

Issue #19

En femme.

Magazine



Contents

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Greetings from Down Under	2
Joanne Wilson	
Nadia	4
Roberta Angela Dee	
The End of the Transsexual Trail	7
Veronica Brown	
Book Review: My Husband Wears My Clothes	12
Rupert Raj-Gautier	
Movie Review: I Want What I Want	15
Daniel M. T. Graham	
More No-Nos for the Transvestite	17
Cartoon by Angel	
Fantasia Fair, the P'town Experience	19
JoAnn Roberts	
Interview: Natasia Ecstasy	29
Angela Gardner	
My Wonderful World	34
Wendi Seabreeze	
Resources	40
<i>En Femme</i> Back Issues	47

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Roberta Angela Dee

NADIA

This is a true story. It is also a love story - a love story born out of an individual's struggle to find an identity - a meaningful identity. It is a story born out of a personal struggle to discover an honest identity in a world that criticizes too much and understands too little.

The story begins about twenty years ago, in New York, on Long Island. At that time, I am twenty years old, an avid Beatles fan, a guitarist, an amateur song-writer, photographer, poet and hippie philosopher. It is a time when many young people drop acid, smoke marijuana, free-base, snort cocaine and search for a friendlier God, a God with whom they can somehow feel a more meaningful closeness. They search for a God who can understand their fears of war, of civil disobedience, social unrest, riots, racial prejudice, corrupted politicians, and an America that seems destined to follow in the direction of other great empires.

Long Island is still suburban, a haven from Manhattan. It is sanctuary from Manhattan's traffic jams, crime, soot and smog. People work in Manhattan, but return each evening to neat little homes on Long Island, where they worship in neat little churches and



send their children to neat little private and parochial schools.

I spend several hours each evening, after my classes are over, downstairs in the basement of the library at the community college. The library is an old building, and the lighting is poor. It is quiet, however, and I am able to find peace of mind there.

I search through the writings of Freud, Jung, Karen Horney. I scan for anything they may have written which could explain why it is so important for me to be a woman. I want to know why I feel such an overwhelming desire to wear female clothes, to walk, talk, and act like a woman. I want to know why

I feel like a woman trapped in a male physique.

Downstairs in the dimly lit, quiet basement, I probably read more about psychology than the psychology professors and their students. In three weeks, I fill a spiral notebook with comments from these astute observers of human personality.

Unfortunately, most of their references are to homosexuality. Their descriptions of this and other so-called disorders fail to correlate with the way I feel inside. I am neither a man who loves men, nor an individual unable to decide to which gender I would prefer to belong. I know I am not a man. And I have no problem accepting myself as a female. My only confusion centers on society's inability to recognize me for who and what I am. While searching for a diagnosis of myself as a patient, I begin to recognize that I am not ill at all. It is the physician who lacks the skill and depth of perception. All I need is a correct prescription!

The information I acquire fails to answer my questions. After graduating with an associate degree in Business Management, I decide to work a year before continuing my education at a four year state university.

Within a few weeks, I rent a furnished apartment and find a job at a nearby bicycle plant. The pay is little more than minimum wage, but with a frugal budget I am able to provide myself with transportation and food. I am also able to pay rent and same money for tuition.

I meet Nadia Mendez at the bicycle plant. She works in the power press department, where huge machines stamp holes into steel pipe. The

machines are old, loud, and covered with grease and black machine oil. It is a large, spacious factory, but it is poorly illuminated and the fumes from welding and painting operations make it difficult to breathe.

Somehow Nadia manages to shine with a primitive beauty that is rare. Although I know she has two children and is divorced, she attracts me in a way I cannot resist. I am attracted to her femininity, her personality, her eyes. Everything about her is covered with a kindness that is impossible to describe.

Her hair is black, like her eyes. Her complexion is slightly tanned and her noble Hispanic features are chiseled in a defiant yet proud manner.

"My English is not so good," she says, as I lean over the bin to inspect her work. She is a good worker and quick to meet her quota.

"Your English is fine," I answer while trying to stare at her cleavage without appearing too obvious.

"Are you married?" she asks.

"No, but I have a girl friend."

