

EX-HUSBAND

Magazine

*Turn that cold,
distant ex into a...*



*Hopeless
Romantic*

*Favorite RomCom?
All of them, thanks.*

*Favorite hobby?
Planning his
wedding to the
guy he hasn't
even met.*

*Relationships are his
everything: tips, gossip,
friends, celebrities,
strangers, he can't
even!*

*Constantly
fantasizes
about the
way he
meets his
soulmate.*

*Falls in
love so
easily!*

*Lives for
flowers,
presents,
compliments
and kisses.*

“Smoke, fire and onions!” Markus called as he slid a pair of his signature burgers across the counter. The excited young couple took their greasy, glorious food and hurried over to one of the nearby picnic tables.



While the hungry young Gen Y savored not just their delicious food, but the pleasure of having just scored on social media by eating at the hippest food truck in New Amsterdam, Markus moved on, taking the next order, going back to the smoking grill, pulling a basket of golden brown onion rings from the deep fryer. He worked non-stop during the lunch rush, dropping into a zone where he wasn't even aware of anything really other than the thing he was doing in that moment, that second. He lived, when he was busy, in the moment, and just like all the corny books promised, it was a gift.

The faces were a blur, a relentless march of customers, and though he grinned and greeted and was known as much for his charm as his cooking, Markus didn't really see them or remember them. It was as the lunch crowd started to peter out and Markus began to come down from his buzz that **she** appeared. He'd just slid a Juicy Lucy across the counter to an

unusually tall and stocky man, who stepped aside to reveal a grinning mouth topped frigid eyes.

As **she** stepped forward, a cloud drifted across the sun, and what had been a bright, sunny scene turned cold and shadowy.

“Oh, hell,” Markus said. “I told you. It’s over.”

“I didn’t come to try and get you back,” Ava said. “I know it’s over between us.”

“Then, you came for an order of French Fries?” Markus said. His experience with Ava told him she was not ever over anything.

“No. I just wanted to see you one last time before you change,” Ava said, looking at him with an almost wistful look in her eyes. “I just came to say goodbye.”

Markus began to feel uneasy. She sounded more nuts than usual, and he started to wonder if she had a gun in that purse of hers. “Well, goodbye, then,” he said. Looking past her, he called out, “Next.”

Ava started to step aside, then stopped, looked back over her shoulder and said. “Oh, and I would be happy to help you pick out your wedding dress.”

“What the hell?” Markus said, not sure he’d heard her right. Wedding dress?

Ava began to snicker, then laugh, then cackle as she walked away.

Markus went back to work. While he zoned out during the lunch rush, he zoned in during the dinner rush, as in he now paid very close attention to the customers, especially the women. A good looking guy, he’d always enjoyed playing the field, and now that he was an Internet celebrity to boot, he was scoring left and right—which, hey, maybe had also been a small part of the reason Ava ended up filing for divorce.

Okay. Probably the main reason.

That night, Markus stumbled into his apartment, a greasy bag of burgers in one hand, his other arm around the waist of a certain Courtney. “Honey, I’m home!” He called out in an ironic voice.

His dog, Sam, lifted his head and raised an eyebrow, but didn’t otherwise acknowledge the return of his boss. Once he’d managed his barely there affection, he laid his chin back down on his paws and closed his eyes.

“Oh, my God,” Courtney said. “He’s so cute.” She went over to pet him.

“Sam the man,” Markus laughed. It was true, he decided, that dogs took on the personalities of their owners. He’d never been much for the exaggerated shows of affection. It was all fake, as far as he was concerned, and it had been one of these reasons that he and Ava had ended up divorcing, besides the fact that—well, we already covered that, didn’t we?

Ava had turned out to be a needy, clingy drama queen who constantly wanted him to be more, what she called, “romantic.” To him, it was stupid, and he refused. “I pay the bills, babe. That’s how I say I love you.”

“But I have needs,” she’d objected, to which he’d just rolled his eyes and kept rolling his eyes until the day he’d been served with the divorce papers. Hell. The alimony was killing him.

He looked around his cramped one bedroom apartment, decorated in the glorious barroom chic Ava had refused to let him have in their old house—neon beer signs, the Nordic Bikini Team from the old beer ads, more neon beer signs, a framed and autographed football jersey.

