

# I Want To Be A Woman Nature Gave Me A Woman's Body But A Man's Sex

By GAYLE SHERMANN

**I was sixteen.  
And I wanted to kill myself.  
What was I? I wondered.  
A sexual freak, a pervert, or just someone  
going through a "stage"?**

I didn't know. But I did know that my very nature was female while my sex was male.

No one had ever taught me to be gentle.

No one had ever forced me to think femininely.

It had all come naturally. I enjoyed playing with girls when I was a child and hated the rough games of the boys.

I enjoyed talking with girls about girl things.

I enjoyed cooking and sewing. But it was just a matter of likes and dislikes, I thought.

Sure, I was different from other boys, but no different than "book worms" who preferred to study rather than play baseball.

But all this changed the night I met Al.

He made me feel different. I felt what a teenage star in a film feels when she meets the handsome boy next door for the first time.

## Anguish

I was confused by this feeling. Terribly confused.

And that night when Al went to bed with a prostitute and then told me he wished it could be me, my confusion became anguish.

That night I cried for hours into my pillow. I was torn by my feelings for Al.

Was I perverted to feel this way about him? Was I sick? Were my thoughts dirty, "unnatural"?

I was naive about sex but not so that I didn't know "normal" sex was between man and woman.

So if it was natural and normal to love the opposite sex, I reasoned, it must be unnatural and abnormal to love a member of your own sex.

But then it struck me: Was I a man at all? Every instinct, every feeling, my whole life had been feminine.

And now I had discovered that even my sexual feelings were feminine.

What was I?

What my birth certificate said ... or what my body felt?

## Woman!

I decided in favor of my feelings. I was a woman!

But my discovery was no release. It didn't change my sexual nature. I was like a bird who one day discovers that he is living in a cage and that beyond those thin bars is a wide open free world.

I was utterly alone. I couldn't imagine then that there were thousands of others who also were prisoners of the twilight sex.

But the bird can't get out of the cage to enjoy his discovery ... and I couldn't be the woman I discovered inside me.

It was only my love for life itself that kept me from destroying myself that night.

I was utterly alone. I couldn't imagine then that there were thousands of others who also were prisoners of the twilight sex.

There are, and I've met many of them, but I'll tell you more about that later.

After my "affair" with Al and my realization that I was a "sexual freak" ... a woman in body and spirit but a man sexually ... I decided to run away from home.

I didn't think I could ever again look in the eye the people I knew.

After three days of pretending to be sick in order to stay home from school, I slipped out of the house one night and took a bus to Chicago.

I left my aunt a note telling her not to worry, that I would be all right.

## Hotel

In Chicago I took a room in a cheap hotel. Most of the people in the hotel worked at nearby strip shows and nightclubs.

I was overawed by them. One in particular. I'll call her Alice Bell. One night I was sitting in the lobby poring over tattered copies of Variety when Alice came in.

I didn't notice her at first. I was absorbed in reading every detail of my new discovery ... show business.

"Here's the latest issue if you're interested," she said.

I looked up and saw this rather broadfaced but very attractive blond looking down at me. I mumbled thank you.

"Are you a runaway?" she asked.

I was stunned. "How did you know?" I blurted.

"I can spot a runaway a mile off," she laughed. I laughed too. Not that I thought it was particularly funny. She was the first person I'd talked to in nearly a week.

Alice invited me to have a cup of coffee and we talked for hours about my new found love, show business.

Then she invited me to see her perform. I was thrilled as I'd never seen any live performance before, let alone a strip show.

So that night I stood backstage ... hidden as best I could behind some old scenery as I was underage ... and watched my first bit of show business.

I was fascinated by the lights, the grease paint, the costumes,



The lovely Gayle Sherman



Tony Midnight has to restrain Gayle as she and dancer Marilyn Mansfield (left) engage in women's talk over whose gown is the most beautiful.

the music, everything. But particularly by Alice.

She was the star attraction and when she went on stage the audience went wild. And they had every reason to. Under the lights and in her costume she was beautiful. I couldn't take my eyes off her.

And then it happened.

