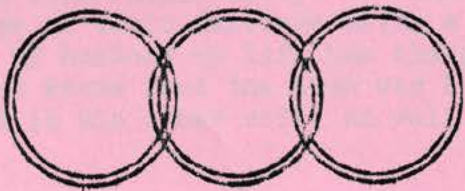
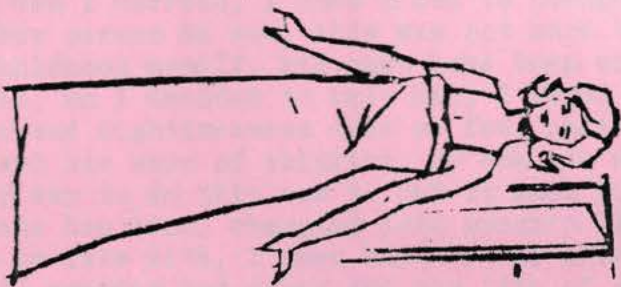
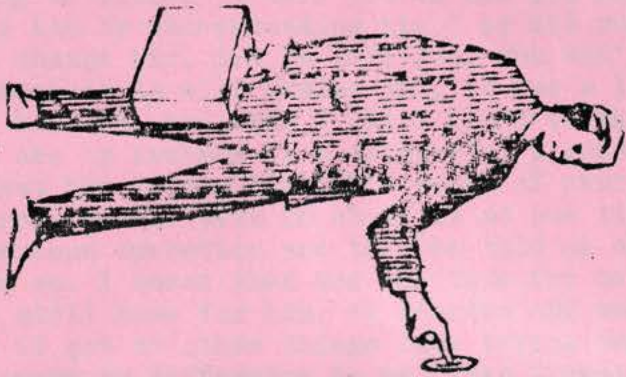
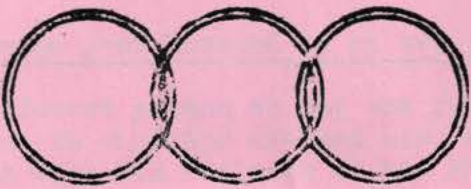


"BIRCHERRY"



"BEEFERS"



"CUTERS"



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You Can change your Husband to be two people

If your husband is a different person to the one you married, why not try to find out the reason as to what has changed him, have you asked yourself if it has anything to do with his children or his childhood, did he tell you he had something he wished to tell you before you named the day,? did you try to help him by understanding him,? or did you think that after marriage you could change him, let me tell you, you won't, he is what he is and nothing you can say or do will change him, it was a long time before I found out about my husband, and when I did I can't think for the life of me how I took it, you see my husband is a transvite, I guessed there was something different about him in our first few years of marriage, I could not pin point it at first, he did tell me about it at one time but it never sunk in, then I had a serious operation and then he told me about his other self when I got over the op. I guess then was the time for me to have the faith and love I had and still have for him, it started off when he used to wear my nightdress then it got to other things like trying on my undies, this I did not mind as it made no difference to me, then I realised that he was different from the man I married, I knew I had to change my way of life to accommodate the other person he was, this was not hard to do, as I had not had a very happy childhood myself, his must have been unbearable knowing what I did about him, so I decided to help him, I found that buying small things like panties and nightdresses made me feel part of his other self I began to understand his ways of thinking, my one aim was to keep my marriage intact, so the only way to do this was to get to know his other self and try to find out what made him tick, changing into woman's clothes made him a much better person to live with, I then adjusted my life accordingly, we went out together to parties and clubs and his life of a woman became mine. If I could turn the clock back I would have made his life more happier for him, so I feel that if a wife cannot accept the man she married as he is then there is little hope of their marriage being a happy one, now that I have come to understand my husband my life has changed for the better, I hope this will make other wives feel the same way I do as with two people you have gained a friend in his other self, as well as a marriage partner.

The History of the World

The history of the world is a long and varied one, filled with many interesting events and people. It is a story that has been told for thousands of years, and it continues to be told today. The world has seen many changes, from the rise of ancient civilizations to the modern world we live in today. There have been many wars, many discoveries, and many great achievements. The world is a beautiful and complex place, and it is our duty to learn about its history and to work to make it a better place for everyone.

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My Brother & I. Liz [REDACTED] n. 998.

I must confess to being a little amazed, at the way some of our members speak of and treat their brothers.

