

Can You Ever Leave Behind the Evil Twin?

By Marti Abernathey

Published February 6, 2008 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/can-you-ever-leave-behind-the-evil-twin_n_308.htm

Abstract

Don't you just love that phrase, "used to be a man?" GARRICK Jacobson was in custody at Sydney's Surry Hills police station when he apparently discovered his girlfriend used to be a man. Within hours of being released on bail, he went to her apartment and started "belting the hell" out of her, Downing Centre [...]

Article

Don't you just love that phrase, "used to be a man?"

I GARRICK Jacobson was in custody at Sydney's Surry Hills police station when he apparently discovered his girlfriend used to be a man. Within hours of being released on bail, he went to her apartment and started "belting the hell" out of her, Downing Centre Local Court heard yesterday.

In this case, told in The Daily Telegraph and the Courier Mail, the phrase came from two Australian police officers who had learned from police records that Brigette Fell had come to them for help previously as a victim of (assumedly, since she disclosed this information to them at the time) anti-transgender violence, and the phrase was told to someone in police custody, who had also been dating Fell. The fact that she was post-operative by eleven years was apparently irrelevant to her boyfriend, as he punched her repeatedly in the face. Ultimately, she fell off her balcony, suffered a concussion and woke up covered in blood.

I'm not one who believes that every transgender person should be an advocate. I think we go through so much overwhelming \$#!t that if we ever get to the point that we want to simply be thought of as "woman" or "man," instead of the "woman who used to be a man" or the "man who used to be a woman," we deserve to be able to slip into that anonymity. "Stealth," as we call it, is not the enemy. Although advocates are very badly needed, we pay our dues just in becoming ourselves (and to be honest, we don't treat our advocates well enough to reward the unpaid, tireless work, either).

The trouble is, I'm not so sure that we can ever be certain that that hard-won stealth can ever be guaranteed. It worries me that post-operative women feel that surgery (or anything else) will assure them of all the same protections and respect of any other woman. It doesn't (the same thought doesn't often circulate among post-op transmen, unfortunately, because the surgery just isn't that well-developed, yet). Precedents still sit in the lawbooks in which post-operative transwomen have had marriages (and spousal inheritance) ruled void on account of their birth gender, thus reverting their marriages to "same sex" status and therefore invalid in the eyes of the law. Nothing is certain.

This all comes to mind while someone who has helped myself and others on a mailing list has mused about the possibility of living as a “heterosexual” (as she terms it), in stealth, and leaving the community largely behind. My initial feeling is that she should follow her heart. Although I think we’d miss the advice as she drifts away, she needs to do what is right for her.

But news like this -- or things like the various insults hurled at Calpernia Addams (also post-operative) as she prepares for the debut of Transamerican Love Story -- always leaves a disquieting feeling over this debate. Can anyone ever be assured of reaching the “end” of that transgender journey? Maybe things will go well and no one will ever raise issue or even find out about that “evil twin” of the past. Maybe. And I don’t mean to hurl this at HBS women as an “I told you so,” because the fact is, when we reach the end of our journeys (wherever that is, as far as I’m concerned), we should have the right to be respected as the person we are, and not judged by a “used to be.” The “used to be” was never a fault of our choice or design.

But it is apparent that today, in 2008, in the shadow of the looming RealID, the backlash in Gainesville FL or Gaithersburg MD, and the story of an Australian transwoman who was seriously assaulted over a “used to be,” that we can’t expect GRS surgery or any other avenue toward stealth to provide any guarantee for our future.

For those who choose that path, I wish you the best of fortunes. In the meantime, those who remain behind still have work to do.

(to be crossposted later to DentedBlueMercedes)

Suggested citation

Marti Abernathey. "Can You Ever Leave Behind the Evil Twin?." TransAdvocate, February 6, 2008.
https://www.transadvocate.com/can-you-ever-leave-behind-the-evil-twin_n_308.htm