

# EXCLUSIVE

## April Ashley's own story



# I AM A WOMAN

**SHE** is beautiful. She walks with the elegance and grace of a fashion model.

Yet in the eyes of the law she is a man.

Last week a divorce court decision made former model April Ashley officially masculine.

**DESPITE** her sex-change operation.

**DESPITE** the fact that she makes love as a woman.

April, whose marriage to Mr. Arthur Corbett was annulled, says:

● The judge ruled that I am and have at all times been a man, therefore I was never entitled to be married as a woman.

I am seriously considering an appeal against that deci-

sion, but meanwhile it puts all the people like me in a terrible situation.

I am a woman. I cannot be anything else. I cannot, and never could, live as a man because I am not and never really was a man.

I have always been more female than male.

It would be too inhuman for me to have to go through the rest of my life legally regarded as a man.

I am not a monster. I am flesh and blood, a human being with all the human, feminine feelings of a woman.

Yet that decision leaves me naked, unprotected. Anyone can come up and insult me, or say anything to me and I cannot even complain to the police.

I am completely unprotected and so are all the others in my position. ●

Her full story begins on Page 23.

# APRIL ASHLEY'S OWN STORY

**SUNDAY  
MIRROR  
WORLD  
EXCLUSIVE**

**EACH** night during my boyhood I had to kneel by the side of my bed and say my prayers.

And I always slipped in a special prayer just for me.

It was: "Please God, when I wake up in the morning let me be a girl."

I was physically male in childhood but from the very beginning I looked like a girl and I thought like a girl; and more than anything in the world, I wanted to be a girl.

Each year I grew more feminine, and by 15 I had developed hips and, because of my shape and my sweet little girl's face, strangers always thought I was a girl, in spite of being dressed like a boy.

Psychologically I was a girl but I had to live in a boys' world and go to a boys' school in a tough neighbourhood in Liverpool and the boys reacted violently against me.

I was pushed and beaten and kicked and tied up by them. I was tortured physically and

mentally by boys and there was nobody I wanted to turn to, because there was nobody who could understand.

My childhood was not just unhappy, it was tragic. My teen years were worse and by the time I was seventeen and a half I had tried three times to commit suicide.

I thought I was the only person in the world tormented by my particular physical and mental problem.

I thought that nobody would ever understand and that there was nothing that could ever be done for me.

In fact, my problem is a common one.

There are many people living the awful life that I lived and the operation which I underwent to remove my few masculine characteristics and substitute female ones is now performed frequently in England on the National Health Service.

I was told recently by a top gynaecologist that last year one London hospital alone performed

# I am not a monster

APRIL ASHLEY  
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forty-one of these operations.

I think the fact that so many can be performed at one hospital with the taxpayers footing the bill shows that the matter is taken seriously by the medical profession.

There are tremendous and terrible social and physical problems both before and after the operation because society does not make one feel welcome or confident.

I know from my contact with them that many of the poor creatures who have the operation and become really female are made to feel so unacceptable that they become prostitutes.

They are forced into it by the attitude of people generally and then they really have to live in the half world.

Anyone who undergoes the operation believes quite firmly

that she becomes a complete and full woman afterwards.

In my case the last words the surgeon said to me as I went under the anaesthetic were: "Au revoir, Monsieur."

The first words after I came round were: "Bonjour, Mademoiselle."

That is the way I believe, and still believe, it was.

