

As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl

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Tells the story of a man whose botched circumcision as a baby and subsequent surgical alteration to a female was mistakenly used as an argument for the success of such procedures.

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Review

Once you begin reading *As Nature Made Him*, a mesmerizing story of a medical tragedy and its traumatic results, you absolutely won't want to put it down. Following a botched circumcision, a family is convinced to raise their infant son, Bruce, as a girl. They rename the child Brenda and spend the next 14 years trying to transform him into a her. Brenda's childhood reads as one filled with anxiety and loneliness, and her fear and confusion are present on nearly every page concerning her early childhood. Much of her pain is caused by Dr. Money, who is presented as a villainous medical man attempting to coerce an unwilling child to submit to numerous unpleasant treatments.

Reading over interviews and reports of decisions made by this doctor, it's difficult to contain anger at the widespread results of his insistence that natural-born gender can be altered with little more than willpower and hormone treatments. The attempts of his parents, twin brother, and extended family to assist Brenda to be happily female are touching--the sense is overwhelmingly of a family wanting to do "right" while being terribly misled as to what "right" is for her. As Brenda makes the decision to live life as a male (at age 14), she takes the name David and begins the process of reversing the effects of estrogen treatments. David's ultimately successful life - a solid marriage, honest and close family relationships, and his bravery in making his childhood public - bring an uplifting end to his story. Equally fascinating is the latest segment of the longtime nature/nurture controversy, and the interviews of various psychological researchers and practitioners form a larger framework around David's struggle to live as the gender he was meant to be.

Jill Lightner, amazon.com