



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW : THE LIFE OF A SIDESHOW PERFORMER

Who has never seen a freak show or heard about it ? We present you here an unprecedented article on a Freak's life, revealing the cruelty hidden in the performances. You will discover the behind-the-scenes of those sideshows. With the story-telling of the life of Desiree Dupree, a three-breasted woman, as a Freak, we understand the difficult daily life she lives due to her malformation. Her heart-breaking testimony offers us a new vision of the shows.

Before we start, you might already know the author, Aglaé Lorse, for her famous investigation on the case of the Rosenbergs. Young reporter in France and all over the world, she is one of our best journalists. Her career begins soon after the end of the Second World War. She started in small press agencies before The Owl's Eye recruited her. Her first success was on the Women's Rights story in England's History. Lately, she has been the first to interview the men who climbed Mount Everest for the first time. She also wrote an article on the nomination of Queen Elizabeth II and her Coronation, on June. On a different theme, she delivers this month « the hardest interview of [her] career », she confides.



« **AL — Hello. May you start this interview about your life as what we call a « freak » by telling us a little more about your childhood ? And how did you live your difference ?**

DD — Well, when I was born, my disability was a shame for my parents. They named me Derek and raised me as a boy. I grew up hiding my body at all cost. After puberty, it became more visible. I was some kind of hermaphrodite monster. Even the teachers looked down at me. The girls in my school were mocking at me and the boys pushed me in the corridors, knocking me, throwing my stuff on the floor, all the kind of things a child would do to a person that is alone, and very different. The teachers also never said anything when the same group of pupils harassed me. I had no friends and my parents were not very supportive, I was on my own, actually. There were rumors that I had three breasts. Some boys wanted to check, so they beat me up and stripped me naked in the playground in front of a horde of curious pupils. They laughed for a long time and left me almost naked outside. It was awful.

AL — How did all of this end ? What event made this stop ?

DD — That nightmare came to an end when I ran away from my parent's house. That was after my first suicide attempt.

It is my sister that found me unconscious in our bedroom and called for help. At the hospital, neither my mother nor my dad came. Only my sister stayed with me. That is why, after she died in a car accident, nothing was holding me back from leaving. So, that is what I did.

I did not care of where I was going, the only thing that mattered was to be as far as the money I had saved allowed me to go. I stopped in a town near Wilmington, in Pennsylvania.

« **I stayed there as a beggar girl who had nothing. »**

DD — And I, actually, was nothing. A young black girl in the streets of a small town with no money, no parents, who sleeps on cardboards, I was part of the background of the city. No-one paid attention to me. And ... I just turned 16 when an old drunk man destroyed the remnant of self-esteem I had for myself in the dark of night in a deserted alley. »

At this moment, we both remain silent a minute and made a pause for her to collect herself. I made her know that we could stop or we could meet another day. I gave her the time she wanted to continue this interview in serenity, peace and respect for her memories. She has been the one to wish to take over.

« DD — A month after that event, a circus went to the city next door. I showed up and the director took me as an artist and I was happy. But at the end of the day, I did not know that I was leaving one hell for a worst place. At first, I did not realized that I was not worth more than the other animals in cages. My wage was a misery, I slept on a carpet in a tent far away from the others and even if I was used to it, the other real artists slept in caravans. On the first night show, the director made me wear a suit where my chest was barely covered by the fabric. I was supposed to just smiled and I had to « let myself be », just like a doll. They did my makeup and I went on stage at my turn with a metal necklace attached to a chain, as if I was a monkey. The director announced me as a freak. Some people gasped, their faces looked disgusted, some men were interested and looked at me weirdly. I remember that a mother covered the eyes of her little boy. It hurt me a lot.

« **But I smiled the whole show, I had not any other choice. »**

AL — Were the circus' artists nice to you ?

DD — All of the others hated me. The circus trainer and the gymnast girl nicknamed me « Monkey », the juggler was laughing at me each time we saw each-other. »