

Ex-Husband Magazine 6: Hippie Chick

By

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Eric grinned as he looked over the crunchy granola protestors gathered on the sidewalk with their stupid, hand drawn signs with such clever and intelligent slogans as “Save the Garden” and “Plants before Profits.” Scanning the faces of the usual hippie losers, he smirked when he saw the face of his ex-wife, Dorothy. Of course, she’d be there. The hypocrite. His developments paid her alimony, but she was still “opposed” to them.

“Hey,” He said, leaning forward and tapping the limo driver on the shoulders. “How about driving down the sidewalk and crushing all those environmental wackos to death?”

“Good one, Mr. Carmine,” Jesus said, faking a smile. He’d learned to just play along with Mr. Carmine’s “jokes.” Instead of murdering a dozen people, he decided to pull up in front of the large, open corner lot, currently filled with small gardens and adorned with a sign that read, “New Amsterdam Community Gardens– Garter District.”

Eric climbed out of the limo. There was a crowd of about 100 people on his side, and they began applauding. He’d paid about 60 of them, roughly 20 worked in his office, and the rest were bankers, politicians, media. Eric took a megaphone from his assistant Mandy and climbed onto a ladder.

“Save. The. Garden. Save. The Garden.” Came the muted chants from across the four lane road. The protestors brandished their signs. Eric sneered. How could these people think their pathetic display would have any impact at all? He already had all the permits, and, besides, standing

right next to the bottom of the ladder was The Mayor, his close personal friend.

“I want to welcome everyone to the ground breaking ceremony for the latest luxury tower from Eric Prince Elegance Ltd. I even want to welcome those sallow hippies over there,” he shouted to bought laughter. “Hey, do



yourself a favor and eat some meat already! You look like a skeleton convention!” More laughs.

“Today,” he said, going back to his prepared speech, “we begin to turn this barren, abandoned lot, into a thriving new luxury building that will serve as an anchor to revitalize this blighted community and restore it to greatness!”

Cheers!

Some of the actual community members, who’d been forced to stop and wait as both the street and sidewalks were closed for the brief

ceremony, shocked their heads. Blighted? Man, I live here! Most of them knew that wouldn’t be for long. When it came to so-called urban renewal, it was always code for, get rid of the poor people.

When Eric finished his speech, he nodded to the backhoe operator, who shifted gears. The huge, yellow machine belched black smoke into the sky and the huge teeth of the shovel swung, smashing into the community garden sign and breaking it into splinters. Workers now marched one to

the grounds and began to destroy all the little garden beds that had been created.

Across the street, some of the protestors screamed in rage, while others wept and hugged. The garden had been a part of the community for over 30 years and back before gentrification when no one could even give away property in the Garland District, they'd begged the city to give it to the community, only to be ignored or told to fill out yet another form, to go see someone in yet another nearly impossible to find city office.

Dorothy, for her part, marched across the street, pushed her way past the circle of admirers surrounding Eric and planted herself right in front of him. He looked down at her and shook his head. When he'd married her she'd been a budding corporate lawyer, always perfectly dressed. Now she stood in front of him with what to him looked like filthy hair, no make-up and wearing what looked like a sack covered in weird patterns.

"Hey, Dot," he said. He knew she hated being called Dot. He looked around at the people who'd gathered— the mayor, lieutenant governor, head of Imperial Bank. "My ex," he said, "and a cautionary tale of what happens when you smoke too much weed."

Dorothy just smiled. She was into practicing total non-violence.

"Did you want to say something?" Eric said, looking at his watch. "Some of us actually have jobs."

"Karma," Dorothy said, and then she turned and walked away.

"Too much weed," Eric said, shaking his head.

Dorothy had not been expecting to be offered an opportunity to serve as the agent of karma, she simply believed in it. That night, however, after volunteering at the soup kitchen, she came home to find a magazine wrapped in black plastic in the narrow mailbox on the ground floor of the

collective where she lived. Other than the black plastic, it was nothing unusual. Going to so many events, belonging to so many causes, she was always getting mail from different organizations, which she accepted as a necessary evil despite—ugh!-- all the paper they used.