"Ah, you have a girl friend. I would expect you to have many girl friends. You have a very nice face, pretty eyes, and a kind smile."

"You are very kind," I reply. "I don't mean to be forward, but you are the prettiest lady I have ever seen. I cannot imagine any man who would avoid an invitation to be with you."

She blushes and replies with a polite thank you.

Soon it is time for me to move on. However, when I leave, I leave knowing that Nadia has an attraction for me. I do all that I can, each time I visit her work station, to let her know that the

feeling is mutual. Eventually, she invites me to her house for dinner.

The following evening after work, I rush to my apartment to shower, shave, change clothing and prepare for our first date. When I arrive at the small house she is renting, I see her two children playing outside. I introduce myself as I exit from my car. They are both excited that I have come to visit with their mother.

I cannot remember their names. It has been several years. But for the sake of this story, I will call the boy Anthony, and the girl Irma.

Nadia comes to the kitchen door. It is on the side of the house, off to the side from the driveway.

"I'm glad to see you could make it. I was afraid your girl friend would find something else for you to do."

"I wanted to see you," I answer. "I have wanted to be alone with you for a long time."

"That's good. Well, tonight you will have your chance."

It is as direct an invitation as any man could ever hope for. Now I am convinced she has a desire to be intimate at some point during the evening.

Nadia serves a simple meal consisting of chicken and rice. It is tasty and satisfies my hunger. The children drink iced tea while Nadia and I drink from tall glasses filled with a dark red Sangria. By the end of the meal, I feel quite intoxicated.

She washes the supper dishes and we talk while the children play outside. After dinner, she invites me into her bedroom and asks if I have a desire to make love to her.

"Of course I do," is my immediate reply.

She undresses. Although I am quite excited by her curvaceous figure, I am also a bit envious of the fullness of her hips and breasts. She is a very beautiful woman.

After we make love, she tells me that I have made love to her like a woman with a male part. I am surprised at her sensitivity and confess to her that I had always wanted to be a woman. I dress and go to my car, in order to retrieve photographs from the glove compartment. They are photos of myself taken while dressed as a woman.

When Nadia looks at my photos, she compliments me but says there is much I need to learn. She promises to keep my secret, and offers to teach me as much as I need to know.

She finds a doctor who will prescribe hormones for me, and goes with me on my first office visit. The doctor prescribes two tablets of Premarin to be taken every day for the rest of my life. After three months on the pill, I begin to develop. Every evening we make love, Nadia massages my breasts in order to encourage them to grow. She teaches me to walk, talk, and move like a woman. She teaches me how to use my eyes to look (and not look) at men.

It is a whole new world for me and I eagerly learn everything she offers to teach.

After developing breasts, I break up with my girl friend. Nadia becomes my lover, my sister, my teacher and my dearest friend.

After that first year, I learn the art of femininity so well that it is now almost my first nature. We shop, go out to eat and do everything in public. No one ever suspects

continued on page 16

Veronica Brown

The End of the Transsexual Trail Or The Pitfalls of Being Deaf, Dumb and Transsexual

(A response to the column by Roberta Angela Dee that appeared in issue 17.)

Ms. Dee's observations about the workings of Madison Avenue are sophomoric. Her generalizations about the real world and the gender community are juvenile at best. She claims that the ideal female model is usually white, blond, has blue eyes and "classic" features. Has she never driven through a black neighborhood and noticed the color of the billboards? Has she never read *Ebony* or *Jet* magazine, or even watched a cable television channel designed by and run for African-Americans? I ain't never seen no white people in those media. I seriously suspect the people who package hair sheen and other beauty products for Afro-Americans probably include Afro-Americans, Hispanics and Caucasians who are also middle aged, minimum wage, workers.

Advertising media exists all over the world for the sake of generating a profit from the sale of goods. Advertising media is designed to appeal to anybody who has a buck to part with. In advertising, there is no East or West and no discrimination against race,

creed, color, or national origin. American money may be green but it is color blind.

