

A Finer Specimen of Womanhood

A Transsexual Speaks Out

Sharon Davis



**A FINER SPECIMEN
OF WOMANHOOD
A Transsexual Speaks Out**

by Sharon Davis
With photographs by Wendell Putney

To many people, the terms *homosexual*, *transvestite*, and *transsexual* are confusing and perhaps even interchangeable. Whatever the words mean, many people in our society view individuals who claim to be any of the three as unnatural deviates.

As a result of these narrow-minded conceptions, author Sharon Davis had to go through indescribable pain and mental anguish every day of her life. Before her sex-change operation, she had been a female trapped inside a male's body. This had been hard enough to deal with, but the prejudiced and uninformed comments of those who didn't understand her made life even more difficult—so difficult, in fact, that in the end she was faced with only two options: a sex-change operation or suicide.

Now, thanks to her friends, (who were always there regardless of her life-style), understanding doctors and nurses, and her own faith in God and herself, Sharon Davis is a happy, contented woman—something she has always wanted to be.

If you're concerned—and scared—about your own sexual identity or if you know someone who is, *A Finer Specimen of Womanhood: A Transsexual Speaks Out* is excellent and highly recommended reading.

To Floyd and Dr. Wesser, whose love and understanding helped to make this book a reality; and to all my college instructors and attorneys, who were there with encouragement throughout this project

FIRST EDITION

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Acknowledgments

This is a book that has been in the making for quite some time. It came about as I lectured in 1981 at Cheney State College. Many people are due my thanks for this publication. At the request of a college counselor, I spoke about myself, a postoperative transsexual.

My family's understanding, love, and support were of great importance to me and gave me the impetus to continue. Many of my peers did not fail to encourage me in creative ways. I would like to thank the Wilmington Medical Center's Endocrinology Clinic at their General Division and all the nurses that helped me to climb, step by step.

For their friendship and medical support, I would like to thank Mr. Fred Hillegas, Dr. Terrell Davis, and his secretary, Miss Nancy Smith. Conversations with these people were life-saving devices. They provided insight and counsel at my most vital moments.

Also, I must thank Mr. Dick Robb, George Hawthorne, and Arnold Gordy for their services, invaluable suggestions, and time. To all others, whose names are not mentioned but who contributed to this life of mine, I thank you for your much needed support.

I hope, by my words, Lester Walls will see I have only tried to express myself adequately for all he's done to make this book a reality. Joan has been part of my life history in the very deepest sense, and I appreciate her friendship because it was all a life-sharing joy.

Preface

The aim of my story is to provide courage and offer hope to those human beings caught in bodies their souls cannot accommodate. I was one of these unhappy persons who, as a transsexual, found a new life and the happiness that had eluded me in my prior body.

The road to the change was a struggle, but it is a winnable battle. There were people who supported me and offered hope. They gave me the will and courage to become the person I wanted to be.

My story is but one example of that struggle won. If possible, then I wish my book to give the courage to others.



Individuality

I am an individual.

I have been placed on this earth to fulfill my life's challenges, to accomplish my main goals in life.

I must strive above all obstacles each day of my life, for tomorrow is yet so far away.

I must listen very closely to conversations and everything that is said directly to me, that I may acquire knowledge and wisdom from those words.

I must lend a helping hand because I might need one in return. I must give my love; in that I will receive love, for to show my love is an expression of my mind.

I must respond in a manner that is more suitable to my personality, for if not, I am denied my individuality.

I must be free—free to learn, free to explore, free to love, and free to be me . . .

Because I am an individual.



Who Am I?

I was born in Wilmington, Delaware. It is a very small state compared to others. My state barely made it on the maps until the Du Ponts became well known for their products. During the year 1956, I was lucky to become the fourth member in my large family of nine. I have two sisters, one who is one year younger than I and another that is five years younger. My six brothers range in age from nineteen to thirty, with three older ones ahead of me and three younger ones following me. At this writing, I am twenty-six years old and into my third completed year of post-op surgery. I knew my life would be a different one from the others in my family because I always enjoyed wearing female clothing and going out dressed as a woman at every opportunity. I've always felt that I am a child of God, and he knows more about me than anyone else. Even as time let me grow older, I remember the year clearly when I traded my little fire truck for the doll of the girl around the corner.

My life hasn't been easy while trying to be myself. I was a special person, and others stood ready daily, trying to challenge or change my reassuring feminine ways and desires. Due to many people's lack of knowledge about transsexuals, I wanted to share my story to help others. Although it has cost me a lot mentally and psychologically, I refuse to become a follower.

So now I must become a leader. I have always stood up for what I truly believe. I have approached discrimination throughout my life. At one point, it caused me to be fired from a job. I am minus a few so-called close friends. Despite much mental anguish, I managed to survive. I never took too much time out for the negative statements coming from others, unless it was what I considered constructive criticism to help me reach upward.

One day I decided that I needed a name to fit myself, so I chose "Sharon," because I liked it very much and it had much meaning in the name itself. I thought so much of being kind and sharing that the name Sharon would just be perfect for me. I have always had it in my heart to share with others. I went into the court of common pleas and petitioned that my name be legally changed to Sharon Davis. It was a fairly easy task until the judge said this petition would be honored but it would not change anything else. Little did he know all my plans were well in the making.

My next few steps were to proceed with the correction of my birth certificate and social security card to read the same as my new legal name. I had many friends who called me "Sharon" long before the court approved my request. I guess there are some people in the world that will do things just out of mere respect for others. After all the paperwork was completed, I can say it made life a bit easier as a preoperative transsexual. After all, I did have the appearance of Sharon Davis as a female at all times, especially in public places. Many people who knew me thought of me as a female, unless they were otherwise told.

Whenever I went out during the evenings, I mainly headed for the straight bars, where the heterosexual males and females gathered, because it made me feel right at home, whereas gay bars just weren't my life-style, where I could relax and enjoy an evening's entertainment.

One hot summer day in 1969, when I was exactly thirteen, I was faced with the reality that my feminine gestures were overruling and dominating me as a little boy. All my peers and school-bus friends would constantly remind me of how girlish I was. It must have been close to seventy degrees that day, as I pretended not to hear some of the remarks. But I'll never forget when I heard this voice cry out, "I should have been born a little girl."

As I grew impatient throughout the years of my adolescence, I studied and researched my innermost feelings, known to many today as transsexualism. I read several books on other postoperative transsexuals, such as Christine Jorgenson, Jan Morris, Dr. Renee Richards, and Canary Conn, not to mention others. I wanted so desperately to get a better understanding of how others with feelings similar to mine came through their journeys and became whole, satisfied people. I shall not fail to mention the tremendous studies and information that Dr. Harry Benjamin compiled in a book called *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. It has been a great help to me and many others who were afraid to cross into this once slightly unstudied field.

