechanics of which, I discovered, I had no inherent knowledge of); and cover it all with a slip and a dress.

I very quickly discovered that women's clothing were but a means to an end: it was necessary in order to build the disguise of myself-as-woman. I remember well the day, when I was about fifteen, that the gas gauge of my gender identity leapt for the first time out of the "M" zone and strayed defiantly into "F." The rest of the family had gone for a Sunday drive, and I made an excuse not to go. I was sitting on the floor of the living room, wearing a purple dress (I had gotten my own by that time), experimenting with my face and hair. And for the first time, I got it right. Looking in the mirror, I would ordinarily see a boy, and only a boy, with a mandatory short-on-the-sides haircut. In that dress, with Cover Girl skin and Maybelline eyes, my hair blended into a fall, I saw a very pretty, an almost beautiful girl. I didn't—and this is important—see a boy dressed as a girl. I saw a *girl*. I remember thinking in awe, "This is who I want to be. This is who I probably should have been." But I also remember thinking that it couldn't be. It wasn't possible. I was looking at a fiction, a fabrication, a creature created out of cosmetics and cloth. The girl in the mirror was a fantasy, and I could see no way to make her real. She had no name. In the end, she wound up in a paper sack which I hid under a loose board in the summer-hot attic.

Few secrets can be kept in a small house with six people living in it, and the girl with no name was soon discovered. In no uncertain terms, I was let to know how scandalous, how perverse, how ugly she was. Despite my decision to give in to

my urges, I had been having real problems dealing with what I considered to be the unnatural need of an all-American boy. The revulsion of my mother, who caught me flat-footed (but not flat-chested), did not help, nor did my father's disgust, when he was told. This was the man who had once jumped on me with both feet (figuratively; he was not a violent man) for talking like the cartoon character Snagglepuss the Lion. Heavens to Murgatroyd! I didn't understand what the problem was until later, when I realized that he thought it sounded effeminate. Now, his son revealed as a boy who dressed up like a girl, he threatened to make me walk the long five miles into town in women's clothing, as he followed in the car.

Would that he had, for I would have been "out," and perhaps it would not have taken me another ten years to come to some resolution about my cross-dressing and my life. Instead, the clothes were disposed of and the girl with no name was dismembered as effectively as if we had cut her up and thrown her chunk by bleeding chunk from a speeding car on a moonless summer night.

My parents took me to a psychiatrist. In my shame and denial, I led him to think that the cross-dressing was not very important, had just been an experiment. And he went for it, telling my parents that I was "just going through a phase." It's a "phase" that's still going on, now, more than thirty years later.

I had not been very successful in my quest for information about gender dysphoria—it was not, after all, something I felt comfortable approaching authority figures about, and the few books on the subject in the public library were often checked out or stolen by people much like me. But in the late 1960s, I heard the news that the Johns Hopkins University was opening a sex reassignment clinic, and that they would evaluate two people a month. Two people a month in a country with a population of hundreds of millions! What chance would a girl with no name have? She was, after all, a lie, a wraith, a sometimes creature. Surely Hopkins would take those boys who were lucky enough to naturally look like girls without having to work at it, those with ambiguous genitalia, whose parents had more money than mine. And how would my parents take it, my father who thought that Snagglepuss was a faggot, and a mother who thought that Miss Jane Hathaway on "The Beverly Hillbillies" was played by Christine Jorgensen? "I just thought I would try it," I told the shrink. "It's not that important."