Ms. Dee claims the feminist movement is not a bad social development but its philosophy has generated several negative results? Well, what are they? She doesn't say. She claims the movement neither accepts blame nor responsibility for its mistakes. Well, what are those mistakes? She doesn't say. This kind of generalized writing is a good way to lose credibility fast.

Later in her article, Ms. Dee comments about lesbians seeking social change and acceptability through the broader gay political movement. Doesn't she know that some lesbian factions consider lesbianism to be a different and distinct phenomenon apart from male homosexuality? Where does Ms. Dee get her information about these topics and why doesn't she use quotes or at least make some specific references to her having even read some gay literature?

Transsexuals and cross-dressers have failed to align themselves with existing alternative cultures and have failed to work together to achieve acceptance, says Ms. Dee. I didn't know

that. Does she suppose all those appearances on radio and television talk shows since the '70s and all the speeches given in college lecture halls by crossdressers and transsexuals never happened? I mean, you haven't really lived until you've had the chance to stand in the middle of a university lecture hall with a hundred or so graduate students of all ages in Dr. Smedley's class on human sexuality and cracked a few jokes to get them loosened up before going into your personal tale of transsexual transformation. I've done that and they were putty in my hands. Does she suppose all those transvestites and transsexuals I've seen over the years in gay/lesbian bars and restaurants weren't really there?

How can she say, further, that when 300 crossdressers in full plumage descend upon a mainstream, big city hotel, that this makes for a "pitiful and uninspired subculture." What about all the TVs and TSs who have marched in gay pride parades round the country? There is a lot of activity out there, some of it is very good and some of it falls short, but to make sweeping negative generalizations is most illogical and erroneous. But then, if you've never been involved in anything, it's easy to sit at home and create disinformation for the gender press. Quit complaining that the bear dances poorly; at least it's dancing.

Do crossdressers want to emerge as an organized political group? Are they going to run for office or back a candidate? They don't have to admit to anyone they are crossdressers to do that. Maybe they want special treatment and laws passed to make

their lives easier? Ha! Fat chance. Living within a special interest community is not the same as being in the real world. So what if their objective is to gather at parties to discuss their version of attributes of femininity? You don't like their way of seeing things? It's a free country (after taxes of course) and they work hard all day. They're entitled to whatever forms of harmless relaxation or pleasant diversion that turns them on. To say they represent nothing that is meaningful is a narrow minded value judgment based upon a different belief system.

I do agree with Ms. Dee that there is much more to being a woman than having the outward appearance of one and having a relationship with a man (or in my case with another woman). There is also much more to being a woman than having one's genitals surgically altered. Let's pose some questions.

- Question #1: Is the transformed male transvestite really a woman? In his mind, through his perception of himself and from the physically aided external trappings, doesn't he seek and feel some degree of success in his endeavors? Is this reality for him? Of course. But is he really a woman?

- Question #2: Is the surgically altered male whose brain and body have been feminized from hormones really a woman? Is this male, having had years of masculine memories, experiences and training, no matter how poorly accepted or performed... really a woman?

- Question #3: What about the surgically altered female, who for one reason or another chooses not to get a phalloplasty. Is he a man? If he chooses

to get the phalloplasty, is he a man?

- Question #4: Is the emperor wearing any new clothes?

- Question #5: When I load Spectrum Holobyte's Space Shuttle simulator 'Orbiter', into my PC XT turbo clone and deploy the Hubble Space Telescope in orbit around the Earth, am I really in command of a Space Shuttle?

My answers to the above questions are: No, No, No, No and No. The next question might logically be, do I consider myself to be a 'real' woman. No, I don't, and I may be the first post-operative, M-t-F transsexual lesbian, New Age Wiccan woman to admit it. (It's a dirty job but someone has to do it.) You now have to ask the next logical question. Do I feel comfortable in my present female role (real life situation); do I enjoy my recently acquired biological pseudo-feminine physical attributes and current social standing as a woman. Yes I do, very much, thank you.

The natural laws of birthright and biology unfortunately do not apply to me and they never will. Neither do they apply to Roberta Angela Dee, the late Christine Jorgensen, Canary Conn, or any of the other simulated, surgically created women out there.