I should stress before going further, that I am not getting at any one, and I have no wish to offend.

These are just some of the few observations, so please no cries of "to the tower" or excommunication;

Ask your self a question?. "Who came first, my brother or me".? We all would like to feel we did, or at least both born at the same time. But we know what a Doctor would say, the birth certificate says male, your physical make up is male, so male you are and a court would bear him out. Hard rather uncomfortable facts- but true and we all know it. Believeve me, I do feel sympathy towards those who have feelings of aggression and distaste for their brother. But he like neour transvestism is a fact and here to stay. I believe in the old maxim "if you have a problem and you can't solve it then learn to live with it; I have found greater peace of mind doing so. There would seem to be no cure for this malady (not that I consider it to be an illness, more a state of mind). And yet if presented with an option- how many really want to be cured- do you?. I went to a psychiatrist- but I have to confess not to be cured rather to find out why I was a transvestite and so I could say , well I tried. The two as I see it are inseperable They must learn to live with each other both having sympathy for the other and realising the obligations that face the seperate persons abilities. Firstly, unlike the lady who wrote "I don't need my brother", I am afraid that I do. He holds down a good job which pays all the bills and keeps me in clothes all other manual chores such as decorating, gardening, washing the car and cleaning the windows are his responsibility (for which I am tempted to say "Well done Son".)

Now to his physical make up, Well he does'nt have a great mass of feminne hair or a face that a perfect shape, or that don't need to be shaved look, nor does he have a 24" waist with 36" hips, (The customers might

might be troublesome if he did); But what natural attributes he has got-when I have worked on them, in presenting me produce a result that I find feminine, pleasing and exciting. Not the perfect or even near it but then whose Perfect.?. We would all make changes if we could but your'e stuck with what you've got, so make the best of it.

Now when it come to clothes, my brother being a company rep, is as careful about his appearance as I am so you can image my horror when I read the following... I suggested a coat hanger on which to hang her brothers suits etc, the offer was casually rejected with the remark "that rubbish can stay on the floor where it belongs", I couldn'y take this attitude because I feel the quality of his appearance reflect on me. I urge him daily to take care with eyebrows, eyelashes and face after a shave, nails, etc, because lets face it, ladies, they are my eyebrows, eyelashes face and hands- nails neglect them and he neglects me and that will never do. Now it is important that he smells right, not too masculine and not too feminine a happy medium. Many after shave lotions are too strong and your average male wears to much in any case. Remembering that smell must be a pleasant background and not something that drowns you this is how we get over it. For deodorant we use three wishes or something similar not too strong, but that will deal effectively with normal perspiration problems, then a hint of Aramis (by Estel Lander) which is a very pleasant aftershave. Now as to his relationship with the two other ladies in the house, ie wife and daughter. For them, and for their peace of mind, he is male in every sense of the word. But don't get me wrong. This does not mean that he walks Britians answer to John Wayne nor does he hold a cigarette like Humphrey Bogart, (all these old stars I am giving my age away). Nor when having his morning cuppa does he grasp the cup as though his life depended on it-Although it often does. I would describe him as male streamlined with the rough edges smooth. In the household generally I am often heard but seldom seen and never by the daughter, I have a wonderful rapour with the first lady of the

house and we can discuss any topic. This relationship of ours I am glad to say has the greatest of all qualities, a sense of humour keep it in this way and you can climb mountains. loose it and you may find yourself in deep trouble. Of course I would like to be seen more, but for the moment I feel it wise to stay in the background.

It has been difficult to write in the part of the third person, And I do hope it has made sense.

So, ladies, there we are, my brother and I inseparable yet seperate, one person yet two personalities, male yet distinctly female.

NOTE. - articles quoted from;; I don't need My Brother. Pat. Hants. BIRCHETT BELLES GUILD MAGAZINE.

It never would have happened. SANDRA 764.

FEMME FATALE. page 9. Jan/Feb 1976.

Beaumont Society's Conference '75. cont; from last issue, a thesis about the use of hormones by Transvestites and Transexuals. By; Dr. R. Jones.