Finally, I geared up enough courage from somewhere to inform a few of my best friends and my family that I was definitely going to have my sex-change operation in the future. Deep down inside, I felt I just couldn't keep it from them any longer. I thought it was only fair to share that part of me with them, since we were supposed to be so close to one another. Of course, it was a shock to several people, but I learned another lesson—that honesty is the best policy, even when it can hurt someone sometimes.

Many times I would use my spare moments to imagine what it would be like when the great day would arrive in my life. Often I would childishly pretend I had conquered the road toward my surgery, only to face the most utter, bitter pain when my day-dreaming moments ended. The main hurt

always put my mind in an uproar when I used the bathroom to see physically that my male organs were still connected to my body. The psychological pain took its toll during some unwanted, miserable moments in my life as a transsexual.

I realized as time went by that I am just as good as the next female, if not better in some ways. That positive attitude, which I achieved in college, has kept me going full force, along with those unforgettable, encouraging remarks from some of my college instructors. It always seemed that when I was down or upset about having to wait so long for my surgery, I'd hear my teachers' voices to help lift me out of the dumps. Even when I had to miss some classes to see my doctors prior to having my surgery, I was excused without problems, because they all had an idea of what I was going through.

II

Prison Is No Holiday for Me

Things really got bad for me during 1975 because I had re-started on female hormones (estrogens), which was the first step toward my transsexual operation. The doctors called it sex-reassignment surgery, or gender dysphoria, but it didn't really matter what different terms they were using; as long as I was to be approved for surgery by them, I knew I was going to be happy someday soon. Then I went to prison in about May of 1975, not knowing I was headed for a very long battle of incarceration without my hormone pills.

Prison life was really hell for me, as I was there with almost 1,000 men, some of whom hadn't had sex for ten, twenty, or almost thirty years. There were a few sexual requests daily; some men had long sob stories and others were bold enough to threaten my life if I didn't submit. I dared not report such incidents to the guards because they would only put me under protective custody, and that meant being locked in your cell for a period of twenty-three hours, with one hour out for recreation sometimes. So, with no choice of my own, I was sometimes looked upon and used as a sexual release center for the other inmates there, but I knew I'd always be more than that regardless of how anyone saw me at that time.

I pleaded with the warden of the prison at Delaware



Correctional Center not to discriminate against me! He had ordered the entire administration to keep me locked up in their so-called protective custody for six months, seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. Once in a while the head guards and captains would visit me in the hope that I would change my mind about being the woman that I felt I was born to be. The warden himself made several visits to my little cage, only to find that I refused to live as someone I knew I couldn't be—a man. I continued to pursue my emotions and desires. This gave me several television interviews. Six reporters came seeking knowledge about where I felt I should be housed. They asked, if I were released the same day, where would I have my surgery done, since Johns Hopkins Hospital no longer did the surgery. My answers: "I am a human being and I do not belong locked in a room alone because of my sexual life-style." I never really answered about the location of my surgery because I was not sure if they were still going to be doing operations in New York. My hell became other reporters' curiosities and assignments for a work day at that rathole prison, which is well known for its overcrowded conditions and rape problems.

The prison life had a lot in store for me. Even when the going was what another inmate called smooth, it was a hurricane for me. Things got so bad once I decided to castrate myself with a razor blade. Guards were summoned by others, who rushed to my cell by the time I had reached to cut the last strings of my pubic hairs. I couldn't have my hormones, I couldn't have my surgery, and I was locked down for so many hours that I got to what they call the burn-out stage. Unreasonable thoughts began to overtake my mind. After all this, I never got anything from the prison administration, but I did manage to smuggle some pills that I wanted so badly into the visiting room by inserting them in my rectal area.

I knew after the guard had stripped me halfway down

that he wouldn't go too far, because I would tease him and he would be embarrassed by my flirting gestures and remarks. I also received a classification move from the prison-ward hospital into the general population. After filing a writ of habeas corpus, the prison had to show why it was keeping me locked away as if I were something from outer space, when the prison itself is in the state I was born in.

While being incarcerated, I had few relationships, some with a few guards, one lieutenant, and two captains. I would never reveal the names of these correctional officers because I knew they were only human, and if the inmates were getting some favors, why couldn't they try? I knew it would win me favors, and I had less problems when they were on duty.

III

Starting Over Again

I went to the parole board in 1977, only to be set back for another whole year. I didn't explode, because others had told me they usually try you the first time around and test your ability to withstand the applied pressure of a setback. However, the following year came much faster than I had expected. I don't know if it was because my friend whom I loved so dearly and I were having so many problems or it was just that I was so active in the prison programs that were available. Whenever they had a program I was in, he was there too, and I appreciated this sometimes because I knew it would keep down some of the sexual requests and assaults.

In July of 1978, I was granted parole; I was presented with a little slip of paper by a guard. When I opened it and saw the box checked, I became so happy; yet I cried because I had a friend, lover, big brother, and daddy I was going to have to leave behind for many years to come. Then I thought, *How in the world will I tell this man I am going to be leaving after three solid years of daily communication and all the other good things that lovers share?* Anyway, when gym was called that evening, we both broke into tears. It hurt deeply to see him cry outright for the first and possibly last time ever. He was one respectable young man who helped make me aware of myself and reminded me daily that I could still hold



my ground as a woman, regardless of how much money or commissary was offered to me for my body.

When I returned to society after being locked away, I kept to myself in a small room for almost four months. I was told that I should get out some time; staying locked away is not good for me. But deep down inside I had to make an adjustment from prison to society without having a man to be my supportive guide. I continued to say I was going to be all right and that my studying was keeping me really busy. I had enrolled in college to study secretarial procedures, only to change my curriculum months later to business administration.

While attending college as a preoperative transsexual, I received several invitations from my classmates to go dating, but I still wasn't ready for that type of action. The hormones that I was getting from a doctor in north "Philly" weren't working fast enough for me. Also, I had other local doctors and many appointments to keep me worried for the next two years leading up to my surgery.

My financial situation was really below a sustaining level, and with no income, I made the best and only decision I could. I quit college to work full time as credit collector. I was told by one of my doctors in Delaware to try and make the state pay for the cost of my surgery, but I knew from previous cases that it was only more pain to challenge and another lost battle to face. I worked from sunup to sundown, adding a little nursing experience to my career until I got enough money to pay for my surgery in full. The rule has always been you must pay first before anything is done.