## Shock

She was nearing the end of her number, teasing the audience with a loose g-string and an even looser bra.

Sudden the lights blinked off then on and there was Alice standing in the center of the stage, her bra held high above her head AND HER CHEST AS FLAT AS A BOARD.

Alice was a man.

I couldn't get over it. I wasn't shocked, just stunned. And I thought it was marvelous!

After the show Alice walked me back to the hotel. This time she or rather he, was in men's clothing. He asked me to call him Charlie, his real name.

He told me he was a female impersonator and had been for eight years. He was married and had three children.

"But why do you perform dressed as a woman?" I asked.

"Because I'm good at it," he said. "And besides, it's my job." He explained that he didn't wear women's clothing all the time.

## No Transvestite

"I'm not a transvestite," he said. "I don't get a kick out of wearing women's clothing unless I'm on stage."

"Then I suppose I get as much a kick out of that as an actor does playing a good role."

I was fascinated. Men dressing as women, wearing jewelry and perfume, dancing and acting feminine ... it all seemed too much to believe.

Then it hit me, why couldn't I do it?

If I couldn't be a woman on the street I could be one on stage.

That night I begged Charlie to tell me more. I threw dozens of questions at him and ate up his answers.

He told me how he had started his career with a carnival sideshow when he was 17.

How he had hoped eventually to go into more serious dancing but just never got the break.

Besides, he liked what he did and hoped one day to make "the big time." The Jewel Box Revue in New York.

Finally I asked him ... no, I begged him ... to let me try. I told him I wanted to be a female impersonator.

He said it was out of the question. He just didn't have the time to teach me.

"Then just let me try," I pleaded. "Just let me try once." I had to restrain myself. I couldn't tell him that I wanted to do this because I felt it was one way for me to get out of the sexual prison I was in.

I couldn't tell him I felt like the bird who sees the cage door unlocked and the wide, free world open to him.

"I want to try," I pleaded. "I've always wanted to go on the stage," I lied. I had taken six years of dancing and acrobatic training when I was younger, but I must admit that the thought of going on stage never occurred to me.

"You're too young," he said. "The cops will arrest you and close down the club."

"But I just want to try. Can't I just try on your costumes before the club opens?"

(Continued on Page 16)



**What was I? What my birth certificate said ... "Male" ... or what my body felt? I decided in favor of my feelings. I was a woman!**



**I was a "sexual freak" ... a woman in body and spirit but a man sexually.**



**If I couldn't be a woman on the street, I'd be one on stage.**

# I Want To Be A Woman

*(Continued from Page 13)*

Finally, because he was more tired than convinced, he agreed. "Tomorrow at noon," he said. "I've got to repair one of my costumes. You can come over with me. Now let me get some sleep," he said, pushing me towards the door.

**But I didn't get any sleep that night. I just lay in bed with a big silly grin on my face, having dreams of my success on stage . . . and the chance to act like a woman!**

The next day I was outside Charlie's door at 11:30. He took me over to the club and showed me his wardrobe.

I couldn't get over it. A man wore these things.

He pointed out one that I could wear then went to another room to work.

**I squirmed into the gown and stuffed cotton into the front to give me a bust. There was some makeup on the dressing table so I put some on. Then I tried on one of the wigs.**

I couldn't get over it. In the mirror staring back at me was a woman. My makeup was a bit on the clown side and my wig was too big, but I looked like a woman.

"Hey, not bad." I turned around and saw Charlie looking at me. "Not bad at all," he said. "You make a beautiful woman."

He took my hand and led me out to the stage. The bar was empty but even the empty chairs gave me goose bumps.

**"Well," he said, "be a woman."**

I gulped, gulped again and said, "Let's take lesson two tomorrow."

But there was no lesson two. When I got back to my hotel my aunt and the police were waiting for me. My aunt had traced me through a card I'd sent her.

**She was taking me home . . . and no buts about it.**

I went with her because there was not much else I could do. But I knew I wouldn't stay there. And I knew that there was a chance for me after all.

**NEXT WEEK  
They Raped My  
Emotions!**