His place was cozy enough, and fine since he was never home, but it galled him to no end to think about Ava swanning around the three-bedroom house he’d bought with *his* money, but which the courts for some stupid reason gave to her even though it was **HIS**.

Courtney finished fawning over Sam and joined Markus at the kitchen counter. She had a pretty face, big tits. He figured she would be fun in bed, and as they’d gotten to know each other they’d agreed relationships were for suckers. She was just his type. He pulled the burgers out of the grease stained bag and spread them on the counter along with a basket of fries. The air smelled of salt and grease, just like his food truck.

Courtney sat down, grabbed one of the burgers and took a big bite, sighing rapturously as she chewed and swallowed. “Oh, my God. That is so damn good.”

“I like a woman who isn’t afraid to eat,” Markus said. “Beer? Wine?”

“Oh, God, beer. Who the hell drinks wine with a burger?” Courtney said.

My freaky ex, Markus thought. My freaky ex.

They ate, drank and then made their way to the bedroom. Courtney attacked sex the same way she attacked her burgers—like a ravenous dog. It was fast and furious. Intense, and Markus was not disappointed. After, Courtney rolled onto her side and immediately fell asleep. Markus yawned and rolled the other way, drifting off to sleep himself. This was the life. You met, you fucked, you moved on. Why had he ever gotten married, anyway?



EX REVENGE IS A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND
HUSBAND
MAGAZINE

MISS-OGONY!
TURN THAT SEXIST
INTO A FEMI-MISS!

HE FEELS COMPELLED
TO GET A WOMEN'S
STUDIES DEGREE!

NEVER WEARS
A BRA-- BUT
WISHES HE
COULD!

CAN'T STOP
QUOTING
THE FEMININE
MYSTIQUE

ONLY READS
BOOKS BY
WOMEN!
ALWAYS
THINKING
ABOUT
RUTH
BADER
GINSBURG!

DESPERATELY
NEEDS TO
PROVE HE'S
A SEXUALLY
LIBERATED
WOMAN!

OBSESSIVELY
ATTENDS
SEMINARS!

4TH WAVE
FEMINIST--
HE'S SOO
ALL ABOUT
SOCIAL
MEDIA!

BONUS!
GIRL POWER
POLE
DANCING!!

MS. MAGAZINE
LIFETIME
SUBSCRIBER!

MEET THE FORMER CONSTRUCTION WORKER WHO
NOW BLOGS ABOUT HIS PERIOD!

Meanwhile, his ex-wife Ava was up suffering another night of insomnia. She'd had trouble sleeping for years now, going back to the lonely nights of her marriage when Markus was constantly coming home so late, or not coming home at all. He deserved what she was about to do to him, she thought, as she picked up the mysterious magazine that had arrived at her doorstep: Ex-Husband Magazine, the cover read. Turn that Ex into a Femimiss.

That issue had discussed turning a sexist ex-husband into a feminist and even featured stories about supposed true-life transformations. It had been enough to lead Ava to meet with a woman named Tatiana who claimed, absurdly, to have magic and the power to transform men into women.

Ava mostly didn't believe the woman's wild claims, though she wanted to believe. Despite her doubts, she'd agreed to try out Tatiana's services on a money back guarantee basis. Now, feeling a little foolish, she held a cold, stone rock in her hand, a rock carved with eldritch symbols. Tatiana called it a scrying stone and assured Ava she could use it to watch Markus via some kind of magic portal.

Ava snorted. How ridiculous. Yet, she squeezed the stone and thought of Markus. The stone began to warm, then glow, and a shimmering portal did, in fact appear, but at first it was all just swirling colors. Ava rolled her eyes. She'd been a fool to...

Wait. Gradually, the swirling colors cleared and there was Markus snoring away. Ava shook her head. It didn't seem possible, but the image was so real. Magic **was** real, and if this portal was real, maybe the rest of that crazy witch's ramblings were true as well. There was only one way to find out. She decided to make a change. Just to see what would happen.