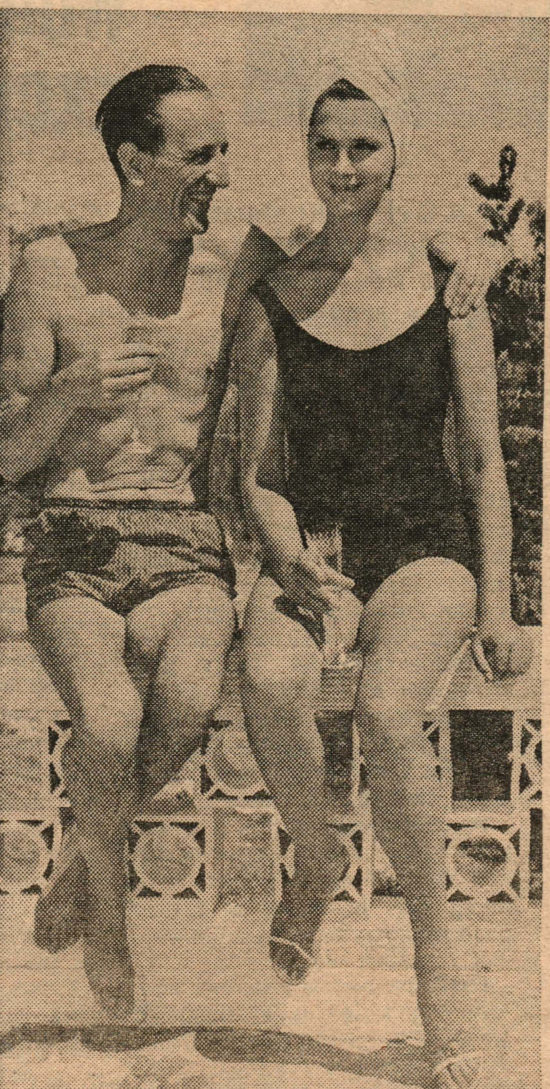
I am not a monster. I am flesh and blood, a human being with all the human, feminine feelings of a woman.

Yet that divorce court decision leaves me naked, unprotected. Anyone can come up and insult me, and I cannot even complain to the police.

I am completely unprotected and so are all the others like me.

How can any of us complain about people insulting us if we are legally men dressed as women?

How can we protect ourselves and how can anyone else protect us? If we cannot be given the ordinary protection from the law that every citizen, let alone every woman, is entitled to.



APRIL, pictured with her former husband

how can we attempt to live reasonable lives?

I am nearing 30, when I should be able to look forward to a calm and tranquil life, but instead I have been put right back to square one.

I cannot sleep and I have terrible dreams. Because in my mind I have no doubt that I am a true woman and I want to love as a woman and make love as a woman.

And if I marry again become a true mother to the children I would like to adopt.

There are a great many people like me. We exist, so society has got to acknowledge us and accept that we are human beings. You cannot leave us in limbo.

## Body

I have been luckier than most and my friends have all stood by me and accept me as I am. After the divorce case finished, I went home and found my flat full of flowers and letters from friends saying that to them I was still the same April.

And that is what I am. In my own mind, I am nothing special, nothing unusual. I am April Ashley, woman. I have been that since my operation in Casablanca ten years ago and I would not know how to live any other way.

I was not created by medicine or science, but I am part of the advances in both. I am medicine's step-child, not its child. Medicine and science simply completed what nature had started.

At the time of my operation I was more female than male. The operation brought a small part of my body into line with the rest of it, and with my mind.

I did not have to readjust because I was always a woman mentally.

The operation removed the only masculine thing about me and substituted an artificial female part.

If I stood naked it is a woman you would see, not a man and you would see nothing to suggest that I was ever a man.

Yet at this moment the law says I am a man. The law says that if I wished to marry I would have to be the bridegroom, not the bride.

My boy friends are as a rule, normal, healthy heterosexual males with no homosexual inclinations.

The problem in my youth and early twenties was not that I desired men, but that I wished to take my rightful place as a woman.

I had to search for myself and find my true identity as a girl who was sufficiently elegant and attractive to earn a lot of money modelling for magazines like Vogue.

Now the judge's words

have taken away the identity which I found and I have to start looking for myself again.

My life has not been easy. In my early days I had to live as a boy and play boy's games.

My father used to insist on giving me boxing lessons with my brothers, and the only thing he ever approved of was the number of times I got up after being knocked down.

Boys at school often tied me up and left me in the air raid shelters because children are cruel to any creature that is strange or which they cannot understand.

I just looked quite incredibly feminine and had a high, soprano voice.

I had such a difficult time with the boys at school and had such mental trouble because of the way they terrified me and my awareness of the fact that I ought to be a girl that I had a nervous breakdown at sixteen.

I could not speak for four days and went through such traumas that my voice broke, although it has since been medically established that I did not ever reach puberty.

## UNISEX CLOTHES WERE MY IDEA

I joined the merchant navy largely to get away from the people I knew, but, of course life was no better there.

I first tried to kill myself with pills when the ship was in the U.S.

Later, back in Liverpool, I jumped into the Mersey to try to drown myself. I was rescued, so I tried pills again but did not take enough.

Then I heard about Christine Jurgenson, the American GI who had an operation to change his sex and I began to realise that there were other people like me and that something could be done for them.

Life was difficult at

April Ashley's story edited by RONALD MAXWELL

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High fashion smartness.