It was three or four years later. The girl with no name was back, spending most of her time hanging in a wardrobe in the Ross Fireproof Hotel in downtown Nashville. I had graduated from high school and been summarily ejected from my parents' house due to a combination of bad attitude and parental defiance. I had found a job as a busboy, and, as I had no car, I would ride the city bus to work and back. In the evenings and on my day off, the girl with no name would come out of the closet and wander around downtown, shopping at Belk's and Cain-Sloan and Harvey's, Nashville's three big department stores; going to the movies; visiting the library; eating in restaurants; hoping desperately to spot someone like herself so that she could at long last share her feelings with someone. She never managed to do so. Men in cars would whistle and slow down and try to convince me to get in

beside them, and I would ignore them, always. But then one day something happened. I—or rather, the girl with no name, for I would never have done such a thing—found herself in a lip-lock with a cab driver. I had never been kissed before, had never masturbated, had never even touched my privates except to wash them, or to push them up inside me so I could pretend they weren't there, and here I was in an embrace that was growing more passionate by the moment. I was struggling to keep his hands out from under my skirt (a mini—it was the sixties, after all), struggling with my self-identity. Here I was being kissed by a man, and I damn well knew that underneath the clothing I was a boy, after all, and I reasoned that I couldn't be gay, for I had no interest in men as a man. Here I was, with a gender identity which had suddenly slammed itself firmly against the "F" peg and would never again wander into the "M" zone. Here I was with an awakening awareness of my genitals—genitals I was wholeheartedly wishing were "innies" instead of "outies" so that I could go to bed with this man like any other woman. Here I was, wondering if I would be killed and decapitated if this heterosexual man were to discover that his girlfriend was really a boy.

I managed to call a halt to proceedings just shy of blastoff, and a little short of discovery. The man pleaded with me to be his girlfriend, and asked me to go with him to meet his friends—but I refused, and did not see him again.

During those days at the Ross Fireproof Hotel, the girl with no name would plot and scheme, trying to figure out how to find a job (short of prostitution, which I was sure would get me killed) that would allow her to stay out of the closet forever. But she was fighting Mother Nature, and she knew it. She, who had years earlier found a single hair on her face and shuddered, had been only too correct in her prediction that it was but an advance scout for a full beard. Every day, there was more hair on her face, and less on her head. She could *feel* the testosterone in her body, and she hated it and the gonads which produced it—but she, being ignorant about hormonal therapy, could think of nothing to do about it, short of self-castration, which she seriously considered, but eventually decided against.

I did consider becoming involved with the gay community, where I thought that there might be a place for me, but as I was no less homophobic than the rest of the populace, I could never quite bring myself to do it. Nashville had a gay bar of legendary fame, Juanita's, but in my mind's eye, it was a seedy little place where older gay men cruised each other. When, years later, having gotten to actually know some gay people and begun to work through my prejudices and stereotypes, I finally got around to visiting Juanita's, and discovered that it *was* indeed a wrinkle room. No, I didn't go to the gay bars, and there was no transgender community. There was nowhere else *to* go except out into the greater heterosexual world, where I had to pass or die (or so I thought).

The testosterone marched on: I entered adulthood as a man instead of as a woman, and the straight world instead of the gay. I married a woman, grew a beard, went to college. I got weak in the knees every time I saw a pretty girl, because I wanted to *be* her so much. I got divorced (for reasons not having to do with transsexualism).

It was 1978. Single again, I had moved back to Nashville after completing a master's program at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. The beard of seven years was gone, and the girl with no name was back, even if she was not passing so well because of testosterone poisoning. I was going to the gay bars, having sex with men in parking lots, facing a lifetime of looking increasingly more bizarre in a dress, becoming increasingly dysphoric about my body. I was finding it more and more difficult to think of myself as the girl with no name, for I was starting to see in the mirror not the girl, and not the woman she should have become, but a man in a dress. My dysphoria, which had always been present, was becoming overwhelming. One fine day, I told myself that whatever was going on with me wasn't going to go away, that it was time to stop hiding the girl with no name in the closet, and to integrate her into my life, doing away with the butch-femme extremes to see who I really was.

I started by acknowledging that I was at the very least a cross-dresser. I quit worrying that my pumps or wig would be seen, or that I would be spotted wearing them. One by one, I told my friends and acquaintances. Step one.

Those were the days of Jan Morris and Renée Richards; gender reassignment, while still scandalous, was at least thinkable. Step two was to ask myself whether I wanted to be a woman. The answer to that was, of course, yes.