Which carries more weight, the temporary, yet physically very real, female clothing that a transvestite wears to create the illusion of womanhood, or the permanent, and physically very real, changes a transsexual gets to create their version of the illusion of womanhood or masculinity? It seems to me while all transvestites may create some degree of illusion of being a woman, no matter how imperfect or successful, the transsexual also seeks to create that

same illusion but for a different reason, with different methods, with varying degrees of success and for a different end result. Just because the latter's methods are more permanent, does that make their transformation and their sense of reality more valid or 'real' than that of the transvestites?

Ms. Dee states the reality that most crossdressers hate to admit is that no one can be a weekend, or part time woman. She speaks of 'degrees of commitment.' In the same light, most transsexuals are afraid to admit they are not, and never will really be, women (or men), or be 'real' women (or 'real' men), no matter what they say. A few transsexuals have actually admitted this to me, but I won't mention any names. The next best thing to the real thing is to be a darn good simulation like the Space Shuttle computer program I mentioned earlier.

Then she says, crossdressing does not involve one with the social and psychological aspects of being a woman. Oh yes it does; I've seen it first hand. It doesn't happen all the time, but it does happen. The mind of a transvestite in drag can have just as powerful (although temporary) an influence as the feminizing influences (although permanent) hormones have on the mind and body of the transsexual.

Like Ms. Dee, I don't get sexually aroused when I put on a bra (though I rarely wear them these days since I've got all natural home grown D cup 'pointers' and men like the jiggle and I love their stares and enjoy taunting them every chance I get), but what does this have to do with the needs and pleasures of the crossdresser? Some of them own some realistic breast forms

that have weight and bounce like the real thing. They can take them off and don't have to worry about water retention or sensitive nipples or any of the downside of hormone therapy.

There is nothing metaphysical about being a woman or a man. I don't believe she even looked the word in a dictionary. We played dress up as children and we still play dress up as adults. We got guys who live in downtown Toronto who dress like (Canajun) cowboys and drive pickups, young adults who used to sit around bars in their wrinkled scrubs while watching General Hospital and teenagers who mimic the dress and hair style of their favorite rock stars. Nearly everywhere you look today you can see evidence of people adopting the dress, speech or mannerisms of somebody else or some thing that turns them on. So why should crossdressers be an exception?

Wake up Roberta! The Playboy philosophy has been out of style for a long time and a Playgirl mansion would be just as sexist as the other version, so that doesn't make it okay. You don't have to believe the Mad-Avenue hype either if you're smart enough not to.

Ms. Dee's description of the fantasy woman holds as much water as a rusted out gas tank of a '53 Chevy. Most people today are scrambling too hard and fast to make a living than to devote all that time to false and noble attributes, but if they do, they must really be stupid, or maybe that's what they've chosen to incorporate into their lifestyle.

Labels? I love labels. How else can we differentiate the good guys from the bad guys? Come on, it's part of our culture. Go take a course in social behavior, or something. Labels can be

objective or they can carry the weight of emotionalism and negativity. But, in either respect, they are there whether or not we like them. You can apply them lovingly or you can apply them with malice. Expect to be nailed to the wall if you apply them in the wrong way to someone, like David Horowitz, who fights back.

And who said we all want to be perfect anyway? You need to make mistakes every day, because if you don't, you'll not learn any new things and your life will be one boring day after another.

Let me leave you with one last thought people. I've observed a lot of pre-ops out there who, not having experienced the total transsexual transformation, nevertheless bumble along, write all kinds of flowery words, and pepper the gender press with boring, first person revelations and pseudo- intellectual book reports as if they are the absolute authority. Those who know even less sometimes accept their word as gospel, because "Why, Good Golly Miss Molly!", they're self-proclaimed transsexuals and aren't they just the biggest frogs in the gender pond? It takes a long time for the dust of the transsexual transition to settle. Most post-ops don't hang around long enough, and aren't willing to divulge this kind of occult information, so no one ever hears about it. But who am I to talk?

(Ms. Brown is a post-op TS who lives in Toronto, Ontario. She is the former editor of Twenty Minutes, the newsletter of the Twenty (XX) Club, a support group for male and female transsexuals in Springfield, Mass.)