She absent-mindedly tore the plastic open as she climbed the stairs to her third-floor apartment—elevators wasted energy— and stopped dead as she stared at the partially exposed cover. “Ex-Husband Magazine” it read, and below that, “From Conservative to Crunchy.” There was a picture of a waifish, free-spirited girl on the cover. *What is this?*

Dorothy read the magazine while eating dinner that night. It promised she could turn her ex-husband into a woman, and not just any woman, but any specific kind she pleased— even a hippie chick? There was even a local “fixer” named Tatiana who advertised in the magazine.

Dorothy, as a practicing wiccan, had no problem believing the magic existed to do exactly what the magazine described. More, her intuitive response was that, yes, she should do this. She loved the thought of seeing Eric in a flowing skirt, dancing at one of their drum circles.

But— is this an act of violence against him? She wondered. On the one hand, castrating a man seemed to fall pretty clearly in the category of harm, but she wouldn't be castrating him in the traditional sense, would she? Instead, she would be giving him a vagina. Logically, it felt wrong, but intuitively it felt so right, and a woman's truth was always found in her intuition!

She decided she would need to meet with this Tatiana and learn more, and she made an appointment to see her the very next day. Walking into Tatiana's office, Dorothy immediately began to feel really good about this woman— it was a warm, feminine space, like walking into a womb. And

Tatiana, herself, had a golden aura and radiated powerful, maternal vibes. Dorothy trusted her immediately.

“I am concerned,” she explained, “that this might be an act of violence? And I am practicing radical non-violence these days.”

“I would never seek to control you or make a decision for you,” Tatiana said in a soothing, calm voice. “But I can ask a few questions that may help you decide. How does that sound?”

“Good,” Dorothy said, sitting back, relaxing.

“Do you believe women are inferior to men?”

“No,” Dorothy answered. “Actually, I think we’re better.”

“So, would making Eric a woman make him better?”

Dorothy thought, then smiled. “Yes.”

Tatiana nodded. This had taken less time than in a lot of cases. “So, would you like to make Eric a better person?”

“Thank you so much,” Dorothy said. “Yes, I do want to make Eric a woman. It’s not an act of violence. It’s a gift.”

“Very good. We can begin right away.”

Chapter Two

Eric's alarm went off at 5 am, as it did every day. Ilse, his supermodel girlfriend, moaned. Eric felt tired and sore. They'd fucked for hours— he always horny as hell after a groundbreaking, but he popped up and stretched. He prided himself on his iron-willed discipline, and he started every day with an intense workout.

As he stretched, he heard Ilse giggle.

“What?” He asked, taking an opportunity to look over at her there in the bed, her bare breasts exposed.

“When did you get a tramp stamp?”



“Tramp stamp?”

“The tattoo on the small of your back?”

Dorothy, watching through the scrying stone, smiled seeing the confused and bemused look on Ilse's face. She was obviously re-assessing just who this Eric fellow she'd been dating really was.

Eric actually tried to look, but he couldn't see the small of his back, and then he realized she must be joking. “Go back to sleep,” he said. “You aren't funny.”

Padding to the bathroom, he chuckled. German girls were weird, but they were hot. What a weird sense of humor. For some reason, though, he turned and looked at his back in the bathroom mirror, his jaw dropped open in shock as he saw the tattoo on the small of his back and not only was it a tramp stamp, but a – a butterfly? On his skin? It was utterly feminine and totally humiliating. What the fuck? How the hell had this happened? He hadn't been drunk. He rubbed at it, thinking it must have been some kind of temporary tattoo, but it didn't smudge. His mind reeled. He couldn't have a woman's tattoo. It wasn't possible. And yet, he looked in the mirror, again, feeling sick. Even if he had it removed, that would mean someone else would see it.

Concern for his reputation consumed Eric at all times. He tried to project toughness, an old school masculinity that most certainly did not include butterflies on the small of his back.

Climbing in the shower, he tried to scrub it off, but when he got out of the shower and looked it was still there unchanged– a feminine scrawl that ate at him with shame. Dorothy laughed. He looked so cute!

“Ilse!” He shouted, thinking she must have done this to him while he was sleeping. He charged back into the bedroom. “What the fuck did you do to me?”

“What are you talking about?” Ilse said.

“This fucking tattoo! What the hell?”

“Ugh,” Ilse said, burying her head in her pillows. “You’re the one who got a tramp stamp. Talk to your therapist about it. I’m going back to sleep.”