What should I change? She wondered. Trying to get ideas, she picked up her tablet and opened it up, a little embarrassed to remember that she'd been looking at wedding looks on PinThis, thinking about one day when she might get married again. She was about to close the window when she took a closer look at the bride. She had full lips, really big lips that seemed almost too big for her face.

Thinking Markus would look cute with lips like that, she imagined him with big, plump lips, the kind guys liked to call "cock sucking lips," and then she giggled as his lips swelled until he had a kissable mouth, just like the woman in the picture. Well, almost just like the woman. She also had brown lipstick. Could she make a change like that? She wondered. She imagined Markus with fashionably brown lips and, yes, his lips looked like they'd been painted with the same glossy lipstick as the bride.



This is unbelievable, Ava thought. I can do anything. I can make him anything I want. She got up and did a little dance, watching Markus sleeping so peacefully with his pillowy brown lips, having no idea what was awaiting him.

Markus woke to the sound of the shower running, the peppery smell of Hammer Blaze body wash wafting from the bathroom. Good, he thought, stretching. The girl, what was her name? She was already up, getting ready to head out. He was pretty good at reading women, but you never knew when some nutty girl was going to get clingy and want to do brunch.

He pulled on his pajamas and headed out to the kitchen to make some coffee. Filling up the kettle, he decided to go with Costa Rican, poured a pile of beans into the grinder and fired it up, leaning down to whiff the tart, volcanic grounds. Soon, steam rose from his coffee mug, but as he sipped, he made a strange face and brought his fingers to his lips. "What the hell?" His lips felt odd, were they swollen?

Ava chuckled.

Markus wondered if maybe he'd had an allergic reaction to something and was about to take a look in the mirror when the girl came out of the bedroom. "Hey," she said, then did a double take, noticing that the dude she'd hooked up with looked like he was wearing glossy lipstick and had gotten collagen injections. Had he looked like that last night?

“So, I really need to get going and—” Markus said, planning to send his score out the door. Before he could finish the thought, Ava made a change. Suddenly, Courtney-- Yes, that was her name, Courtney-- she started to have this glow to her, and remembering their love making the night before, Markus felt his heart skip a beat. She was really great, cool, sexy. At the thought that she was about to walk out of his life forever he felt an icy pain in his heart.

“Say,” he said. “What say we get go get breakfast? I know this great place. We could hang, get to know each other.”

Courtney took a step back and made a mock cross with her fingers. “Hell, no,” she said, chuckling. “That might lead to a relationship, and we agreed last night that relationships fucking suck.”



Markus felt like she'd kicked him in the stomach. "I usually feel the same way, but there's something special about you..."

"Um, bye," Courtney said, turning and running for the door, mumbling, "oh, my God, he's a clinger!"

"Call me!" Markus shouted as the door slammed.

Markus struggled with whether he should run after her. There were sparks, a certain crazy energy between them. Love! He was sure of it. What if she was his soulmate, and this was his one chance to—

"What the fuck is wrong with me?" Markus said, shaking his head. Soul mate? That was chick flick bullshit. Soul mate. He shook his head, then took another sip of coffee, once more thrown off by how puffy his lips felt. Grabbing his phone, he put on the mirror function and—

"Ahhh!"

He almost dropped the phone in shock, took another look, putting his fingertips to his soft, plump lips. "Am I wearing lipstick?" He wondered, rubbing his lips with the back of his hand. Nothing. Fuck. Later, he stood at the soap sink after taking a shower, trying to use soap to clean whatever was on his lips off, but nothing. He looked at the time. He had to get to his truck soon. Damn. What the hell had Courtney done to him?

Markus felt self-conscious all day about his glossy lips, and he noticed quite a few of his customers gave him funny looks, though he couldn't be sure if it was because he looked like he was wearing lipstick, or he just looked different with these pillowy lips.

He was pretty sure, though it was more a feeling than anything else, that less people seemed to be taking selfies while he was at the window. Worse, there was something seriously wrong with his head. All day long, anytime a couple showed up at his window, he found himself rating how cute they looked together, evaluating the likelihood they would make it—and almost none of them were going to make it, he thought, feeling a little sad about it.

"Love is so brief," he sighed. "Forgetting is so long."

