

**GIRLS — how would YOU feel if your husband or boyfriend suddenly announced he preferred your clothes to his own?**

It may seem funny, but it's the very real and often agonising problem that faces the partners of transvestite men — and threatens to wreck a previously happy relationship.

Bear in mind that the man is sexually adequate in every other way. Your love life is great. He doesn't see his obsession as the end to your relationship — on the contrary, he wants it to help bring you closer together.

Transvestites say their women react in five distinctly different ways to the unwelcome news. Which category would you fall into?

- Would you . . .
1. **WALK OUT** on him immediately and say you'll return only if he catches himself on?
  2. **STAY**, but pretend the problem doesn't exist? Turn a blind eye to his dressing routines as long as you never see him at it?
  3. **ALLOW** him to carry on doing his thing, but never help him or join in?
  4. **HELP** him to buy clothes and advise him on his appearance?
  5. **ACCEPT** him totally, treating him like another woman, calling him by his female name and taking "her" with you on trips to restaurants and supermarkets?

Strangely enough, psychiatrists say that many wives DO fall into the last couple of categories.

After their initial suspicions die down, they realise that their husbands are not homosexual, that

# THAT'S NO LADY, THAT'S MY HUSBAND!

their sex lives won't suffer, and that their marriage can survive.

**It might take some adjusting, but wives of transvestites often say they end up becoming even closer to their partners.**

According to some psychiatrists, many women find they enjoy the new sense of power they have over their husbands.

## Truth

Whatever the reasons, the statistics seem to show that marriages involving TV husbands have no higher break-up rate than normal marriages.

Since most TVs don't recognise their problem until they are in their mid-thirties, the truth may only be revealed to a wife after many years of happy marriage.

It may emerge in three painful stages. At first, when she smells a strange perfume or finds a pair of

tights in the glove compartment of the car, she suspects he's having an affair with another woman.

**Then, when she finds out that the perfume and the tights belong to her husband, she fears that the truth is even harder to take — he's having an affair with a man.**

Finally, when the real facts emerge, she wishes she'd been right in the first instance. "If only you said you were having it away with some bird from the office, I wouldn't mind!" one Dublin wife blurted tearfully to her totally-faithful TV husband. "But this . . .!"

Another wife was equally appalled. "This means we won't be able to sleep together any more!" she cried. "That would make me a lesbian!"

Some men try to forestall such horrified reactions by breaking the news gently, or by letting the truth dawn gradually on their partners. For instance, he may suggest clothes-swapping as a

game — until she realises it's much more than that.

## Rehearsing

**A psychiatrist in Britain tells of a case in which a transvestite husband told his wife he was to star in the title role in an amateur pro-**

**duction of "Charley's Aunt" and needed to rehearse at home.**

Two years later, he was still busy rehearsing in full dress each night. And her enquiries among his friends finally revealed what she'd begun to suspect . . . there never was any production of "Charley's Aunt."

## CONTINUING: The highly-secret world of Ireland's transvestites



**DES EKIN REPORTS**

### ...and girls will be boys

**UNTIL recently, Northern Ireland had its own club for transvestites, according to the Dublin group Friends of Eon.**

But it disbanded through lack of numbers. "They only had about six members," a spokesman said.

In contrast, Dublin has at least several hundred practising transvestites, ranging in age from 16 to well over 60.

Unusually, they include at least one self-admitted woman transvestite. Although there are just as many women TVs as men, they rarely come to anyone's notice because their compulsion to dress as males can easily be satisfied under the guise of fashion.

Their male counterparts don't have the same freedom — at least yet. But if the "Boy George" fashion fad catches on, who knows . . .?

"WHEN YOU dress, it's like borrowing someone else's identity for an evening.

"You hang up your everyday male personality on the coathook along with your jacket. After that, you're free from all the pressures and troubles and career worries of the male world.

"You can talk the way you want, act the way you want. The nearest thing I can compare it to is putting on a mask at a fancy-dress party where nobody knows your true identity. Except that when you're a transvestite, your everyday self is wearing the mask — the feminine personality is the real you.

"I must have been only ten or eleven years old when I began dressing. I had a compulsion to try on my sister's clothes, not just once but again and again.

