

# Insurance company employee wants to perform in

## Night and day

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During the day Michael looks like any other 22-year-old male. He has short brown hair and wears a turtleneck, blue jeans and black boots.

Stains of foundation makeup around his collar are the only clues of a lifestyle that few of his friends know about.

Michael wants to be a drag queen.

"I always thought female impersonating was interesting when I was younger," Michael says.

Drag queens are female impersonators — entertainers who imitate women in dance performances, he says.

Michael won't tell his last name because he doesn't want to be harassed for his choice to lead a gay lifestyle.

For Michael, an Omahan, drag is quite a contrast from day life. He works full time at an insurance company.

"I wear ties everyday."

But it's not daytime. It's night and Michael and his friends have just finished posing for pictures. He's wearing a platinum wig, a sheer black tank top, tight red leather pants that lace up the sides, panty hose underneath and high-heeled 1970s clogs.

Although he's wearing women's clothes, Michael says his outfit tonight isn't drag. These are just his going-out clothes.

Michael is picky about the distinction between dressing in drag and in his night attire. Drag is a totally different look — it's more real, he says.

When Michael dresses in drag, he

wears foam fanny pads, hip pads to give him an hourglass figure and artificial breasts equipped with nipples.

"I've gone to buy cigarettes and have had guys say, 'Hey, baby,' and stuff like that. It's amusing when you get reactions like that. . . . You know that you've fooled them."

Drag queens are different from cross-dressers, too, he says.

Cross dressers "don't look as real as the drag queens do. They don't look all glamorous, you know, all put together.

"They just dress that way because — I really don't know why. I mean, personally, I don't like it. It's nothing I would do."

Michael talks as he undresses in a friend's house. There, he changes out of his night outfit. He throws down his clothes next to a pile of wigs. A black bra is pinned to the bedroom wall. Pictures of men in women's clothing clutter the room.

The tools of Michael's physical transformation lie about the room, but, Michael says, dressing in drag is much more than a change in outward appearance.

"I've noticed a lot of drag queens are different people when they get in the makeup and the wig and the little outfit.

"They become their drag name. They become this female."

But Michael doesn't wish he were a woman.

"I like being a boy too much," he says as he wipes foundation from his face.

"Once I take these clothes off, I am a boy. I have a dick."

Michael says he dresses in drag only when he's performing.

He's preparing for his first public drag-queen performance May 3 in "Closet Ball," a show for beginners sponsored by an Omaha bar.

"It's to give you your start. Your first chance to perform," Michael says.

Michael talks about his upcoming debut as he takes off his tank top, revealing his artificial tan. He pulls a white turtleneck over his head.

Michael says he's anxious for his first chance to perform. He enjoys imitating women, he says.

"I'm friends with a lot of the drag queens and, you know, they like it," he says. "They think it's fun. I think it looks really fun."

Michael says that at Closet Ball he will walk out on stage in "regular attire" — dress pants, blazer and a tie in front of mostly homosexual spectators. He will leave the stage as a man.

"They'll see my appearance as a boy," he says.

But the next time he comes back on stage, the crowd will see Michael dressed as a woman.

"I'm going to be dancing and moving and lip-synching," he says, taking off his wig and revealing his own short, brown, almost yuppie hairstyle.

It takes a lot of guts to perform as a drag queen, he says. Michael describes himself as anything but inhibited.

"Nothing really bothers me," Michael says as he rubs a washcloth over his face. "I'll do anything. I really don't give a shit."

But still, Michael says he's nervous about the performance.

"As it gets closer, I start thinking a little



Photos by Al Schaben

Clockwise from top: Michael displays his tattoo that he says is a homosexual symbol.

Michael, dressed as a drag queen, shows a little attitude. Even though he wears women's clothing to the bars, Michael says dressing in drag is different. Drag is more glamorous, he says.

Michael stands on a men's bathroom urinal while Zach makes last minute additions to his wardrobe in the background before posing for photographs.

