

## SOMETIMES THE CLOTHES DO NOT MAKE THE MAN

The five most stressful life events are supposedly the death of a loved one, divorce, moving house, major illness or job loss and Daniel was going through 3 out of 5 and never felt better.

Losing the job he hated had come as no surprise. It was almost a relief when he was called into his manager's office (or rather, received an ominous Zoom invitation) for a Monday morning meeting to discuss performance.

"This has nothing to do with your er, private life ...." his manager had said, clearing his throat nervously. Daniel had almost felt sorry for the old boy, who was trying to avoid the elephant in the room. He wasn't surprised that even in 2020 there were still some unspoken taboos. After clumsy attempts at "workplace education" which had ended with an excruciating workshop on gender diversity, his company had obviously decided enough was enough.

But strangely Daniel only felt freedom - the kind he had hoped for 20 years ago when he tried to tell his mum that he was a girl trapped inside a boy's body. The horror in her eyes stopped any further discussion and years passed before he could face his thoughts again. So he didn't – instead he followed the route expected of him.

He should have felt joy on his wedding day, but all he had felt was a cold knot of fear. He deeply regretted the pain he had caused Sue but when he finally admitted he was transgender she said he had only confirmed her suspicions. They agreed to tell the children, Naomi and Joe, as they were home from university, and it was becoming harder to hide the separate bedrooms.

"Thank God it's only that" Naomi had said when Daniel told them that he was going to fully transition, "We thought one of you was sick or something."

"No, no one's sick, but living a lie is not fair on me or Mum. And although I won't be living here, it won't change how much I love you."

"I remember a boy at school going through it," Joe said, "he had gender reassignment."

"It's really *realignment*, not *reassignment* as I'm getting back to who I should be", Daniel replied "But I don't wish it happened sooner as I wouldn't have you two"

Joe nodded thoughtfully before asking "Will we have to call you 'Mum?'"

"No you already have a perfectly good mum" Daniel smiled. "We'll work something out"

He was thankful that the children seemed fine although he knew there was a long road ahead., pulling up outside his new house, the words of a song came into his mind:

*I think there's something you should know  
I think it's time I told you so  
There's something deep inside of me  
There's someone else I've got to be  
Take back your picture in a frame  
Take back your singing in the rain  
I just hope you understand  
Sometimes the clothes do not make the man*

**"Freedom 90". George Michael**

**496 words**