Eric could feel his head pounding. He rubbed his temples. He had to get to work. At least his clothes would cover the shameful butterfly. Fuck.

Dorothy hugged her knees to her chest and sipped her herbal tea. Tatiana had urged her to go slowly, to savor the process and allow Eric to fully experience his metamorphosis from lowly caterpillar to glorious butterfly. It would not be easy, and she struggled with the urge to just make all the changes at once, just totally rip away the bandage and fix everything that was wrong with stupid Eric. Savor the experience... Tatiana had urged her. Savor. She supposed she should.

Anyway, she wasn't sure exactly the look she wanted for him. She knew he would be the exact kind of hippie chick he mocked, but Dorothy wanted a more specific sense of his look, so she turned to Pinterest and searched for hippie fashion. She started looking through the images that came up, most of which called the style boho, and began to think about the perfect hair, clothes and makeup for her ex-husband. She wanted him to be so pretty and cute he would drive all the hippie boys crazy. She created a new list called "Eric's Look Book" and started pinning things, keeping the scrying window open as she worked, idly watching Eric go through his day, amused to see him constantly rubbing the small of his back, clearly feeling sensitive about his new tattoos.

Once at work, Eric became so consumed with his job he forgot all about his tattoo issues. It was meetings, phone calls, shouting. Eric's policy was to bawl out at least one employee per day. Today it was Nina's turn. His employees all worked in an open, bullpen-style office with no cubicles or anything. Everyone could see and hear everything, and so could Eric who had a camera set up so he could watch his workers all the time. He didn't pay people to loaf.

He walked up to Nina's desk and saw her tense up. "Good morning, Ninamina," he said with a pained grimace on his face. He gave all his employees diminutive nicknames.

"Good morning, sir," she said. The other employees all froze, waiting for the storm, cringing and feeling back for Nina but glad it wasn't them about to get dressed down.

"Ninamina. Ninamina. Are you aware that we have a template here at Eric Prince for all emails?"

Nina's mouth dropped open as she realized he'd seen the email she'd sent that morning sans format. "It was just a quick—"

"Shut up!" Eric screamed getting in her face, veins bulging in his neck. "I didn't ask you for excuses!" He picked up the paper coffee cup on her desk and hurled it against the window, the coffee splattering against the window, dripping down. Nina cringed.

Dorothy, who'd been totally lost in her fashion planning, sat up as her ex screamed at his employee. No. This was not acceptable.

"Are you so stupid you—" Eric bellowed in his deep, thundering base voice, but in the middle of the sentence his voice cracked like a teen-age boy's. "Fo—llo-w." He cleared his throat, annoyed that his performance had been interrupted. When he started again, though, what came out of his mouth was a buzzy, high-pitched voice like a little girl. "Are you so—" He stopped, eyes wide, putting his hand to his throat. He cleared his throat again. "... stupid that... what the fuck?" His cheeks turned red, and he retreated toward his office. He wanted to shout, *this isn't over*, but he was so shocked and humiliated by his piping little voice he couldn't, wouldn't say another word.

Dorothy smirked. That's better, she thought. I don't think he'll be trying to intimidate anyone by screaming at them anymore!



The staff watched Eric vanish back into his office, shoulders hunched. "What just happened?" Will said.

"That was— weird," Lisa answered. "Did you do something, Nina?"

Nina shrugged and shook her head.

"He sounded like Polly Pixie," Will said, snickering.

"And how would you know what Polly Pixie sounds like?" Lisa asked.

"I have a daughter."

Eric, had he been asked, would not have disagreed that he

sounded like a pixie. Back in his office, he was testing his voice. "This is what I sound like," he said, cringing at the tiny, sweet sound of his voice. "Fuck! Fuck! This can't be happening!" This time, he picked up a paper weight from his desk and hurled it against the wall, watching it explode and

shatter into a thousand pieces. Eric was the kind of man who always wanted to be in control— always— and now with this mysterious change to his voice along with the tattoo, he felt a terrifying anxiety building in him.

He needed a doctor. There had to be some way to fix this, but in the meantime, what was he going to do about his meeting with Marco Mattia at his strip club, Kittens? He needed the mobster's help with the construction crew, which had decided to stage a slowdown, and there was no way he could go to that meeting sounding like a 12-year-old cheerleader. Eric searched his brain. Solving problems was his thing. The obstacle was the way.