What are hormones that are available, and which is the best to take;

I have divided the hormones into the oestrogens and progestogens, and I feel that there is no real benefit to be gained from the latter. The oestrogens are divided into the naturally occurring oestrogens which can be extracted or synthesised; and substances which differ in chemical structure but have oestrogenic effects, they are synthesised and are confusingly known as the synthetic oestrogens. Let the people consider the natural oestrogens of which there are twenty-two of which only three need concern us. Natural oestrogens and their derivatives. oestriol is the weakest of this group and is rarely used except in old ladies. The powerful natural oestrogens are oestrone and oestradiol of which the latter is used in therapy. In practice the true natural form (Oestradiol-17 β) is not used because it is too rapidly destroyed by the body. The synthetic derivatives ethinyl oestradiol, mestranol (ethinyl oestradiol 3-methyl ether), oestradiol monobenzoate and oestradiol valerate are used. They are all extremely potent oestrogens and fairly long acting. Ethinyl oestradiol is the most popular with mestranol a close second. These are usually given in tablet form. Oestradiol monobenzoate and oestradiol valerate are usually given by injection in an oily solution and are therefore absorbed over a long period and may be given at monthly intervals. Another source of natural oestrogens are the extracts from the urine of pregnant mares. These preparations contain a wide range of natural oestrogens in unspecified proportions and have the possible advantages of containing the lesser known oestrogens. The most popular preparation is Premarin, which is dispensed in tablet form.

Synthetic nonsteroidal oestrogens. These are chemically unrelated to the naturally occurring oestrogens but have powerful oestrogenic effects. The most well known of these being Stilboestrol, less well known are dienestrol, chlorotrianisene, and methallenestrol. These are given in tablet form. The substances described above are presented under a bewildering variety.

of proprietary preparations of which it is difficult to say that one is better than another. Sometimes one substance is better tolerated by the individual, than , for no distinct reason. It really comes down to a question of "suck" and "see". These hormones are also prepared in topical form (to be used locally on various parts of the body and in particular the vagina). Applied to the male breasts for example, under an occlusive dressing, they appear to exert local effects. In fact this effect is probably attained by local absorption into the circulation whence they return in diluted concentrations to the local site where they exert their effects. A new product 'Androcur' has recently appeared from the drug company's literature, would seem to perform a chemical oestrogenation of purely temporary nature. If you believe, as I do, that transvestism is basically linked to libido then you can expect from this drug your emanation. There is nothing in the hand-out on its use in transvestism since its main use is in the treatment of the persistent sexual offender though 'about on patient in five develops transient or in some cases permanent enlargements of the mammary glands.

How should hormones be given. as indicated above the majority are prepared in tablet form for oral administration and this is by far the most effective route of administration, certainly for the novice since the dose is more susceptible to control. The topical form is virtually no use in the exercise of harmless narcissistic fantasies. The oily injections are good for their prolonged action and simplicity of administration; but it is not possible to be sure that a cyclical administration is being achieved since there is no simple way of telling when the depot of hormone is exhausted. Also there is a tendency for the hormone to be rapidly absorbed at first and tailing away to very little at the end of the month. The same applies even more strongly to administration by hormonal implant. This takes the form of a large amount of hormones concentrated into the small pellet which is implanted under the skin at some convenient spot and whose duration of action is variously described as being from one to six months. You really don't know where you are from one term of dosage with this route of administration. The best but theoretical method would be to have an ovary transplant. This is technically possible but ideally one needs a twin to act as donor, and women rarely happily give up their ovaries to the surgeon until the gonad's remaining lifespan is somewhat foreshortened.

What dose of oestrogen should I take, the standard regimes recommended for women to replace ovarian lost function seems to be far less than the transvestites requirements, for example when trying to grow a pair of breasts
In practice the patient is started on a dose smaller than the maintenance dose for a woman (e.g. ethinyl oestradiol 0.01 mgm daily or stilboestrol 0.5 daily). This done to ascertain the severity of any side effects that may be experienced. If all is well the dose is steadily increased in as far as a way to be effective in producing breast tenderness and hence enlargement. As far as maximal doses are concerned, for most subjects enormous overdoses are prescribed but there is probably an optimum level of medication which can only be reached after months or years when the maximum changes have been achieved and one is simply concerned in maintaining these changes. The maintenance dose is found by a patient method of trial and error. Of course such a fine degree of control is only possible with oral medication. If the patient is receiving injections or implants it is probably the safest policy to under-dose.