The day was getting late, the tall building already casting shadows as the sun sank in the West. Markus hadn't picked anyone up, but maybe that was okay. He felt tired and didn't know what the heck to think about his lips. He could use a night off, by which he meant he'd drink a couple beers, spend an hour on a porn site and then yank the doodle dandy.



A couple showed up, and Markus smiled, but the guy was waaaay too tall for her, and while she was on point with her fashion choices, the guy looked like he was stuck in some kind of 90s grunge time warp. Come on, Markus thought, barely able to hide his disdain for the slob. Don't you realize how much you're disrespecting your girl when you dress like that? Another doomed couple, he decided as he put their order together.

Opposites attract? Sure, but they never last, Markus thought, shaking his head. They never last.

As Markus went to the grill and started on their order, he could only shrug with shame at where his mind was. He wondered, seriously, if he should see a shrink. Something was wrong with him.

When he got home, Markus took a shower to wash off the grease off his body, put on his pajamas, grabbed his tablet and a bottle of beer, going right to his favorite porn site and zooming in on a gorgeous girl with perfect

tits. Oh, yeah, Markus thought sipping his beer, giving his dick a squeeze as he let his eyes roam up and down his slender body. Damn, she was fine.

Ava made a change.

Markus sat up, set his beer down and stared at the girl's face. She was pretty, of course, but that's not what caught his attention. There was a sadness in her eyes—her smile did nothing to hide it. "Oh, no," Markus sighed as he began to imagine a life story for this poor girl who was, after all, someone's daughter. Her parents had died when she was young, he decided, and after years being abused by awful foster parents, she'd become hardened and ended up falling in with a cruel pimp who probably got her hooked on drugs.

"No!" He shouted dramatically, throwing his tablet across the room as he covered his eyes with his arm. It was all so wrong. Porn was bad. So bad and, besides, it was such a sad, pale substitute for what all people wanted and needed: a loving relationship. What was porn compared to a cuddle?

Markus froze, once again aware that his thoughts had gone crazy, that he was thinking things he'd he never thought, things he was pretty sure most straight men never thought. Maybe I should see a shrink, he thought again, confused, unnerved by all the mushy lameness he was experiencing.

Ava smiled, and a new thought popped into his brain. Maybe I should watch *Casablanca*? Ava had tried to get him to watch it the whole time they were married, but it was old, black and white and *romantic*: three things known to totally suck.

Yet, what the heck? He just felt like watching it all of a sudden. Yes, he decided, he would watch *Casablanca*, have a beer or two. He wanted to, so very badly. So, maybe it was a chick flick, but guys could watch a chick flick now and then. That wasn't weird, right?

Ava snickered. It was so funny to make these changes in her ex. As he watched *Casablanca*, she decided to make more changes to his face. It would be fun, she decided, to give him a sexy, beautiful feminine face. Using the same bride as a model as she'd used for his lips, she gave Markus long, curly lashes, and then a pert, cute little nose, plus sculpted eyebrows with a feminine flair. She clapped. He looked adorable, and then

she decided he needed some accessories and a pair of studs glittered in his ears.

Markus didn't even notice. He was totally enthralled with Casablanca. The main couple, Rick and Elsa, were so perfect together! Ava was finding she loved the gap between when she'd changed him, in this case making him cute and pretty, but he didn't know, remaining blissfully unaware of his vanishing masculinity. Waiting for him to discover the changes she'd made just elevated the thrill.



“Oh, I hope Rick and Else get together,” Markus whispered as he watched, leaning forward, eyes wide. “They belong together. They do.”

Fog drifted across the runway, and the grinding, whirring sound of a prop plane filled Markus’ apartment. “If he leaves and you’re not on that plane,” Rick said to Ilsa. “You’ll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.”

Markus bat his long, pretty lashes as the tears rolled down his cheeks. Oh! No! How sweet was Rick to put the happiness of the woman he loved before his own? He cried and cried, and he didn’t hate himself for it right away, but soon and then for the rest of the night.



Once he’d cried himself out, Markus got himself together, cleaned up and headed to the bathroom to brush his teeth. He looked in the mirror. A woman looked back at him. He screamed, and his world went black.

Bonus