Yes. He had it. Eric sent an email to his secretary— there was no way he was letting anyone hear him talk like this again— Title: Lost my Voice.

An hour later he arrived at the meeting with his secretary, Fawn, at his side. "Mr. Prince has, unfortunately, lost his voice," Fawne explained, "He hopes you will understand and accept that he will type out his answers, and I will read them to you."

"Sure, whatever," Marco said. He had a gorgeous blonde clinging to his arm. "Amberlynn, scram," he said, giving her a pat on the ass. She giggled and pranced away. She had a fantastic ass, and Eric enjoyed the view. Marco did, too. Marco thought maybe he'd come back to Kittens later and get a lap dance from Amberlynn. She was one fine ass bitch.

Dorothy half-watched the meeting as Eric typed answers and Fawn read them to Marco. Fawn, for her part, had a sexy, breathy voice, but it still carried more authority than Eric could muster. Dorothy grinned. Eric now needed a woman to speak for him. Perfect!

Now, patience, patience... oh, the hell with it. There was another change she wanted Eric to experience and right now! She willed it and sat

back, biting her lip, almost trembling with excitement for the moment when Eric realized what had happened.

Chapter Three

Eric had his secretary set up a doctor's appointment for him— the earliest he could get in was the next morning. As much as Eric considered his tea kettle voice an emergency, the doctor's office didn't agree that "loss of voice" was life threatening. The rest of the day he worked in his office having given Fawn strict instructions he was not to be disturbed.

And yet, he was disturbed. His chest ached, especially his nipples, and he found himself constantly pressing his hand against it, trying to ease the pain. His joints ached, and he had a headache. *Maybe I'm getting the flu*, he thought, *putting a hand to his belly, which felt heavy, bloated*. He found it hard to concentrate and just couldn't seem to get anything done. Power through, Eric told himself. Sick or not, my mind is stronger than my body.

And yet, time and again, he found himself staring out the window daydreaming, unable to focus on getting his proposal done for the Eastern Project.

Fuck! He slammed his fists on his desk. The tattoos, his voice, and now this— weakness! Feeling the sting of tears building in his eyes, Eric pulled himself back. He hadn't cried since he'd been a child. There was no way he was going to—

He felt the hot tears roll down his cheeks, tasted their salt on his lips. What the fuck is happening to me? Eric wondered as he sobbed into his palms. What the hell?



When the crying spell ended, Eric took a few deep breaths and looked at the clock. It was almost six. He had no desire to head home and deal with Ilse. Not with his new voice. What was he going to do? Challenge her to a screaming contest? He was still convinced she'd somehow stuck him with the tattoos and— wait. Could she have done all this? His voice? The tattoos? But how? Why?

Eric didn't know, couldn't think of how or why she would want to feminize him. Ugh. His chest again. He wrapped his arms around his chest and hugged hard. It seemed to help. As much as Eric just wanted to go home and crawl into bed, he decided he wasn't ready to confront Ilse. He thought again of that dancer— Amberlynn. He wanted to see those tits of hers, and he was sure she was a great dancer.

Tossing back a shot of whiskey and a couple aspirin, he headed down to Kittens. He communicated by using his phone and soon he was in a dimly lit private room, smoking a cigar and sipping more whiskey while Amberlynn shook her ass in his face. He'd been right. She was a great dancer, all woman, and yet, there was something about her, a certain— he didn't know what, but he did know he wanted to fuck her badly. The aching in his nipples increased, but it felt good now, and he responded to the new demands coming from his chest by squeezing his nipples between his thumb and index finger in rhythm to Amberlynn's dancing. He was only half aware of what he was doing— he just needed it, and it felt so good!

Dorothy watched. This had *not* been among the things she'd been expecting as a part of her latest change, but it was a wonderful bonus and she loved looking at Eric, cheeks flush as he played with his nipples while getting turned on by that gorgeous girl. Of course, he would be bi-sexual, she'd already decided, mostly because he'd spent their whole marriage telling her that bisexuality was a myth. Eric would be all about free love when he was done.

Later that night, Eric stumbled into the bedroom, drunk and bleary, relieved to see that Ilse already asleep, buried under the quilts. Thank God. He started to crawl into bed, then sighed as Ilse threw the covers off and glared at him. "Don't even think about getting into this bed!" She said. "You stink! At least take a shower."