IV

A Search Becomes Reality

After years of unexplainable mental anguish and pain, my new life was due to begin with my life savings. I began by scheduling what I thought was an end to my misery, only to find I would be very, very, disappointed—two times. I had made up my mind that if I didn't have my surgery completed by the end of 1980, after two straight years out of prison, I was going to commit suicide. Thinking that I had no more mental strength left to go on, I seriously discussed the idea with a doctor whom I had been seeing for support. He assured me that I was a strong person who need not talk of taking my life, which had really yet to begin.

I thank God that on my third and final scheduling, which was December 19, 1980, I made the appointment that was to be my last. Oh, it was joy and relief to my physical body forever. My mental anxiety was on the way down the drain, and I was on my way to begin a search that was to be completed with a happy ending. My major goals were in clear focus. The paths I had traveled had been many; there were stumbling stones and remarks that I refused to heed to keep me from moving forward.

My doctor had given my special instructions not to be late and make sure I didn't eat anything by mouth after midnight prior to the surgery. I made sure I followed his orders,

because this was the biggest chance I'd get in a lifetime. I arrived at the hospital in New York an hour earlier to be doubly sure I wouldn't be late.

When I arrived, the lady said, "You must be Miss Davis," I smiled, and she waved for me to come into the office. As I entered, I realized there must not be many blacks who come for this type of surgery—not that there aren't many black transsexuals, because there are. I guess it is the financial part that keeps most transsexuals from having surgery, but mainly it is the black ones who have to wait so long or miss out completely. At least I can say I am the first known black transsexual in the state of Delaware. There are ten transsexuals whom I know in the state of Delaware who have had their surgery completed. They are all white and wish to live very private lives as heterosexual women. When those thoughts left my mind, we had completed most of the paperwork and the lady kept saying to "be sure to use your legal name when you sign your signature." I felt so good inside, since I had already been through the legal channels of my name change.

Another lady entered the office and said, "You can come with me now." Before I could think to ask where, I was on the elevator to the eighth floor to have blood work done. I was scared to death about needles, so I kept thinking for the first time in my life, Was I going to run out of the hospital and be unhappy the rest of my entire life, or lie dying on the operating table with a chance to set me free forever! While moments passed, I quickly made the decision that I'd go all the way, since it was the decision I had to live with all my life.

After my blood work was completed, I was given a hospital gown to put on and then taken to room 318. That was my living quarters for the next two weeks. I was given some medication to keep my nerves calmed down. I tried to act as if I wasn't too afraid. When I was left alone in my room, I found out moments later that my room was the one without a television. As time passed, I didn't need it, because I was

going to be weak during my entire stay.

During my two weeks at the hospital, I was in so much pain; however, I still wouldn't allow the nurses to give me pain medication with needles. I took the oral medication and let my faith do the rest. As I prayed before my surgery and each day thereafter, I even asked God to allow me to die on the operating table if I was doing something against his will. Apparently, I'd done nothing wrong, or else I'd been forgiven and spared. Whatever the case may be, I know for a fact there is no greater pain than having a female mind with male organs and imbalanced chromosomes stating that you are more of a female when those male organs have to remain attached to your body. It's miserably unexplainable pain. Unless you are in that present situation, only you can empathize with what I have felt for thirteen and a half years. It takes a strong-minded person to live daily like I have lived, because you can never run from yourself, regardless of how your friends see you or how many compliments you receive. Only you know the true feeling within!

My doctor visited me on several occasions to see how I was coming along with my newly created vagina. His approval came none too soon, because I was ready to go home, and he advised one more day's stay to make sure all was well. That next day seemed like a whole week, but it wasn't that bad with the few visitors I had the evening before.

With the help of the nurse, I felt secure enough to leave the hospital. The head nurse wanted me to stay another day because I had a small fever, but I said no way. I had arranged for my ride to meet me at the train station in Delaware. One nurse flagged a taxi cab while another carried my baggage to the car arrived in that crowded New York station slowly. There was a stranger staring me dead in the face as I moaned in pain. He asked if I was all right, and I told him I was coming from the hospital and I needed some water for my medication. He was kind enough to bring a ginger-ale

soda from the dining car. I accepted the soda mercifully to rush the pain pills down my throat. Before I knew it, I had fallen off to sleep and was praying to get home as fast as possible.

Following is an article about me that appeared in the *Delaware Valley Defender*:*

Sex Reassignment

During the past decade a new change in our society of sexual revolution has finally came out into the open with people changing their sexual roles, better known to many of us as sex-changes and transsexuals. Sharon Davis is one of those people who has taken on the challenge to meet her innermost desire of becoming a woman by changing her sexual organs from male to female through surgery.

On Dec. 19, 1981, Ms. Davis underwent a complete one stage operation, costing almost \$6,000. Her male organs were created into a female vagina and she is now considered to be a woman. As she tells of her success she says, 'Much pain and mental problems were on her road towards peace.'

Miss Davis has done several dozen interviews to help others such as herself. But most of her time is taken with her schooling, in which she plans to graduate soon with a degree in Office Administration.

To date, others have shared her experience as well but she claims to be the very first black individual in the entire State of Delaware to have undergone a Transsexual operation. She admits that there are at least three more Transsexuals that are living in Delaware but they are white and you can't tell they were once men.

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V

Home Sweet Home

The Metroliner raced into the Wilmington train station and I only hoped another one of my dear friends would be there waiting. The train was arriving almost one hour late, and when I got up to hop off the train I nearly fell back down into my seat. The conductor must have been looking, because he came to my seat and carried my baggage to the steps. I stepped off the train in unbearable pain, just making it to the flight of steps I was to walk down, alone. I looked to the bottom of the steps for a second time, and then I saw my friend with his hand out, waiting to carry me back to the apartment.

I felt a warm feeling and some pain leaving my body, because I was with someone whom I knew cared and would get me home safely. Finally, I extended my left hand into his right, and we were off for home. I had no idea I was going to be facing a long thirty-day rest period. When we got to the apartment driveway, I could see ice everywhere. The snow made it appear more like Christmas, which had been six days before.

Walking from the car to the apartment wasn't too much to worry about because I was assisted by my friend's arm to lean on. As soon as I opened the front door, I could see Christmas gifts waiting to be opened, but I was really tired and too weak to open them, so I waited until three days had passed. I wasn't anxious to open my presents anyway, because



I knew that there was no present better than my completed surgery.

After lying in the house the first week, taking four "sitz" baths daily and one regular bath, I began to have some progress with my vaginal healing. I had lost seventeen pounds, and it took almost five months before I gained it all back. I couldn't eat anything more than crackers and soup for the first two weeks. Plus I fought daily with swallowing my antibiotics and pain medication three times a day. Somehow, after the fourth week, I figured that I was ready for the cool air to hit my face again.