"I had the same compulsion throughout my teens, but it wasn't until I was 20 that I was able to put a name to it. I saw some television programme that identified the condition, and pointed out that there were many more people with the same urges.

"Before that, I had thought I was the only person in the world with this problem. I can't begin to explain the bitter feeling of loneliness and isolation.

"At last, I managed to screw up enough courage to phone the transvestite counselling service. The first few times, I hung up as soon as someone answered the phone, but finally I was able to tell the counsellor what was on my mind.

"I told him the same story as most first-time callers — that I'd dressed once or twice, but I wasn't really a transvestite.

"He was sympathetic, and invited me to the club to talk things over. When I arrived, the door was opened by a man in full dress. That shocked me a bit, but it was a huge relief to sit down and talk to others who understood exactly what I was going through.

**TRANSVESTITES rarely talk to the press, for obvious reasons. Here, a young Irish TV breaks the unwritten rule to tell his own story:**

"I've been going to the club meetings ever since. We all dress — that way everyone feels comfortable. It doesn't matter what you wear, but it has to be respectable.

"What do we do? Nothing much — chat, have a drink, enjoy a bit of a laugh. That's not important. What matters is that we are expressing the feminine side of our natures.

shopping trips to London for the same reason. But it's not really necessary. People don't really notice you when you shop for women's clothes, although you tend to imagine they do.

"Look at it this way. Lots of men go shopping to buy a dress as a birthday present for their wives, and nobody thinks it's unusual. So why should it be any more noticeable when a transvestite shops for

## When he turns off and she takes over!

"We share a collection of wigs, but we usually bring our own clothes. It's usually casual gear — transvestite always tend to dress down except on special party occasions such as Halloween and New Year's Eve.

"Our tastes vary. Some TVs have a huge wardrobe of clothes, others keep wearing the same simple items.

"Some of us buy them by mail order to save embarrassment, and others go on

his own gear? "Wigs are more of a problem — you can't really get away with saying you want a wig for your girlfriend! We have a catalogue, but that's not as satisfactory as shopping directly.

"Surprisingly, we find that many shop assistants don't bat an eyelid. They know why you want the wig, and it doesn't bother them in the least. And why not? Most of them are on commission, and a

sale is a sale. "There's a lady in Clery's, and she's great. We buy from her all the time.

"Make-up is easy. After all these years, I'm really good at the technique. I like Max Factor and Rimmel — they're the best. Women tend to buy more expensive brands, but I don't think they're any better.

"The trouble is that applying make-up is a time-consuming business — it least an hour, maybe longer. I tell you this, you can never complain to the wife that she's taking too long to get ready!

"Of course she knows I'm a transvestite. I decided to tell her before we got married. It was an agonising decision, but in the end I knew I had to risk losing her rather than base our entire relationship on a lie.

"Her first question was: 'Are you gay?' I assured her I wasn't, and after that the whole thing ceased to be a problem. Our sex life is terrific, and we're closer than most couples we know — we share a special kind of secret.

"For a start, we have more in common. We go out shopping together, although she's not too keen on accompanying me when I'm dressed. Trouble is, she's such the same size, and I can't stop her buying clothes from my wardrobe!

"Most of the younger generation of wives are equally understanding. The older TVs I pity. They miss out on all you can't really turn around to a wife after 25 years of marriage and say: 'The way, there's something I think you should know . . .'

"I doubt if the people at work would be as tolerant. The younger ones peep, but not the older generation. You lose your job in a minute, and let's face it, you couldn't really succeed in a plea for fair dismissal.

"It's different for homosexuals — they have their Gay Lib movement to look after their interests. But there can never be a "TV Lib" movement. We're too faint. We'll always remain in the shadow.



# Anyone can

# do it!

**IT WAS** late at night when the Garda stopped the blonde woman driving alone through Dublin city centre.

He checked her licence, but sensed something was not quite right. "Would you mind opening your boot, madam?"

• **Snapshots, left, right and below, taken by the TV group Friends of Eon show the Dublin transves tites in full dress at their meetings. "When you dress, it's like borrowing someone else's identity".**

he asked. The fashionably-dressed lady complied, and after checking the empty boot the cop thanked her and told her to drive on. He noticed she slammed down the boot lid with surprising force. Unfortunately for her, she still had one of her fingers inside.

