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A Girl Called Adam

The Time Has Come to Tell the World

by Zoe

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"I'm really female," I said out loud. "I'm really a girl" ...

Have you ever had a secret so embarrassing you can't imagine telling anybody, ever? Nineteen-year-old Zoe from the U.K., has. But now she reckons the time has come to tell the world. Every now and then, when I'm walking down the street, I catch sight of myself in a window and I just stop and stare at the smiling nineteen-year-old girl I've become. "Is that really me?" I ask. And, when I realise it is, I want to shout for joy.

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I didn't used to look like this. My hair was different. So were my clothes. In fact, I even used to have a different name.

Perhaps you've fantasized about changing your image? Maybe that will help you to understand. But I didn't just change my image - I changed my whole

identity.

The fact is, my name used to be Adam and I used to be a boy.

The Outsider

I always knew I was different. When my friends wanted to play with train sets, I wanted to do ballet. When they ran around shouting, I'd be sitting quietly. I couldn't relate to them and they didn't want anything to do with me. "Adam's such a girl", they'd say. Funny that!

When I was about fourteen, I started to grow hair all over my body. But instead of accepting puberty as natural, I felt disgusted by it and shaved it all off.

"It just doesn't feel right," I told myself.

I longed to talk to someone about my feelings, but my dad had left home, and although I was close to my mum, I couldn't imagine sitting down and saying, "Mum, er, I think I've got the wrong body."

In the end, all I managed was, "If I'd been born a girl, what would you have called me?"

"Zoe," she said. "It was going to be Zoe." How I wished it had been.

There was nobody at school to confide in either. The boys thought I was weird and the girls called me a poof. Then the bullying started. I was getting beaten-up most days, and I was so lonely I'd skive off school and spend hours on my bed, staring at the ceiling.

"What's wrong with me?" I'd cry.

"Why can't I be like everyone else?" But the ceiling didn't have any answers. No one did.

Dressing-Up

My mum did her best to help. She arranged for me to be taught at home and begged me to confide in her. But I didn't know what to say.

Then one day I went out and bought some girls' clothes. It was just a plain top and a skirt from the sales but, as I tried them on and looked at myself in the mirror, a strange feeling came over me. I didn't look much like a girl with my short hair and boy's body. But for the first time in my life, I felt completely comfortable.

I wanted to shout out loud, "This is me!". And, at last, I knew the truth. I had got the wrong body. Inside this boy casing, I was really a girl.

Living a Lie

Deep down, I think I'd always known. But because I didn't know anything about sex changes - or transsexualism, as it's called - I was even more confused and scared. I assumed I must be the only person like this in the whole world. "It's no good," I told myself. "I'll just have to go on pretending I'm a boy."

Things cheered up when I left school and started college 'cause I met some new friends who were Goths. They all wore make-up even the boys! I thought they were amazing, and at last I didn't feel so out of place in the world.

I could grow my hair long, wear lipstick and dress in sarongs without my friends thinking I was strange.

But then one day, I was in a shop when someone pushed past me and said, "Excuse me, Miss." Miss! I shook my head. He'd called me "Miss"! I'd been mistaken for a girl!

I stood there for ages with an enormous grin on my face. And in that moment, I realised. Being a Goth wasn't enough for me anymore. I didn't just want to look like a girl - I wanted to be one.

After that I got really depressed and cried whenever I saw stubble appear on my face. But eventually I decided to do something positive. I didn't know if anything could be done to fix my body but I had to try. I couldn't go on as I was.

I started searching on the Internet and that's when I found the word transsexual. This was someone who'd been born the wrong gender. Someone who felt like they were in the wrong body. I slammed my hand down on my mouse mat. "That's me," I cried. It was good to finally have a name for it.

Even better was my discovery that there were lots of other people who felt the same as I did. Suddenly, I didn't feel so alone. I found out there were operations and hormone treatments I could have to turn me into a girl. I also read about people who'd been through the process and now felt truly comfortable with themselves. Afterwards, I burst into tears.

"I'm really female," I said out loud. "I'm really a girl. A girl called Zoe." Now I just had to work out how to become her.

First, I had to tell someone how I felt. I had an e-mail friendship with a guy called Wolf I'd met on the Internet, so I decided to tell him first, 'cause we weren't face to face.

"If you're sure it's what you want then you should just go for it", he wrote back. Because he wasn't shocked, I found the confidence to confide in my friends Mike and Alex. "We don't understand it, but if it'll make you happy then it's fine", they said.

My best friend Michelle was the same. "Cool," she said, "So that's why we get on so well!".

But there was still one hurdle ahead of me before I could seriously consider having a sex change ... Mum!

Telling Mum

It took ages to pluck up the courage to tell her and when I did, she wouldn't take me seriously. "Oh, you don't really mean it," she said dismissively.

"Yes I do, Mum".

"No, you don't." And then I gave up.

Finally on New Year's Eve 1999, I started crying and couldn't stop. "Just tell me what's wrong," Mum kept saying.

"I want to change sex, Mum," I said. "I really do. I want to be a girl called Zoe. Please just accept that."

She just went mad, shouting: "You can't be serious, it's totally stupid," and threatened to throw me out of the house. We didn't speak for ages until one day she came in and put something in my hand.

"What's this?" I said.

"A key ring," she replied.

I turned it over, and my chest tightened. There was a name on it: Zoe.

"It's for you," Mum said.

The First Step

Once Mum was okay with everything, I went to my G.P. and asked to be referred for treatment on the N.H.S. He was really understanding but said the waiting lists were really long and it could take years. I couldn't wait, so I went private, and saw a psychiatrist.

On my second visit, I was put on a course of female hormones. I've been taking them for three and a half months now. My hair is thicker, my skin is softer, and people tell me my figure's much more feminine.

Now I'm saving up for the £9,000 for breast implants and the sex change operation. There's also the cost of laser treatment to stop my stubble growing and elocution lessons to help me sound more like a girl. It'll be about two years before I can afford it all but things are

really looking up.

I have a good job with an Internet company and my workmates are great about the new me. I'll be the only girl in the office but they're putting in a ladies loo especially for me. I've also met Nicky through an Internet group - a girl who, like me, was born a boy. As we're taking the same hormones, we can compare notes on the way our bodies are changing. It's great to be close to someone who really understands.

I know after the operations there'll be things I'll never be able to do, such as have children, but it's a small price to pay for finally being able to look in the mirror and feel happy about the face I see smiling back.

My story probably sounds strange, but it's really about something most teenagers go through - finding out who you are and getting your friends and family to accept that.

That's where I am now. I'm Zoe. And that makes me feel great.

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