I took my first walk outside to the rental office to complain about the lack of heat. Trembling as I entered the office, the secretary realized I wasn't feeling well and she called the manager from her office to take my complaint. I was given the same old line about the oil having run out and the heat would be on soon, if not later. I was told I should be home in bed, but instead I was taking a chance on doing something I wanted to do—get out of the house for just a little while.

I made it back to the apartment shaking uncontrollably and was sent to the hospital by ambulance. I was kept waiting on the stretcher for at least twenty minutes. Then a foreign doctor who had experience with transsexual operations was sent to my room. She said I needed much more rest. I was glad they sent someone who knew something about my situation, because they don't even do the operation in the hospital or state. The doctor was very kind to me, and she expressed her happiness for me during my bandaging. As I left for the waiting room to get a ride, she reminded me that I must rest longer. I smiled and walked away, waving as if I were well again.

Following is an article about me that appeared in the Delaware *Morning News*:*

After Years of Derision, Pain,
Transsexual Begins New Life

By WILLIAM P. FRANK
Staff reporter

Sharon Davis was born 24 years ago in Wilmington as a boy named Roger E. Davis, but she's now legally regarded as a woman.

For years, Roger Davis said, he felt he was a female so he acted like one, dressed in women's clothes and endured taunts from other males—even while he was in prison.

Late last year Sharon Davis, nee Roger Davis, underwent a transsexual operation in New York and returned to what she hopes will be a happy life with a young man in her apartment in Kynlyn north of Wilmington.

She claims she is the first Delaware resident to have undergone such an operation, or "at least the first black in Delaware to have had this experience."

Her driver's license now states she is a woman. Her name has been legally changed from Roger to Sharon on her birth certificate.

"The only disappointment I have is that I can't have children," she says.

Before she underwent the Dec. 19 operation, performed by Dr. David R. Wesser for about \$5,500, she underwent psychiatric examinations at the Wilmington Medical Center. Dr. V. Terrell Davis, the center's director of psychiatry, had certified that such an operation would be beneficial to her.

*From the *Morning News*, February 1, 1981. Reprinted with permission of the news-Journal Co., Wilmington, Delaware.

She is still under a Wilmington doctor's care and continues to take hormone pills under his direction.

She lives with a young man she describes as her boyfriend, who regards her as a woman. She says she is grateful to him for helping her with the cost of the operation.

A preoperative transsexual came to my aid by transporting me from the hospital back to my apartment, which was twelve miles away. I thanked her and told her I would be available when she went to New York for her surgery. After all her doctors gave her such a hard time, I made arrangements for my surgeon to see her. She was very excited for me, and as I was being dropped off she assured me that I could call upon her anytime. That made my day a complete one, because my friend was out working.

Finally, staying in the house for three more weeks led to my successful healing and happiness. I was then ready to return to work and give my interview to a reporter, whom I trusted very dearly. I felt this would be my chance to repay him, since he had helped me while I was in prison. Also, I knew there were many other transsexuals in the world who could be assisted by my coming forth and sharing my personal story with them.

When I returned to work, I was fired from the job I had for two years as a credit adjustor for not informing my supervisors that I had used my vacation time off for my most needed surgery. I had always been well accepted as a woman among my co-workers. When they found out about my surgery through the news media, I received a lot of cheers from them, and nothing more was said of it. Then, all of a sudden, two days later, my supervisor began his harassment. Indirectly I knew, from within myself, that I was no longer wanted there

as one of the credit-bureau employees, so I took my case to the courts. I lost out, because my money ran out first. I received many letters and requests for help pertaining to my surgery. I never set a required fee for my help because I know how it hurt me to pay out so much money before I actually got to the operating table. I did several speaking engagements at different colleges and accepted twelve interviews hoping to help others, as well as myself. I only wished I could have come across someone such as myself during my search for help, but I had to read many books and go through uncountable studies. Thank God that I have achieved my destiny now!

At this writing, I can say I know my life has not been in vain, for I have helped eight preoperative transsexuals to success, and three doctors gave lectures to those who were in some doubt. Many people tend to confuse the terms *homosexual*, *transvestite*, and *transsexual*. It is very important to most transsexuals that they be considered as heterosexual persons and not as people who changed their sex just because they felt like it or could afford to do so financially.

I have no regrets whatsoever, and I would do the same thing over again. My transsexual operation saved my life, and for those who do not understand, I can only say it was like a woman giving birth to a child, and she chose to die so her blood could live on. In turn, I chose to set myself free from suicide. I know that with all my followup postoperative sessions, many would say, what a price to pay for happiness. I believe that everyone's happiness costs a different price; only some can bear the pain, and others cannot. I would not have made it through my pain without faith in myself and God. I constantly remind myself that I must maintain my faith, and I did just that to the very end.

VI

Beach Off Limits

I had been praying to go to the beach for the past two summers, since I had been waiting to take my first swim without anything distracting me between my legs. All was well with surgery, and my doctor okayed this type of activity beforehand. Only one thing stood in my way. I was determined to conquer it before the next summer came rolling around. That meant I had less than a complete year to get myself together and challenge my off-limit point.

After taking those female hormones (estrogens) for many years, I still was not happy with the progress of the hormonal therapy. My breasts just weren't the right size for a female my age. One day I would be a full A cup, and the other days I'd appear semi-flat chested. I guess it was mainly due to my size, because if you are larger in figure your breasts will develop more fully from the hormone reaction, whereas being small and petite doesn't allow a greater reaction to the hormones, and there is less to work with. This is my interpretation from having seen the progress of other transsexuals who have had more success.

My clothes were sizes 5/6 and 7/8 in dresses, without much up front to catch an eye. I feel strongly about every woman being secure when out on the beach swimming with her companion. I must confess that insecurity played a role



in my life when I refused the opportunity to accept swimming and beach dating. I knew inwardly I couldn't go near a beach because I would look like a flat-chested girl after going under and coming up all wet.

All this made me feel like I was putting some limitations on myself as a woman, and I was not about to miss out on any more sunny days at the beach. Finally, I sought out six different doctors' opinions, two in New York, two in New Jersey, one in Delaware, and one in Maryland. Also, I received some advice from three close friends who said the same as all the doctors who had suggested it would be all right for me to have my breasts enlarged, but not too much. I agreed to that because I did not want any extra attention coming my way. My desire was to be a well, round-shaped, pleasing and secure lady throughout the rest of my life. I knew that after I had reached this stage, there would be no challenge in life I couldn't accept as a secure woman.