If I go on increasing the dose of oestrogens will my breasts continue to grow indefinitely? It is important to realise that for each individual the ability of the 'target' organ to respond to hormones will vary enormously; some men will very quickly grow a very satisfactory bosom while others will struggle on for months with little effect. This inability to respond has to be accepted though it is disappointing. On the other hand it must be accepted that there does appear to be a stage of maximal development at which the breasts will grow no larger. At this stage they may or may not have reached the desired proportions but no amount of increase in medication will provoke greater growth. The breasts are chosen as a measure since they are measurable but the concept of maximal changes probably applies to the other target tissues.

How can I tell whether the hormones are taking effect? reliance should be placed on objective assessment while at the same time the subjective changes are there to be enjoyed. Regular weighing under standard conditions in a standard amount of clothing will reflect the increase due to water retention and fat deposition. Measurement of bust, hips, and waist are obvious. The additions to these measurements of thigh and arm circumference at a fixed level from the bony landmark will be of interest. The facial changes are best studied by a series of facial photographs taken at regular intervals (in black or white). They should include full frontal on both profiles.

It is of great interest to keep a proper record of medication and the changes found, both subjective and objective, with this type of record long term therapy can be accurately planned.

Where can I get these hormones? It is not unknown for the patient, desperate for hormones, to ingest or inject hormones destined for animal consumption. This is not only aesthetically unpleasant but also unsafe and ~~uncontrolled~~ uncontrolled. You cannot obtain hormones over the counter without a doctor's prescription. Some cosmetic preparations (usually exceedingly expensive) claim to contain hormones and most of these don't.

The attitude of the medical profession vary from cynical scorn or kindly co-operation via almost total disinterest. A quiet persistent intelligent plea will meet with more success than the passionate hysterical demand. Remember you have no right in this matter since it is the individual doctor's privilege to with-hold prescription. You do have the right to change your General Practitioner and an interview with your prospective new doctor will determine whether he has the required attitude to your problem. Hormones may be given by some psychiatrists if you wish to go to the bother of psychiatric ~~assessment~~ assessment. Lastly there are a number of private practitioners who have a name for 'free dispensing'. This is fine and they render a good service; but at a price. What will hormones cost.

If you are fortunate enough to find a N.H.S. doctor to prescribe for you it will cost you the prescription charge only. Brought privately over the counter the cost will depend on how much you are taking and which product., the latter being the more important factor. The cheaper synthetic natural oestrogens should cost less than 50p. per month. A monthly injection at cost price is a little more than £1.00. The natural conjugated cost between £1-50p. and £4.00. per month.

Note; These prices are those ruling in 1974.

Should I be taking hormones at all, All things being equal and despite the talk about the discretion of the doctor, the decision to take hormones or not is one for the patient alone. It is his psyche which drives him to the request and assuming he is well balanced in his outlook, the request should be honoured. There are certain people to whom I would refuse hormones. These are of course the young courting couple or married man and indulging in an active sex life, and the older man whose sexual urges may still have a faint enough spark to give infrequent pleasure to his partner. No amount of arguing would dissuade me from this. I would be quite happy to give hormones to the young unmarried man but as soon as he took a steady girlfriend I would withdraw from the arrangement. ~~There are certain people to whom I would refuse hormones.~~ It has been said that birdseed and padding should invariably be adequate and so it may be for some. There are some of us with more sophisticated aims in life which require something more convincing than these measures but are not prepared to go onto surgical breast augmentation for example. For these the 'boobs, buttocks and bliss' family, I feel that hormones are well justified.

BIRCHETTE BELLES

I suppose we are all aware that some events condition and influence the birth or growth of an association or business. In this case an event occurred which eventually led to Joan and Pat having to think seriously about the future with Pat's insatiable desire to dress TV. Like all R.G's had her long moments of torment; worry and a certain amount of revulsion too, but her philosophical outlook gave her the answer. "Well," she said, "If you can't beat them, join them!"

It wasn't as simple as that, because the Beaumont Society was struggling to find new members and to obtain a measure of publicity for our cause and concern. The invitation to share their home went out to all those members who shared the common problems which TV/TS brings. It was not just an invitation to participate as a Beaumont Member but an opportunity to share the personal problems that a TV/TS experiences. The counsel was phenomenal because "Joan & Pat" are blessed with "listening-ears".