Step three was to take an honest look at myself, to determine if it would be possible, via surgery, electrolysis, and better living through chemistry, to ever pass convincingly as a female. I refused to be a man in a dress. I took careful stock of my body. I didn't at all like what I saw. My body had moved in undesirable directions since that day when I found that single hair growing on my face. I was too hairy. Too big. Too this, not enough that. I made a list, and then scratched off things that could be changed through hard work, hormones, electrolysis, surgery. I looked at what was left and thought "Just maybe . . ."

And so I took myself to the gender clinic at Vanderbilt University, where I gave them some money and told them about the girl with no name and took a battery of psychological tests that I had been trained to administer. After a time they got back to me, saying that they had made a decision about my gender. *They* had made the decision! And no, it wasn't the one I wanted. Because I was not so dysphoric that I was dysfunctional as a man, they would not offer me feminizing procedures like hormonal therapy or surgery. They would, however, offer me counseling to help me in my life as a man. Thank you very much. Fuck you. I didn't go back.

I began to haunt the library at Vanderbilt University Medical School, reading books and articles about transsexualism. They confirmed what I had been told at Vanderbilt—that transsexual people were marginal, maladjusted creatures. Since I did not fit the stereotype: since I was not a sex worker; since I did not hate my genitals, but only thought them the wrong ones; since I had not wanted to be a girl from earliest memory, but only since age twelve; since I had never seriously considered suicide, I thought that I could not possible be what was considered transsexual. I was simply a man who desperately wanted to be a woman.

Vanderbilt's refusal to give me female hormones cued me about what I needed to do to pursue physical change. I visited a number of physicians, asking for hormones, but was refused. The easygoing manner of the doctors would change when I explained my situation. They would exit in confusion, and return a few minutes later to tell me no and give me their bill. Finally, in frustration, while waiting alone in an examination room, I tore a dozen sheets from a prescription pad and put them in my purse. Later, at home, I studied the *Physicians Desk Reference,* looking for a suitable estrogen, and forged a prescription at what I hoped was the proper dose. Later that same day, trembling, I stopped at a drug store and left with a bottle of diethylstilbestrol tablets (a synthetic preparation possessing estrogenic properties, but more effective than natural estrogen).

That simple act of defiance, illegal as it might have been, changed my life. Had I not started a regimen of hormones at age twenty-nine, my body would have continued to masculinize. Instead, it started to feminize. The physical changes were subtle at first, but cumulative. The ultimate consequence of that act was that ten years later, I did not look like a thirty-nine-year-old man, but like a thirty-nine-year-old woman, which made transition from the male role to the female role easy, in a physical sense. But the emotional consequences were devastating.

During this ten-year period, I obtained a license to practice psychology, took a job in a remote corner of the state, began a very tumultuous eight-year relationship with a man which was simultaneously the most satisfying and most frustrating experience of my life, and went once again to graduate school. In the fall of 1988, after I had given up hope of the relationship ever improving, I began to quietly prepare myself for transition. I underwent a course of electrolysis, located a support group, and began seeing a therapist (who gave me a referral to an endocrinologist, legitimizing, at long last, my hormonal therapy).

In December 1989, I resigned from my civil service position as a psychological examiner in Tennessee and moved to Georgia with everything I owned in a U-Haul truck. I was sure it would take years to find an equivalent position, but to my surprise, I found one immediately; as I write, I am in my sixth year of employment there.

I would like to assure the readers of this book, many of whom are undoubtedly therapists, that my use of third-person pronouns in referring to "the girl with no-name" is a convenient literary device, and has no clinical significance. We have come to a time in which the "psychopathology" of transsexual people must be redressed. Certainly, I have never felt very impaired by being transsexual; any confusion, guilt, or indecision I felt while trying to sort myself out was much more the effect of a nonunderstanding society than the result of my transsexualism. I realize that societal reaction to transsexualism does traumatize some of us, but it did not do so to me, and I will continue to fight against those few and unenlightened who still tar us all with the brush of psychopathology.

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