I selected the doctor in Baltimore, Maryland. The fees were more reasonable, and I had already decided not to spend over \$2,500 for the surgery and all the followup treatment that would be required. He stated he would be very glad to perform the breast-implant procedure for me, but there were many unanswered questions. I knew immediately that I was going to be put in the position as to why I wanted this done. I knew if I told him I was a transsexual, he would agree without further questioning, so I did. I wanted to set up an appointment for December of 1982, but I was told I couldn't be seen until sometime in 1983. I said okay and was given the eleventh of January, 1983. I didn't even know the location of the doctor's office, so he gave me his secretary and she explained in brief directions I thought I'd never find.

During the course of my conversation with the secretary, I found out that this doctor was a plastic surgeon who was on the staff of Johns Hopkins Hospital.

After all the planning and insecurity I've experienced about being flat-chested, I somehow realized that having B-size busts doesn't make a complete woman. It's her personality and charm, I've been told. Learning to be happy and live with myself was all I ever really wanted out of life. Therefore, after giving the matter considerable thought, I cancelled the breast-implant surgery and began to live with myself, depending on the slow progress of the hormonal shots. I would have to continue this therapy for as long as I live; the dosage would reduce in amount as time went on.

Three months had passed with some good notice of an increase in my breasts. The chest area that I often worried needlessly about had finally begun to show a great difference. So I decided to venture out by attending a conservative modeling school. I felt I'd be very happy being around other girls who were seeking modeling careers. But I had no idea my body and facial structure would appear good-looking enough to receive many compliments from the others girls and staff. As time went on, I was rated a number nine on a scale of one to ten, and my smile was marked a ten. As I walked the runway for the final pose, with chills racing up and down my body, I made it offstage without a single mistake. My walking steps were just about excellent, but my posture was horrible when it came to scoring how straight I could stand up without my shoulders lagging. I worked on all my weak spots until I got it right, because I knew I couldn't stand repeating nine more months of modeling class.

While the days grew shorter toward the end of my modeling courses, I drew courage from within to wear flashy tank tops and sexy low-cut blouses to show off the super progress of my fully developed breasts. The hormones had not failed me after all. The round-shaped figure was all included, and I was happy.

I guess I should have had more patience to realize time

would make things well. But it must not be forgotten that I was still seeking the final price on my happiness. It took me a while to believe that the hormones weren't going to work overnight. I developed my patience by learning to understand more about the treatments. Now I'm glad I did wait. My courage and self-esteem are high, and I can challenge my peers and society to prove that I am a special lady. I say *special*, because I feel that in my heart, and I know everyone has something special. Only some people refuse to allow their uniqueness to show.



VII

I Was Desperate, but Wise

The yearning feeling I felt within my mind and body just can't be expressed in a few words, but I know I wanted my operation so desperately that I refused to wait until I had completed the second option, which was electrolysis to remove the hair that grew on my face constantly. I only went through four treatments of painful needles in my facial area before I believed the hair would some day be gone forever.

Due to the hormones, my face wasn't as hairy as the average male's but I did have enough growing to cause myself great embarrassment several times a month. So I constantly thought about the transsexual program I had not joined in "Philly" and the recommendations they gave me, which was to complete all the series of electrolysis work first and then consider my surgery later. Again, my emotions kept telling me to have faith, because I knew there was a better way and not as much of a wait. I was not about to wait another year for my surgery; another delay was going to mean death by suicide.

My electrologist had explained that the entire procedure would take approximately a year, with periodical visits following. So now I did it all my way, and the pain from the needles wasn't so bad after all. Others had made it seem like torture, but a small amount of electrical current pierced my skin each

time, leaving a tiny tingling sensation. This method killed the hair roots. I usually lay on the table like a bed for one hour once a week, until my sessions eventually broke down to fifteen minutes every three months, and then twice a year, until my face was like the palm of my hand—free from all hairs.

I was so thrilled with the lack of hair I could see on my face that the pain was never given any time to play its part in the long treatment series. It made me feel happier having all the work completed. However, if I honestly had to go through the electrolysis again, I would have taken the advice of going through the treatments and completing the entire procedure first and then working my way up toward my surgery. Due to the many factors of emotional bondage and money, I decided that it was best, or else I would never be able to afford the price, which was \$5,500 just for the surgery itself. This did not include the hospital bill, which ran well over \$1,500 during my entire stay.

Taking a shortcut can sometimes take you down a long road. But it was worth it all, because I made it to the finish line, fighting my personal battle and winning the war of opposition as well.

There are many tips and advice that I was offered. Many people and agencies tried to stop me. As a result, my defenses allowed me to trust few people. Now I can see very clearly that it's not in vain to wait for something if you know it is going to be worthwhile. My emotions took me over many rough times; spontaneously and before I realized it, desperation played its role. I permitted it because I had thoughts that made me think time was running out, and I only had so long to live. I knew I was alive, but not as the person I felt I was meant to be. It was like the living dead being a preoperative transsexual, walking around parks and then to bridges, hoping for something terrible to happen so I could be set free from my misery. I wanted to be wise about the decisions I had to

make, and I used logic and suppressed my "can't wait" feelings. All of my misery is now over. I am living my life as a successful and content woman.

Reaching my happiness has given me the opportunity to step out into the world as a woman full of ambition. I live freely now as I've always wanted. My experience with four different employment firms was successful. I labored as a nurse's aide, sales cashier for Jefferson Wards, security guard for Hercules, and an exotic dancer for professional events.

When I worked at these job sites I always applied as a woman, using my new legal name, which is Sharon Davis. Not once did I ever look at myself as being weird or strange, as some people may call transsexuals. A heterosexual female was my label, if I had to have any for society's purpose. I have nothing against being called a transsexual because the medical terminology expresses my situation as that; however, there's no need for the public to know all the details. Therefore, I decided to keep my physical change to myself. I am accepted as others see me: a female.

Mentally, I was always that woman inside of me, and I never dared to tell any of my co-workers. To this very day I would never deny having undergone sex-reassignment surgery, because I am very proud of the outcome, and to share this truth may help others. Also, being yourself can help others who have confused states of mind and people in similar situations. Before my daring step, I was told anyone in my shoes who lived as a female and dressed constantly as a woman was still looked upon as a homosexual. Thank God I'll never have to go through that ordeal again. When people do find out about your life-style, your real friends remain friends.



VIII

My Magical Secret

You have read in other pages prior to this how I've mentioned and stressed the dynamic importance of female hormones. They are indeed the magical estrogens that make a woman more becoming and beautiful. For those of you who aren't really aware of the expensive but highly worth-it treatments of injections and little hormone pills that come in tons of different sizes, shapes, and colors, just ask your physican. If time allows, go over to your nearest library for some extra medical research. The more knowledge you can obtain pertaining to your hormone treatments the better. I was once told, "A word to the wise is sufficient indeed" and I need only be told that once!