The small regular gathering inevitably looked for a name and a bond between all members, for which Dawn, our Area Organiser, and the location of Joan & Pat's home was connected with. The Birchette Belles emerged. A Committee was formed and a "Guild Constitution" drawn up. To the reader the small notice appearing in the Bulletin stating that Birchette Guild meet every third Saturday in the month, spells out a simple task of opening the door and welcoming the member. It could not be further from the truth because the preparations for that one event per month means a very business-like approach by Joan & Pat to feed the "multitude"; quite some correspondence and telephone calls from potential visitors in the weeks prior to the event; cajoling and arranging the demonstrators or saleswomen appointed for that evening.

Its a dawn attack for these two stalwarts on the day and it does not end until the early hours of the following day. Tired, and sometimes disappointed, they are in the planning stages on the next day.

A wide range of events are considered but mainly it can be divided into two categories. On the one hand the main purpose is to assist the member to improve their femininity by watching make-up demonstrations, a chance to buy a range of clothes and wigs, whereas the second purpose is to publicise the Beaumont cause.

In the latter case we have been visited by some Teaching Staff of the Good Samaritans; a BBC Playwright and our hostesses have had a special interview by a lady journalist.

Distinguished Society visitors still appear from time to time, from our own Sylvia culminating in the visit by Virginia Prince. The story of the Birchette Guild is reflected in the pages of the Visitors' Book where we still see 30 odd names each month.

The feature of the Guild is, of course, to enable each member to meet member, to discuss their personal problems which, quite often, has been resolved by some member.

Whatever the beauty, the style of clothes, or presentation of the TV/TS, the seven or eight R.G's help those of us who lack the finesse to look the part. This is of tremendous value especially in the early days of membership where members who are unable to subdue the impulse to walk-out dressed can reduce the risk of being read.

The Birchette Guild is progressive because it is always conscious of the need of change. Some of these actions are reflected in the special "call-out" system which member car-owners have elected to give their personal address/telephone numbers in case of a car

breakdown and, the gaining of the services of a solicitor should the member be accosted by the law.

The Birchette Guild is a lively organisation owing its life and vitality to the vision some years ago when a dark cloud entered into Joan & Pat's life, cleverly nurtured by Dawn, and supported by those of us regular members who will always be eternally grateful.

It carries on the Beaumont Society's traditional example to all heterosexual transvestites to shed the guilt and worry that we all experienced before we knew we were not alone in the world.

Mary 480

THE HAIR ON YOUR BROW

There's a hair on your brow, dear sister, dear sister,
there's a hair on your brow, dear sister, a hair.

Then pluck it, dear brother, dear brother, dear brother,
then pluck it dear brother, dear brother, - PLUCK IT.

(To the tune 'There's a hole in my bucket' - Traditional)

Not so long ago, one of the features inherited from my brother was a pair of eyebrows which were a dead give-away. A light touch of the Dennis Healey's you might say. Not quite up to the Mike Yarwood caricature, but bad enough all the same. The time had come to put my foot down with a firm hand. So I upped and told the said brother that he would HAVE to do something about it. I was quite adamant, MUST do something, I said. But he's a bit of helpless lad when it comes to the niceties of life, as you can see from the way the conversation developed:-

With what shall I pluck it, dear sister, dear sister?

Tweezers of course, dear brother, everyone know that. But there are lots of different shapes of tweezers - some have very pointed ends, some are angled to a point, some are rounded and some are flat. The ones I prefer are the flat ended type. They are easiest to use and grip the hairs well. Hairs are difficult to get hold of with the pointed types and the rounded end varieties are too big to get at individual hairs easily.

And where shall I pluck it, dear sister, dear sister?

Find an eye level mirror in a place which has a strong natural light, coming from behind you so that the light is reflected from the mirror, and preferably diffused, i.e. coming through frosted glass, such as in a bathroom. In artificial light or strong frontal, direct light some of the hairs just do not show up.

And how shall I pluck it, dear sister, dear sister?

Try to pluck individual hairs, from as near to the root as possible and pull in the direction that the hair is lying i.e. outwards. This way you stand more chance of pulling out the root and secondary growth is then less vigorous. Also this way causes least damage to the delicate skin tissue. Don't be too anxious - pluck a few and see how it looks. Always pluck from the underside and work upwards, one row at a time, shaping as you go. Let me re-emphasise - take it slowly, not too much at any one time, so that you can see results whilst others don't notice the difference. I took several months over getting mine thinned down and shaped. In fact, they could still do with more work even yet, but I am positive that none of my acquaintances have noticed, and that is important to me. Once a week, keep the cleared areas really clear.