"Why are you busting my balls?" Eric sang in his pretty little girl voice. In his drunken state he'd forgotten about his changed voice. His hand went to his throat, eyes went wide.

"What the hell?" Ilse said, shaking her head, thinking she had to be mistaken. That voice could not have come out of her man.

Eric coughed. Shook his head. Pointed to his throat and retreated toward the bathroom. He slammed the door to the bathroom, humiliated and ashamed that his woman had heard him speak in this tiny little chiming voice. His voice was higher and buzzier than hers now. Fuck. Fuck! He did stink. He needed a shower. Hopefully, he'd be asleep by the time he got done, but if not he'd have to use the phone and type out his answers.

Dorothy, who'd just left the scrying stone on all the time, letting the scenes from Eric's morphing life play out as background noise, like an average TV show you leave on while cooking dinner, had been snapped to attention by the little exchange between Eric and Ilse— the poor girl being stuck with an a-hole like Eric. Well, not for long. But, still. Anyway, seeing Eric about to get into the shower she cursed herself and her impatience, but it was just too perfect of a chance, and so she wished another change onto the ever-improving Eric.

Without thinking, Eric grabbed Ilse's Jenni!! brand body wash and one of her pink loofahs and showered. It felt so good. His skin seemed extra sensitive, especially his chest, and he closed his eyes and sighed as the vanilla and coconut perfume of the body wash filled his head. When he opened them, he happened to glance down and made a pretty little yelping sound as he saw all the curly little hairs swirling around the drain.

"What the hell?" Eric said, his tiny voice echoing in the shower stall. Eric dropped the loofah and looked down, then ran his hand across the now hairless, bright skin of his chest, his belly. He'd been proud of the thick jungle of fur on his chest and seeing it now gone made him tremble. His legs, even his arms, were now completely hairless— like a woman?. Once more, he'd been feminized, and his anxiety came back redoubled. How?

He wondered, and then he suddenly realized he'd used Ilse's body wash, her loofah. Could that be the cause?

None of this seemed real, or even possible. Climbing out of the shower, Eric toweled off and looked in the mirror, hoping that somehow he still had some body hair, that he'd imagined the whole thing, but instead his mouth dropped open in horror as he saw that he did have one small strip of hair left— it was a landing strip leading down to his penis and there, just to the right, another tattoo had appeared: this time a fucking seahorse? He didn't



even notice the new tattoo running down the length of his spine that read, “Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me.”

Dorothy loved the delicious irony.

Eric sank down onto the toilet and put his head in his hands, fighting

back more tears. Hopefully, the doctor would have answers. The doctor had to have answers.

Frazzled and confused, he pulled on his pajama pants and crawled into bed, hoping Ilse was either asleep or pretending to be asleep and wouldn't

say anything. She was, and she didn't. Sleep came fitfully. Eric woke with a terrible cramp in his belly, gingerly put his hand to his tummy thinking, what now? He tossed and turned. Stared at the ceiling. He felt a clench, a push, and then his pants filled with a warm, sticky feeling, and he smelled something—copper?

Fuck. Did I just piss myself? Eric got up, terrified Ilse would see he'd pissed himself, and he snuck back to the bathroom, pulled down his pants and squealed in terror as he saw his groin and thighs covered in dark, red... blood? Am I bleeding?

"Quiet!" Ilse groaned, having been woken by Eric's squeak.

He blushed, shaking his head. Something was seriously wrong. Fuck, fuck, fuck. "Unh!" Another cramp. A bad one.

Dorothy snickered as she watched her ex suffering his first period. Poor thing, and no Mom to explain the facts of female life to him. Oh, well. She was sure he'd figure it out. He prided himself on his problem-solving mastery!

Eric did not realize he was on the rag, but he did do something females had been doing for ages. After he clean himself up, he put on a fresh pair of underwear and balled up a wad of toilet paper and shoved it in his underwear in case he leaked again.

Eric sat on the exam table, typing out his symptoms on his phone. Doctor Ultemyer listened, nodding his head, perplexed. Most of the symptoms Eric had described sounded like menstruation, but that wasn't possible. "Your loss of voice may be unrelated, but I am more concerned

about the bleeding. Let's do an ultrasound, so I can see what's going on inside."