Now, to elaborate just a bit more on estrogens, I only need to say the most popular estrogens for transsexual usage has been 2.5 mg. Premarin and 10 mg. Enovid, which are specifically known to work positively well with less side effects, if any at all. Communicate with your physician for your appropriate dosages.

Female hormone therapy was one hundred percent essential to my achieving *A Finer Specimen of Womanhood*.

Any doctor with a certified medical background will inform you that it is most highly recommended that you start on these precious pills, then take injections before sex-reas-

signment surgery. Although many will not tell you in advance, you must remain under such treatments throughout your entire life. Some of the pills have been bitter to swallow, but now my life is so sweet.

The action in which hormones work may seem a bit difficult to believe, but again, from many, many years of experience, I can tell you what I know about myself and at least 126 others. A biological fight occurs within your physical body—a boxing match—between the female hormones and the male hormones. The female hormones attempt to overtake all male hormones produced on a daily basis. This explains in brief why I could not keep starting, stopping, et cetera, because progress would certainly die down. Of course, it would be like the beginning all over again. Instead of being in round nine, it's round one. If you're lucky sickness will not prevail, and you will not be knocked out or bedridden, something a small percentage of patients must deal with. Let your doctor be the referee; tell him if you're going through side effects, knockouts, et cetera.

Some doctors will even become highly upset with you if you're not consistent with your prescribed treatments and therapy. Allow me to clear some of your minds: It is not the money a few worry about, and even if it were, that would still be the patient's total loss, not theirs. The prescription and office fees are usually reasonable; having it filled is, without a doubt, very expensive! I've brought from 90 to 200 pills at one time, and the rule is, the more you buy the less money you'll spend. Any purchase of less than \$20 is a small loss.

As for hormone injections, delestrogen is usually given in a combination of delutain. I have had doctors add a little vitamin B-12 in my injection on several visits. Now that I am no longer a pre-op I require pure estrogens only. Therefore the doctor has eliminated Delutain and Enovid; in turn I take provera and delestrogen. When studying, as I've done in the

past, you will surely see all tasks become self-evident. Regardless of how much I tell you of my experiences, there is still nothing like hands-on experience. Doctors are constantly studying this medical problem and have yet to come up with an accurate dosage per person; this tends to make many under- or overprescribe.

Dealing with hormones on a regular basis, I have come to the realization of this medical fact; adequately maintaining medication dosages will bring about fantastic secondary characteristics of a female—the breasts, fingernails, hips, finer hair, clearer complexion, et cetera. The most startling thing to think about is the agony of reverse if you haven't disciplined yourself.

I say that a weakly organized mind will bring about the same for the body. Also, the great sensation most receive in the breast area will diminish as treatment does; the same applies, vice versa. Erections will then be very painful, and your organs will possibly be in rubbery, lukewarm form.

Since the word-publication of this unique writing, letters by the hundreds have been mailed in. Questions of all sorts did challenge my mind and ability as to the knowledge I possess on my transsexual life—a woman by mind and birth and physical surgery by law. One special letter stuck in the back of my mind, which I remember clearly: A young college student explained so helplessly how a druggist laughed when female hormones were requested by him over the counter without a written prescription. If you gain enough wisdom in life, it will only go to show that everything is funny to ignorant and arrogant people who lack knowledge.

Yes, being a transsexual patient is recognized by law and medical science as a legitimate medical problem. Therefore, if you need a prescription or any type of care, you have that right, as I've pursued mine. During my dusty roads, the medical travels were many, if I must confess now. I have been sent away by many doctors who refused to write for me a

most-needed magical note. Without reasons I left, but throughout all, I kept seeking out the secret to my life. My spirit has yet to be destroyed. My brothers and sisters who need me, I am here waiting. I give to you my medical adventure in writing; fortunately, I am rich at heart. Might I remind you: No hormone pills or injections can change or replace the personality I share.



IX

Tips I Didn't Have

1. Too much make-up on your face can be like putting black on rice—it will show more than you anticipated.
2. Never rub your eyes when applying make-up because you can irritate them by getting some in your eyes.
3. Always get shoes that fit correctly. If they are too tight, it will show in your walk and eventually cause unnecessary pain. Shoes that are too big can give you a clumsy walk or cause you to fall.
4. If your voice does not satisfy you, practice with a tape recorder or a close friend whom you can confide in.
5. Don't wear nylons if the size is too big or small; you will not be comfortable or appear as well dressed as other females.
6. Clothing that is incorrect in size will draw laughing glances and leave questionable looks on faces as you pass by others.

7. A mirror can provide some good suggestions after dressing. Look for hanging tags, loose strings, dangling buttons, and hems or pleats out of line.
8. Don't wear nail polish unless your nails are completely painted. Chipped and unfinished nails take away from your outfit and prestige of being well dressed.
9. Wait until you are one hundred percent ready to appear in public, challenging movies, clubs, restaurants, et cetera. Uncertainty can bring about unwanted attention.
10. There is no real need to tell people about your life unless you feel it is required to get a few strangers' opinions.
11. If you have any problems with the law trying to cross-dress in public places, you may secure a letter from your doctor explaining this is a prerequisite to surgery.
12. Never take other transsexuals' medication. What might work for them may bring about illness or even kill you.
13. Alcohol and hormones do not mix at all. The combination will sometimes cause nausea or vomiting. It also reduces the amount of progress you could receive.
14. After post-op surgery, you will still be required to continue on hormone therapy, as it is always required during pre-op stages.

15. Breast implants are generally used by most transsexuals after surgery; hormones will only increase your breasts and hips to a noticeable degree.
16. All surgery for any cosmetic operation leading to gender change must be paid for in advance. Some insurance companies and Blue Cross will pay a reimbursed fee.
17. There are several different methods of having the surgery performed. The popular technique is the one-stage operation.
18. Go where you can best be treated by the law and others. Some people, including employers, find pleasure in discriminating against transsexuals.
19. There is no guarantee that anyone will be happy after completion of surgery. Statistics show that sex-reassignment surgery for transsexuals proves to be positive therapy for most.
20. If you are skeptical or have any doubts whatsoever about your sexual identity, consult a specialist or seek counseling immediately.

X

Dancing Paid Off

Since I was never a dancer while I was growing up, during my adolescent years, I considered the fun and pressures of exotic dancing by toying with the idea some five years before I had the male-to-female surgery change. Upon completion of my controversial operation in 1980, I didn't explode as if I were crazy; I just waited out almost another full year before approaching the nightlife. My very first adult entertaining job came about working under the name Angel, my dancing name. I worked in a peep-show booth in Delaware. My task was just running my mouth on a three-minute phone that was hooked up in each booth for the prospective customers. My employment lasted about three months, with me just making bundles of cash. I was going into my fifth week of working there when word got out from one of my co-workers that I was a "sex-change," and this big blabbermouth dancer was telling the customers she knew me prior to my date with the operating table, thinking this would keep them from coming into my booth and possibly she could keep all the business for herself. It turned out to be just the opposite. Mostly, all the customers wanted to see me in attempts to confirm the rumor and satisfy their own curiosity.