What shape shall I make it dear sister, dear sister?

Well, the basic shape is achieved as follows:- Take a pencil and hold it vertically alongside your nose. There should be no hair inside the line of the pencil. i.e. across the bridge of the nose. Then hold the pencil at an angle of 45 degrees outwards from the corner of the eye and this gives you the outer limit.

Within these limits the shape can be straight or arched, thick or thin, according to your personal preference. Personally, I prefer a slight arch, as I think it more feminine and not too thin, otherwise it could be spotted. Certainly over exaggerated shapes are easily spotted, so again - carefully does it.

There's a hair on your brow, dear sister, dear sister.

Ooooh! He does go on, doesn't he? Do you have this trouble with your brother?
Pluck it, you steaming nit, pluck it!

Jill [redacted]

A T.V's LAMENT

I wish I could do it a bit better.

I'm pleased with my wig, it's a lovely light brown,
But there's this bit at the front which will dangle down,
When Lynn gives it a back comb and spray,
That tames it in just the right way,
But I can't do that on my own.

Oh! I wish I could do it a bit better.

What a nuisance, those hairs on my face.
Well, really they are out of place,
The shadow I try hard to hide,
But I know it's there at the side
And I'm scared of being a disgrace.

Oh! I wish I could do it a bit better.

Now consider the problem of bust,
Water filled balloons dare one trust?
Disaster could approach
From the pin of a brooch,
So find a different method I must.

Oh! I wish I could do it a bit better.

I would like my nails to be seen
Varnished beautifully, giving a sheen.
But one's sure to split,
And I feel such a nit
With some long and some short and some 'tween.

Oh! I wish I could do it a bit better.

There's this smashing bird that I see,
I really thought she was R.G.
When she spoke of her brother
Then I realised other,
But nobody fails to read me.

Oh! I wish I could do it a bit better.

So my new resolve is to try
To present more accurately this lie.
To look a girl, not a man,
I'll strive hard as I can,
And then look the world in the eye.

Yes, I'll try to do it a bit better. .

LOVE FOR A STRANGER

Part 2

Meeting Others With The Same Obsession

In himself he was more cheerful since he now had friends who understood him. They were members of the Beaumont Society (BM Box 3084, London WC1V 6XX). The Samaritans had put him in touch with the society so that he could meet other men with the same obsession. It has a membership of transvestites in Britain and abroad.

The national secretary puts prospective members in touch with regional representatives so that they can share their problems. But, more important for me, the society also sponsors an annual dinner where members can safely dress up without divulging their identities, inviting their wives and girlfriends along as guests.

To my distress Brian started to write to members of the society. I felt I was losing him and that he'd find one of them so understanding that they would eventually go off and live together, dressing up all the time.

As we grew further and further apart a wall of tension sprang up between us. Sexually our marriage was shaky. It got to the point where he accused me of being a sex maniac whenever I turned to him for some loving warmth and attention. And then the old doubt crept in. Did he want to change sex? I spent many nights crying into my pillow.

I felt the situation had become more dangerous when he confided in a female colleague at work. As she was very tall he felt she would appreciate his problems about getting clothes and be able to advise him. She did understand and was sympathetic. Now I felt my marriage doubly threatened.

The crisis came one night when the girl and her husband agreed to go out with him, all dressed up, and Brian came home raving about what a marvellous experience it had been.

That night I couldn't sleep. In the small hours I slipped out of bed and went into the children's room. I burst into tears, thinking desperately: "I can't, I simply can't, go on!" Drearly I trailed back to bed and lay there staring at the ceiling till morning.

I had almost decided to leave, but I promised myself one last try.

I hurried the children off to a neighbour, and we sat down and faced each other over the table. Tearfully, in short jerks, I let it all out - how neglected and unloved and unimportant I felt.

"I don't understand you," I choked, "and I sometimes think you'd be better off without me and the children. Then you could dress up all the time."

There was a silence. But I could sense that for the first time he was really listening to me. Then, very gently, he took my hand in his and said:

"Look, neither of us knows why I have to do it. I don't understand any more than you. All I know is that I must do it. But I don't need it all the time. I want a home, a family and a wife.

"I love you, and I know how much extra love and understanding I'm asking for, but one of the reasons I loved you in the beginning was that you were the kindest and most generous girl I had ever known. Couldn't you try to understand me, to go along with me?"

