

Michelle's fabulous fun-filled frolic!!

Its complicated, life is complicated. On paper it would seem so simple; we are born we are given a gender and we live with that gender and life goes on. But what happens if the gender we are given is not simple, not guaranteed and not binary? What if there is something inside you that says you can be fluid, you can be the gender other than the one given to you?

Time spent with Ophelia is about dealing with this complexity of gender. For an ever so short time you are in a friendly, non-judgmental environment where you can play, escape, talk, debate, dream, explore and maybe and just maybe experience the opportunity to live the life that little (female) voice inside you tells you that you can and should!

But back to Michelle's experience!

I was frightened and excited I was travelling to begin an important experience, then the plane was delayed for an hour, thanks JetStar!

Finally I did arrive at Ophelia's house, we met talked and due to the delay began a transformation. I had splurged out on the overnight experience and this was just now beginning. I really needed this after a number of months of isolation I had many questions and many issues to share.

The transformation was quick but what came from it was magical after having struggled for months with the basics of make-up and at last I could see that Michelle was a beautiful woman. This was exhilarating and affirmed all my concerns and doubts that existed! The formal make-up lesson would come later.

We were working to a deadline due to an appointment at a small jazz club in town. I was quite excited this was my first real experience in public Michelle was to be *stepping out!* As we were moving so quick the nerves weren't overwhelming. We left for the club, arrived and entered and all the ideas I had of people staring, making comment (re: the female toilet scene in Transparent) where all for nothing. The night out was a complete joy. I was very lucky as there was Ophelia's partner Cathy (a transgender person) and another of Ophelia's very satisfied client's Rochelle. Everyone was wonderful company with great music. The night was made all the more special for the opportunity to use the woman's toilets. While not high on people's list of life changing events it becomes a milestone when trying to establish your female identity on your very first night in public. I went to bed that night a happy WOMAN!

The day after the night before was relaxed and amazing. There was time to do things and further explore. I was still in make-up so we all had breakfast talked and then did some amazing things that involved me going in public again. The first was to go to Ophelia's local shopping village for what I thought was to be a shared shopping experience. When I arrived the school-teacher in Ophelia switched on and my best lesson would be one the I learnt myself. So it was to be, I left the safety of the car I made my OWN way down the street while Ophelia took photos from the car like some private detective following a philandering wife. I must admit the experience was

liberating. Again no long stares, no comments just me, Michelle, a woman like any other woman (albeit 6'2" and 110kgs). This was a great lesson in confidence, knowing that I could comfortably go out in public and no one would really care, and no one did care. However, I am sure that there were one or two elderly gentlemen with a twinkle in their eye hey I feel I am entitled to a little dream!

When we finally returned to Ophelia's place there was a nice spontaneous walk in the park, which was quite busy and again fantastic to confront people as a woman. When we did get home there was a great little make-up lesson that was enormously beneficial and conversation during which we lost time.

As with my arrival my departure was very quick, which was good in a way as there was no time for long goodbyes or to become too upset at having to pack Michelle away again for another occasion that would arise god knows when!

My short time as Michelle with Ophelia and her partner was truly magical. The opportunity to be a WOMAN for all of that time, to be spoken to as a woman, to dress as a woman, go to bed as a woman and wake-up as a woman was liberating, confidence building and eye opening. Best of all it has helped me understand the nature of my own situation so that I could begin to develop strategies for dealing with it and hopefully be able to include those close to me who must be included for the journey to continue.

For all this I am truly indebted to Ophelia and her partner Cathy for what they have provided Michelle. If you see her website and are thinking of visiting her, don't think DO. You will never regret the experience. It is something that you MUST do for your won piece of mind and those close to you!