One man came into my booth and requested that I say nothing. Then he began to tell me that "Your friend next to



you told me you were once a guy." Then he smiled and said she was just jealous of me. I have had many vicious friends that wanted to make life as miserable as possible for me. They pulled sneaky little pranks to protect themselves from their fears and insecurities. Some of these biological women hate the thought of transsexual women receiving equal status and respect. While I worked many late nights and double shifts, I had a lot of juicy conversations with men. I mastered the ins and outs and ups and downs of horny men's fantasies. I learned how to be on guard for those really manipulative married fellows who seek out a night's fun. Some men would come out just to say all kinds of things they dared not say to their wives or girl friends. On several slow days, very rarely, a few married couples would breeze in for some tips to keep their marriage exciting.

The dancing business always allowed me to take pride in myself, and so I used this knowledge and my peep-show experience to ease me right on into stage work. I did one audition and was hired for three weekends to do a show with seven other girls at a well-known club in Aberdeen, Maryland. The army post was located within minutes from the club, bringing a booming business from hundreds of sex-starved GIs. They were like wild animals, very hot and lusting at every move, twist, or dip I made. Back then, exotic dancing was always in the headlines. Also, only a handful of black dancers were available. During my short, yet satisfying career as a dancer, I never ran into more than one other black dancer at any one given time or evening.

The road map for dancing sent me to eight states. I learned immediately that you can't stay in one place too long, because the same customers usually frequent the same business daily—if not, certainly on a weekly basis. Also, my dancing outfits, which I prefer to call costumes, had to be changed after every fifteen minutes or three songs. This type of situation required

variable amounts of money according to one's taste. I usually spent between thirty and seventy-five dollars per costume. Some were three pieces; others varied from five to seven pieces. You must realize you have to look your very best and remind yourself daily that competition never stops, for you or any other dancer. I already knew this, but once I did think about my breasts not being the size of grapefruits. Then another thought countered that one, and I happily recall more than once several guys saying, "All over, more than a mouthful is wasted." As long as I saw the men smiling and received my applause afterwards, I knew my just deed had been conquered by my audience of wild passion. Not once did I think of this job as being of a sexual figure. I just knew that my opportunity as a dancer would allow me to express myself and present a figure of art in a special format. Besides receiving money, I felt joy coming and stress leaving as I endured the shaking of my joy-box.

Believe it or not, I was never once faced with anyone calling me horrible names or singled out due to my secret surgery. This surgery business has always been a well-kept secret, unless someone at a dancing job knew me, and that has happened only once—thank goodness for that. Passing was never a problem for me. I am not a very large person nor do I wear clothes that are too revealing. I usually pass in the nude with pride, and with all due respect, my doctor did the ultimate job. Even my female co-workers never questioned my doctor's creative art and surgical skills. However, I do remember hearing remarks about my being black and a few racial slurs. For me, that was nothing, because I learned quickly enough not to let such thoughts filter through the loud music. Instead I'd get more enticing and throw out faster and sexier gestures, for it was all being done out of fun, even though I was still at work. My big smiles would make you forget this was my job and make you think that spinning around

in high-heels for pay was really this little "Angel's" fun time.

Music and dancing together for me brings about such intensive satisfaction, because they give me my special moments of making others happy and allow me to fit in and relate fully with my corrected sexual identity. A few might think that I might be doing this to try proving myself as a woman. No way, never under the sun! I already know who I am and where I am going in life. It takes much more, a thousand times more, than dancing to become a woman or what I've achieved, "a finer specimen of womanhood" at her best!

My years in the adult-entertainment field would have me give warning to any future prospective seekers of jobs in this profession. The jobs were indeed fun, but there were a couple of serious incidents. Men are never at their best when drinking, and a few got half-drunk, causing disturbances and interfering with the dancers. Also, there is a wise guy in every audience. These are the ones that show off their "weapons" or threaten your customers. Then there is the last group, who go around and think they will get to have you for the night by saying, "I was with your girl friend the other night. What about you tonight?" Or maybe they will say, "Can you outdo what your girl friend did?" I smile at things like that and keep going. But being in the presence of such situations is risky business, and making money in the fast lane isn't always ice cream and cookies.