A Last Chance To Help

There it was. More or less an ultimatum: put up with it or get out. My throat went dry. I have never felt so close to him and yet so separate from him. Inwardly I raged that it wasn't fair, that he was being selfish, demanding all the sacrifices from me.

Yet as I looked up I caught his eyes as he waited for my answer. They were the eyes of a man in agony. Silently, incoherently, he was pleading with me. I knew this was our last chance. I took a deep breath. "I - will - try," I managed to say. "Let's start slowly - you may find I'll even help you dress up. I'll make you look as good as I can."

That was the turning point. But even after that it wasn't easy. Nothing changed overnight. I still felt the same resentment and repulsion. When he dressed up I found it hard to think of him as another female. I felt as though a bit of my life had slipped away: there was something that I couldn't get back. And what I couldn't get back was my man - because my man was now a woman.

I just hadn't got any room for this other female. He wanted me to sit beside him on the sofa and hold hands. But I didn't want to. I couldn't stand the smell of make-up on his face. I'd feel sick.

He wished I could be tender and affectionate, but to me that would be leaning towards lesbianism and I was determined to keep out of it.

I spoiled one or two occasions by bursting into tears. We had screaming sessions over the constant dash to the mirror, or about the tiny mirror that he kept pulling out from behind the cushions, to look at himself.

"If I say you look right and I accept you, for goodness' sake, stop looking at yourself!" I screamed once.

But it was no use. He so desperately needed reassurance and admiration.

"You're so enveloped in yourself," I remember saying bitterly. "And I shall never completely understand because there's still the other half of you that I want."

"But the other half of me is there," he said, trying to reassure me. "It's all me. This is just an extension of me, another character that I like playing. It's nothing more than that. And, if you'll let me slip into this character for just a few hours, you'll find when it's over I'll slip back into the other character again. I've not really gone away."

Time does change things. Little by little over the past three years I have grown used to it, come to accept aspects of Brian's transvestism that I would never have dreamed possible. It doesn't bother me any more to have him touch me, hold me, kiss me, if he's dressed up. I know that it's still him.

Fortunately his dressing up does not have much effect on our sex life. Once the tension between us was removed, once we began to pull together, we were our usual affectionate selves. He is always happy to change back before bedtime. By the time he's removed his wig and make-up the magic's gone, and he doesn't want to continue any more. He is immediately my Brian again, only much more relaxed, warm and gentle.

I think the thing he finds most restricting about family life is that the sessions don't go on longer. And they don't happen that often - perhaps once every couple of months. He only does it when we can persuade a friend to have the children for the night. He doesn't like them to be around. I think Brian's afraid they'll laugh.

Going Out in Public Together

I'm pretty well organised about shopping for him now. I use cash and carry stores for his clothes, catalogues for shoes, and now I've found a shop that will let him try on wigs after hours.

The first time we went to a social occasion together was to the Beaumont Society dinner two years ago when we took all Brian's gear for him to change into there, as they had a professional hairdresser and make-up artist on hand. I was as nervous as a cat, but I must have made one man's evening when I asked whose wife he was.

Waiting for Brian to emerge, I spoke to several other wives - it was a tremendous comfort to me to find that other wives were soldiering on and coping with the same problem.

Since then, we have begun to talk about it in front of the children. They now realise that some of the clothes in the wardrobe are Brian's not mine. And we've become bolder about going out in public. We have a relative who very kindly keeps the children, perhaps for three or four days, and we just vanish. As soon as we find a spot, Brian changes in the back of the mini-bus, and the tall girl and the short girl go for a walk.

It still gets me down at times, but that's really by the by. I was determined to salvage our marriage, and that outweighs everything else.

For him, dressing up is truly an obsession. But I can only be glad that I have learned to live with it. I feel now that it's a shame that so many men suffer so much heartache and guilt over it when all they really need is a patient and understanding family.

The other night, while Brian was in our bedroom taking his dress off, I went into the children's room and stood there, just as I had done on the night I nearly left him. I thought back to all that had happened since, all that we had been through together, and how we had come to terms with our troubles.

The troubles are still there. They always will be. Perhaps some people would say it's not much of a marriage, but it's my marriage, and in many ways it's a good marriage. My husband is sober, faithful and kind. In his own way he loves and cherishes me. Many women cannot say as much. ""

