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Transgendered Family Values

Jess' Mum is F.T.M. and Her Step-Mother is M.T.F.

by Jess Brangwyn

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I'm fifteen years old and I live in Massachusetts, U.S.A. with my mom and my step mom. My mom, Raven, is a female-to-male (F.T.M.) transgendered intersexual and Bella, my step-mother, is a M.T.F. transsexual.

Living in this family taught me not to judge any books by any covers, and to respect people for who they are, not who I think they should be, and to always be willing to make friends even with people that others would shun.

My mom was married to my dad and they divorced when I was five; my dad lives in California now. Luckily, everyone is still friends. I've lived around transsexuals since I was seven, so I know the community very well and it wasn't

as upsetting for me when mom told me that he wanted to become a guy.

When he told me about it, I made him promise that I could call him by any pronoun that I wanted to and that I could still call him mom no matter what he looked like, because I think he knew it meant a lot to me to still call him mom. A lot of people say that it's a little odd to hear me call him by a male pronoun and then call him mom (like when I yell "Mom!" in the store at this guy with a big bushy beard) But he's still my mom and I love him.

I'm very lucky that me and my family live in a town that's understanding towards us, and a state that doesn't discriminate too badly against my mom and step-mom. Moreover, I'm incredibly lucky to a point that I'll probably never completely understand, that I was never even near hatred, violence, discrimination or dishonesty about the transgendered world. Take it from me, the very worst thing you could ever do to a child or teenager is lie to them! It makes them feel hurt and betrayed.

I wanted to talk to a couple of the F.T.M.s at my mom's support groups, because I was afraid that he would die or god knows what else in surgery. They explained what had happened to them, and one of them took his shirt off for me, and told me that he had come through it fine. Which my mom did (though it was very painful). So that made me feel better. I like to picture my Mother as a sort of Don Quixote, but sane. Don Quixote goes out and tries to change the world; so does my Mom. Occasionally Don Quixote would tilt at windmills and so does my Mom. And of course, they both dream the impossible dream.

When I first met Bella, My Step-Mom, Mom brought her home and said that she was going to move in with us. We used to have an argumentative but loving relationship - we fought a lot, and sometimes it got really ugly. It's the way we communicate. Sometimes we drive poor Mom nuts together. Mom and Bella moved us all to the country to a farm, which I think is boring. However the way my mom feels about it is, "Well, kid, you're going to move out sometime, and if I leave Bella and the farm and move back to the city where you're happy, when you move out I'll have nothing". So Mom is keeping Bella, and I can move out in three years; which is fine with me. You see we're both silly and impulsive people. Mom says we're very much alike. Fortunately Mom likes that.

My dad lives a very straight life but he's actually a little bit bisexual. He took Bella out once after Mom started dating her. I'm home-schooled, so I don't have to worry about what people at school think of me. My grandparents were pretty weird about the idea of my mom's sex-change.

After she told them, my grandmother gave my mom a Christmas present of pink tea towels and placemats! My grandfather brought Mom some power tools, but he was pretty indifferent about the whole thing.

And then there's the time I told my grandmother about my new girlfriend, now there's a funny and amusing pastime for the curious fly-on-the-wall. So she's not just a friend ...? Whoo boy, I was sweating then!

Okay, now for the frequently asked questions

How does living in a transsexual family affect my life and the curious friend?

It never really occurred to me how much attention I'd get when we all go to gatherings and stuff. It would all start out with a friend that I had made asking me why Bella kind of looked like a guy and a girl at once, and then lots of kids would start asking me the same thing,

and they would all eventually crowd around me until I told them. I would sit them down and explain to them that some people are born a little bit male and a little bit female, and Bella and my Mom were like that. My best friend Aria only asked me once, and I told her everything, and she never asked me again, and we're still friends. So I think it went well.

Is it hard for you to deal well with the fact that you have an "abnormal" family?

No, I prefer it. It's not as big of a deal to cope with as some people make out. A lot of people act like, "How can you possibly be happy in that kind of family? I would probably go insane if I was in that kind of family"! And to tell the truth, I went insane a long time ago, so I don't notice. (Just kidding!) When I act insane, I blame it on my P.M.S. Living in this family taught me not to judge any books by any covers, and to respect people for who they are, not who I think they should be, and to always be willing to make friends even with people that others would shun.

What's your advice to other kids with trans-families?

My advice to other kids whose parents have just told them they're transitioning is: They'll probably be a whole lot nicer and happier afterwards. My Mom was very depressed before he got on hormones, and now he's not. Most of the other transgendered people I know were nicer and happier after their transition too, so it may be a blessing in disguise. And if all else fails, you can always bargain with them - if you want that wig, I want that PHAT new haircut, and so forth. If they can give for you, you can give for them. And if people make fun of you or them, well, they aren't worth the space they're taking up and the air they're breathing anyway. You'll find out who your real friends are, like my friend Aria. Your true friends are the ones who don't care about who your other compadres or family are ... And the same goes for your boyfriend/girlfriend!

I have a lot of respect for my Mom and what he believes in, and I'll always support him in whatever he does. Living here taught me that I can be and do anything in the world that I want, and I'll always have someone to walk with in the Pride parade.

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