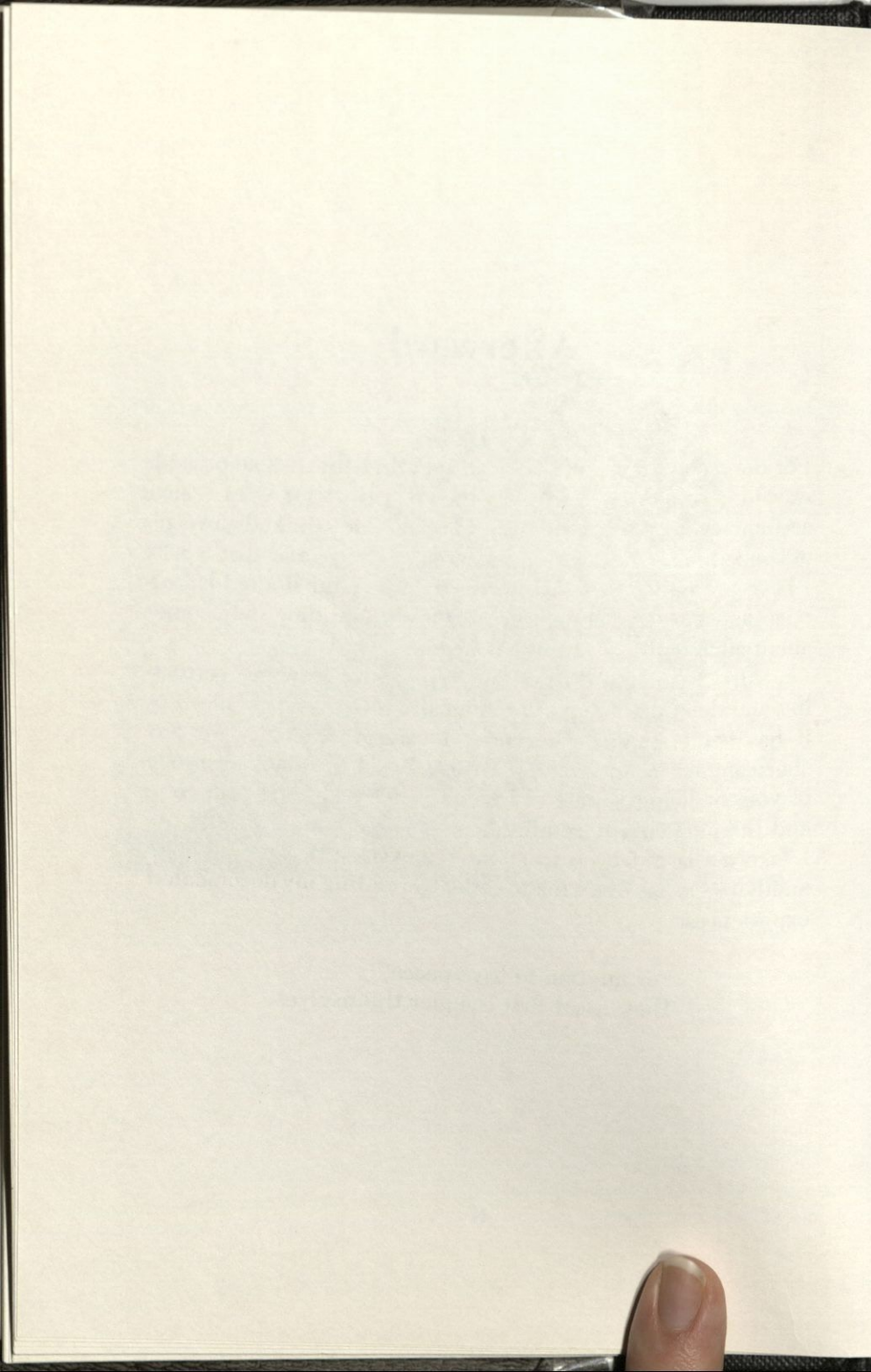


Afterword

For the record, some individuals feel that there is no possible way they would ever express their support for what I have accomplished up until today. Yet I receive letters and messages of concern for a deeper understanding daily, and that is why I have presented this in return—to ease your limited knowledge and burdens. For a greater understanding only comes about after soul-searching has begun.

After writing and rewriting, typing and retyping, correcting and deleting, I have intentionally narrowed my life. For it has yet to begin; therefore, I cannot apologize for any shortcomings as an amateur writer. But I do thank everyone of you for being a part of my life just by sharing your time and the moments it required to view my honest writing. As I take my last stretch from the typewriter, I can only hope another's life has been made easier by reading my documented experiences.

For anyone to have peace,
They must first conquer themselves.

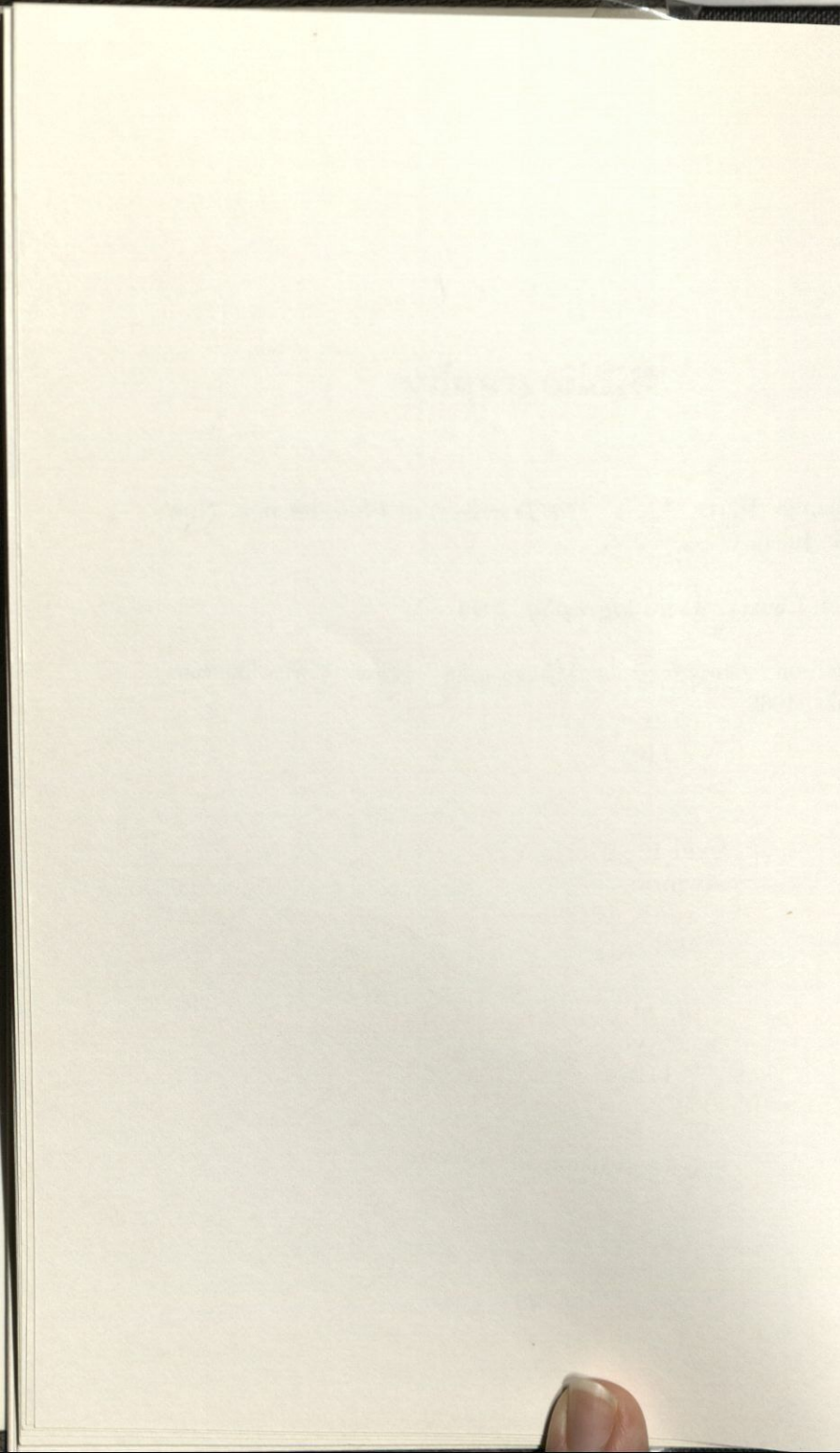


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About the Author

Born in Delaware in 1956, Sharon Davis underwent her sex-change operation in 1980. Today she is a successful model and lectures professionally on the transsexual experience, helping other transsexuals through her own experiences and trying to bring a better understanding of gender-dissatisfaction problems to everyone.

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