



Turmoil of a sex change

Look at this Birmingham girl with the long hair, soft grey eyes, and careful make-up.

Early in life she found she was a girl trapped in the body of a boy.

She tells of the turmoil that led to a sex-change operation in full and frank interview with Victoria McKee.

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VICTORIA MCKEE MEETS A GIRL WHO SEEKS A BETTER DEAL FOR PEOPLE WHO "CANNOT HELP THE WAY WE ARE BORN"

I had no choice but to change my sex, says Barbara



Barbara Linsey Stanley: "There is so much hatred, bigotry and apathy in this world today that almost everywhere people like myself turn we are faced with unjust ridicule and ill-will."

Barbara Linsey Stanley was a vision of pink and white femininity when she stepped into the Evening Mail offices on her delicate high-heeled sandals.

You would have had to look very closely, and with cruel appraisal, to notice the Adam's apple camouflaged behind the ruffled collar.

Or that the hips in the discreetly-slit pink skirt were too slim for truly feminine proportions.

Only the deep, mannish voice might prove instantly disconcerting.

Barbara Linsey Stanley is a transexual. An agonisingly lonely person who dares not talk about her past and cannot contemplate much future.

She is as lonely as she is surprisingly lovely, with her waist-length hair and piercing grey eyes which look shyly out from beneath their carefully made-up lids.

Her entire face is expertly painted like that of the model she longs to be. But she would settle for any job she could find. The man who she was lost his job and all prospects of one the moment she was conceived.

That was more than six years ago, when the 19-year-old laboratory technician in a Birmingham school realised he "had no choice" but to undergo a sex-change operation.

When he told his employers that, in order to prepare for the operation, he had been asked to start living and working as a woman, he lost his job.

That was his first experience of what Barbara Linsey Stanley now refers to as "the wall."

Always on guard

She said: "You think when you finally stop living a lie that there is going to be a brave new world. But you just meet a blank wall. There possibly could be a brave new world for people like me, if the world were made more aware of what we are."

She does not want to have to deny her past but society has forced her to be wary. She is always on guard with strangers, lest a slip of the tongue betray her.

And most people are strangers to Barbara Linsey Stanley. She has few friends.

"It's a lonely life," she said. "I don't want it to be but it is. I can never marry, I can't have children — and don't want them."

"But perhaps if they could get this city community centre going there would be somewhere people like me could air their views, grievances and feelings."

The centre she referred to was the proposed community centre for homosexuals in

Birmingham towards which the county council voiced its intention to give a £5,000 grant.

The strong reaction against the centre and the grant by the West Midlands Ratepayers' Federation, reported in the Evening Mail on Wednesday, July 21, prompted Miss Stanley to write a moving letter to the editor.

Standards lowered

"There is so much hatred, bigotry and apathy in this world today that almost everywhere people like myself turn we are faced with unjust ridicule and ill-will," she wrote.

"We deserve recognition for what we really are: ordinary people who cannot help the way we are born.

"We do not choose to be homosexual or transvestite. We are simply the victims of Nature's will. We need help and sympathy, not protest and fears.

"The true standards of our society are lowered by the vandals and the thugs who beat up the innocent.

"It is there that the Ratepayers' Federation should be focusing its concern . . ."

At such a centre, Miss Stanley feels that she might be of help to other people wrestling with the problems she faced before her operation.

She herself has met only one other transexual and knows of none in the Birmingham area. The famous ones such as April Ashley and Tula are already too legendary to provide useful-role models, she said.

Cry of the heart

Born and bred in Birmingham, the boy who became Barbara Linsey Stanley had a promising school career. He gained nine O-levels in subjects, Miss Stanley wryly observed, ranging from human biology to electronics.

But from about the age of nine he realised that he was different from other boys — "not what people expected me to be."

That conviction grew in its intensity until he felt that if he could not live as a woman it was not worth living at all.

"I never considered myself a homosexual," she tried to explain. "It was as if I was a woman."

"I broke it gently to my mother," she recalled. "She was shocked at first but came to accept it. We only told my father a couple of years later."

Never given a chance

Fortunately for Barbara Linsey Stanley's existence, the Birmingham doctor initially consulted recognised a true cry of the heart. He did not send the young man away with an exhortation to pull himself together, he referred him at once to a psychological hospital.

After nearly six years of "mental preparation," gleaned partly by commuting weekly from Birmingham to Charing Cross Hospital in London, Barbara Linsey Stanley was finally born in Brighton last year.

The operation was arranged through the NHS, and that fact alone, she asserts, should prove that it was considered necessary and not a mere whim.

Her parents had been wonderfully supportive, as had their neighbours in Kings Heath, and she continues to live at home.

But since her father's death on July 11 she wonders how she and her mother will manage.

Mentioning her father caused her to fumble in her shoulder bag for a neatly-folded handkerchief.

"It's so frustrating, all this looking for jobs," she continued. "You know you're capable but you never get given a chance."

"And with so many people looking for work these days you can never be sure whether they have found someone better or just don't want you."

She has been refused by all the Birmingham model agencies to which she has applied — although she did not reveal her secret to them — and her most recent disappointment was over a nursing job.

Usually she tells prospective employers the truth because she is afraid it will all come out anyway, especially if they ask to see her birth certificate.

For the time being, Barbara Linsey Stanley will continue to fill her lonely days and evenings with household tasks and to indulge her science fiction fantasies.

Novel rejected

This is a passion which has remained unchanged since her childhood, when she escaped with comic books to fantasy realms.

In addition to reading all the science fiction books and seeing all the films she can, she has already written one science fiction novel — which was rejected by the single publisher to which she sent it.

Undeterred, she is working on another, a sort of space age Western and tries to write a little each day.

She said hopefully: "I can type — I can do lots of useful things, if only someone would give me a chance."

Now she is worried that she and her mother will have to sell their house if no additional income is forthcoming.

Barbara Linsey Stanley's vision of a brave new world is