The Garda was already walking back to his bike when he heard a roar that made him stop dead in his tracks. "Oh SHIT!!" howled the lady in a resounding and unmistakably masculine bellow.

There was a long pause before the Garda turned slowly around to stare at

the red-faced transvestite. "Madam," he said. "You are not quite what you appear

to be." Without another word, he

**TO PAGE 12**





# ANYONE CAN DO IT!

waved him on.

This is just one of the stories told by the Dublin transvestites of their late-night encounters with the law. Although their behaviour is not illegal, they sometimes have trouble convincing the ordinary cop on the beat that their dressing-up is not motivated by criminal intent.

**At Garda headquarters in Dublin Castle, a spokesman said: "Provided there are no complicating factors such as indecency or breach of the peace, there is absolutely nothing in law to prevent anyone dressing up in the clothes of the opposite sex."**

"After all, hundreds of fashion-conscious women do it all the time."

According to the Dublin TV group Friends of Eon, many of the hardened city-centre cops are so used to seeing the occasional fully-dressed transvestite that they don't bat an eyelid. Others react with surprise or even shock, but they rarely interfere.

But there are exceptions. "Once I was driving along Grafton Street late at night," one Dublin TV says, "when I was stopped by a Garda. He seemed convinced I was a woman until he heard my voice. Then he asked me to step out to answer a few questions."

"Twenty minutes later, I was still standing in a shop doorway by the side of the road answering his questions. He wanted to know everything - how we got the dresses, where we bought the wigs, the lot."

**"It slowly dawned on me that he had more than the usual policeman's interest in the subject. In all likelihood, he was a secret TV himself."**

So transvestites may not be breaking the law - but are they sick? And can they be treated?

According to the latest medical research, the answer appears to be no. "It is not an illness or neurosis," says one leading psychiatrist. "In fact, it looks as if it is associated

with achieving and able individuals rather than the reverse."

This unexpected observation is borne out by the Eon group in Dublin, which says its membership is top-heavy with professional workers such as bankers, politicians, high-level civil servants, and so on.

"We have surprisingly few working-class people," says a spokesman. "We just don't know whether this is something to do with background or, as I suspect, that transvestism is somehow linked with drive and ambition."

In any event, the condition is seldom treatable. Some Irish psychiatrists still use aversion therapy - in which the patient is told to dress as a woman and then punished - but this practice rarely works and is rapidly going out of medical fashion.

## Anxiety

**Many modern doctors feel it's best to let the patient get the compulsion out of his system. They say the main problems arise not out of the condition itself but from the depression and anxiety that stems from the transvestite's own reaction to it.**

That anxiety can give rise to deep despair and even suicide. In Dublin, the Samaritans estimate that a full seven per cent of their callers - nearly 3,000 people a year - are approaching them with problems of sexual deviancy, including transvestism.

And how do the Churches see the problem? Although it is specifically outlawed in the Book of Deuteronomy as "an abomination unto the Lord", most priests and clergymen now take a tolerant view of transvestism provided it does not interfere with marriage.

**In fact, the telephone number of the transvestites' counselling centre is Dublin 908739 - is actually the number of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Service.**

# TRANS TALK!

**TRANSVESTITES have developed their own in-jargon to describe their activities. Here are a few samples ...**

**T.V.:** Transvestite.

**DRESSING:** Short for "cross-dressing". The important ritual in which the transvestite carefully dons female clothes and make-up to adopt his feminine personality.

**COMING:** The way TVs describe their feelings and emotions as they "dress". Not to be confused with "coming" in the sense of orgasm - more the arrival of a new personality, bringing a deep sense of relaxation and release from tension.

**EN FEMME:** In the role of woman; having dressed in female clothes.

**FEMME NAME:** The name a TV chooses for his female self. "Susan" is most popular - transvestites rarely use the feminine version of their own male names.

**RG:** Real Girl (as opposed to transvestite "girl"). In-term used by transvestites to describe wives or girlfriends who help them do their thing. Sometimes "GG" - genuine girl.

**PASS:** The ultimate high - to appear undetected "en femme" in public.