The poise of a model.



The flair of a dancer.

charge of the famous troupe of female impersonators

At first he thought I was a girl and when I convinced him I was not he signed me up straight away and I started learning to dance.

Very soon I was earning £20 a day and was at last able to start saving £2,000 for the operation which would change my life.

## Surgeon

I first tried to have an operation by going to a famous English surgeon who had performed a lot of operations on people like me.

He said: "My dear child, why does a pretty girl like you want to change her sex for?"

I told him I was not a girl and he was so amazed that he asked if he could examine me.

I agreed and afterwards he said I was the most fantastic specimen he had ever seen and that if he had been younger he would have operated at once.

After four years with

the Carousel we were in Milan and I had saved the money for my transformation

One of the two best clinics in the world for this kind of surgery is in Casablanca.

In May, 1960, I went to Casablanca and the surgeon examined me and said I was perfect for the operation.

The operation took between five-and-a-half and six hours and afterwards I was expected to spend two months in the clinic recovering, but I ran out of money and said I would have to leave early.

The surgeon said that I must not and that the money did not matter, but I insisted and left.

Because of this the after-effects lasted for eighteen months and I had abscesses and pain and looked like a skeleton, but eventually I recovered fully.

I had poise and elegance, probably because of my dancing, and all my friends told me I should take up modelling.

People I met invariably

asked me if I modelled and after a while I thought I should try it.

I went to an agent and was lucky at once and started doing very well within just a couple of weeks.

## I CAN MAKE LOVE AND ENJOY IT

I knew Sarah Churchill and she was my great, wonderful friend at this time.

She was my education. She prepared me for society in England because until then all I had known was night club society in France.

Now, as a successful model, I met different

and well-known society people and, since my operation, I was a woman and could function as a woman.

For the first time I could fall in love and have real boy friends.

I wanted to marry and have a good husband with whom I could adopt children and I went out with a lot of different boys.

My operation was good and successful and I was able to have sexual intercourse as a woman, and I did.

I felt, however, that in fairness I had to tell boy friends about my background and my operation.

Most of them accepted me purely as a woman and I did make love with several and enjoyed it enormously and obtained great satisfaction.

People seem to find it surprising that, although my most female part is artificially created, I can and do make love and enjoy it.

But that is the case, and there is no lack of enjoyment by the man either.

I was 24 when I had

my operation and it was quite some time before I could live as a woman in the fullest sense.

But when it began it was a complete fulfilment of all my striving and work to raise money for the operation, and justification for the pain and suffering afterwards.

## Trapped

One very small part of me was male at birth and remained male until my operation, but much more of me was female.

Why does that one, unseen part have to be so important when all the larger and more evident parts proclaim that I am a woman?

People like me have been described falsely as women trapped in the bodies of men. But in what way was my body like the body of a man?

Since the age of 18, when I developed breasts, 99 per cent. of me has been female, so how have I been trapped in the body of a man?

Every reasonable, religious man accepts that the soul is the most important and only inde-

structible part of a human being, yet the soul cannot be seen or examined.

Cannot one also accept that the mind, the psychological being, is also as important as the body?

If one can, then one must accept also that someone with a female mind and a female shape is unquestionably female.

I am not a product of surgery and drugs, which must be clear from what I have said about my history.

Surgery and drugs can do a lot, but they cannot create a feminine woman like me.

Hormones cannot change the shape of the body and they cannot change the mental outlook.

They would have the effect they would have on any other woman, no less and no more.

## Name

I had by now changed my name officially to April Ashley and the British passport by this time did not specify sex, so I could travel freely as a woman.

I had lived with men by this time and I had no doubts about my capabilities as a wife, but I had feelings that I was to be involved in a disaster.

The wedding to the Hon. Arthur Corbett was in Gibraltar on September 10, 1963, and the marriage lasted only a few days, so it WAS a disaster—especially for me because it brought back worries about my place in life.

The end of that marriage last week was possibly the most humiliating experience of my life.

Throughout the case, I had to keep taking tranquillisers to be able to listen to all the evidence without interrupting, and there was the final blow of the judge's declaration that I am and always have been a man.

I cannot understand why I should be regarded as a man. I can only function as a woman.

The operation did not transform me, it completed me.



Cool and elegant . . . the way April longed to be from her childhood. I am complete, she says.

Next Sunday  
**MY FUTURE**