

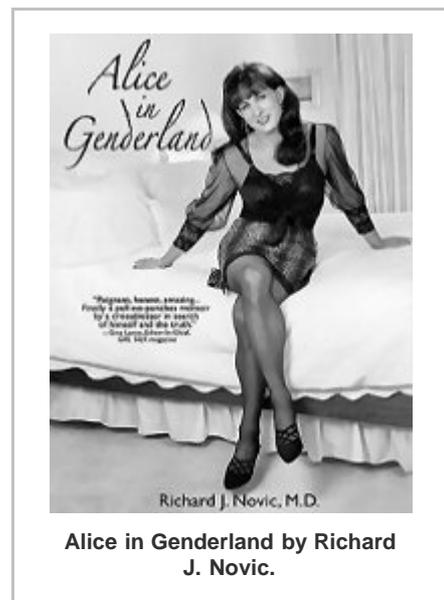
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Book Review: Alice in Genderland

A Cross-Dresser Comes of Age

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Alice in Genderland: A Cross-Dresser Comes of Age

by Richard J. Novic M.D.
Published by iUniverse Inc. U.S.A.
(2000).
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0595315623

This is the most clear, graphic and honest account of the wrestling match that many married transvestites deal with in their day-to-day life.

When I received a review copy of this book I put it on the pile of books to be reviewed and did not hurry to read it but eventually its turn came around. Well - I can tell you it was not what I expected. I guess I thought it would be another biography of a transperson and their own version of their finding themselves. Doctors and academics rarely write good autobiographies because they edit too much of the real truth out to make themselves look respectable.

What I got was a whistle-stop tour of Richard's life as a trainee psychiatrist and his sometimes alter-ego, cocaine sniffing and sexually available, Alice. This book is a real good read and I could not put it down. Richard or Dr. Novic, M.D. or even sometimes Alice reveals absolutely everything about his own personal journey to accepting his transvestism. When I say reveals all, I mean just that. He tells us about his middle-class white, privileged, Jewish upbringing as a doctor's son who berated himself with shame about wanting to get

sexual in his sister's undies. As his journey progresses, he tells us about his adventures in bars and car-parks in high-heels and full drag while his wife and children stayed at home.

At times it is difficult to tell if this book is an autobiography, confessional or adventure into self-exploration, and I suppose it really is all three. Richard has probably been able to get to this place because of his years in psychoanalysis, confronting his demons but it is still brave of him to tell us his tale with sometimes lurid veracity. Non-selective disclosure is the bravest of acts from any autobiographer.

This is the most clear, graphic and honest account of the wrestling match that many married transvestites deal with in their day-to-day life. Not only did Richard have to deal with growing up and evolving as a person, but he also had to contend that his often sexual obsession with cross-dressing meant he was trying to evolve two personalities at the same time on different days of the week.

I am unsure that in all his encounters with transgender, transsexual and transvestite people in bars and at L.G.B.T.I. centres that he ever really got a good angle on the average transsexual, but after all, why would he if he is a transvestite? I also had the feeling that he kept referring to himself as transgender because he felt it was less controversial than transvestite, but none of that distracted from the book.

Transvestites just coming-out may find the depth of disclosure in this book a little too full-on but they ought to read it anyway. Richard's lifestyle may not be right for the average transvestite who is often very closeted and lives in fear of family and friends finding out about their obsession with cross-dressing. However, all transvestites and anyone else for that matter could benefit enormously from reading this book because it shows that learning to own every part of who and what we are helps us all along the road of self-acceptance.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