Ultemeyer had his assistant, Winnie, bring in the ultrasound machine, and she lingered in case he needed any assistance. A green-eyed ginger with nice tits, Eric rated her as fuckable, and he gave her a look that said as much.

She smiled and raised an eyebrow. Eric had always had a way with women, and it pleased him to know he hadn't lost his touch. He and she were flirting with their eyes when Ultemeyer said, "incredible."

Eric looked over at the screen, his face crumpling up in confusion. Flickering on the screen was what looked like a womb, ovaries, those tube things. He shook his head, wishing he still had a voice he wasn't ashamed to use.

"This is— it's quite unusual," Ultemeyer said.

Eric shrugged. What?

"You're not bleeding. I don't know how to tell you this, but you're menstruating."

Winnie snickered. She couldn't help it.

"Menstruating?" Eric shrieked, no longer able to control himself. "I'm not a woman!"

Ultemeyer and his assistant stepped back, shocked at the effeminate shriek. "Well, technically speaking, you are."

Eric stormed out of the doctor's office, cursing. He would get a second opinion. A period? Him? "Bullshit!" He screamed, pounding on the steering wheel. "Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit! Unh!"

Another intense cramp, and his car filled with the smell of pennies as once more he felt a warm, sticky discharge in his pants.

Loss of control. He'd lost control of his body. Whatever the real cause, because as far as he was concerned menstruation was not possible, Eric felt the now ever more familiar feeling of anxiety seeking to overwhelm him. He wanted to go home, crawl into bed and pull the covers over his head, hide from the world and just hope this all went away. Ilse was off on a photo shoot. He'd have the place to himself. But that wasn't his way. That wasn't Eric!

He didn't know what to do, and he sat in the parking lot, staring at the sky, paralyzed by indecision.

Dorothy made another change.

A sudden flash of inspiration. Eric pulled out his phone and said, "Sarah, what's my daily horoscope?"

The first hit was from Madam Gallo, who he'd never heard of, but she wrote for the New Amsterdam Daily, so Eric figured she must be good.

He was an Ares, of course.

This is the perfect day for business and commerce. Now is the time to make a pitch. Money and success are coming your way.

"It's like she's speaking right to me," Eric whispered. He had a big meeting that day with people from Amsterdam Trust about buying a building he'd had his eye on for years. "Thank you, Universe!" Eric sighed, relieved that someone had told him what to do. "How ironic," he mused as he pulled out of the doctor's office driveway. "And I made fun of Dorothy for believing in all this astrology nonsense all these years!"

Ironic, indeed, Dorothy thought, as she made and planned her next changes.

As Eric drove, he found it hard to reach the pedals, and without even thinking he adjusted his seat, pulling it forward. He was too distracted to notice he'd gotten smaller.

Eric headed home. He couldn't show up at the meeting smelling like pennies. He'd clean up, put on a fresh suit. Some power earrings. The meeting was going to be a success. He just knew it. His horoscope said so.

At home, he showered, but when he went out to get dressed, he searched through his closet, rifling through – these weren't his clothes! Blouses instead of men's shirts, women's slacks, and what happened to his ties? They had all shrunk!

"No! No!" No!" He squealed. This meeting was so important. He couldn't show up dressed in women's clothes. He would be the laughingstock of the business world! He threw himself onto his bed, grabbed a pillow and pounded it with his fist. "It's over!" He wailed in his little girl voice. "I'm over!" There was no way he would wear women's clothes. No way ever—

Dorothy made a change. Eric felt a wave of energy pass over him like a cool breeze.

This isn't me, he decided as his tantrum subsided. *This isn't Eric Prince*. He had a meeting and a chance to make a lot of money, and he wasn't a quitter.

He got up and looked through the clothes. They aren't so bad, he decided, making some selections. Not so different from men's clothes. No one would even notice. Besides, he was sure he would look really cute as he picked out an outfit to wear. He would show up at the meeting no matter what. His horoscope had been crystal clear, after all.

He slipped into the slacks, the blouse, the vest. All his shoes were now women's flats, so what choice did he have? He slipped them on, grateful at least they weren't high heels. He tied his cute little tie. Looking in the mirror, he frowned. He didn't look totally professional. He needed earrings—



What? No. Earrings? But he had no choice. There was no way he would go to a major business meeting without jewelry now. He picked out some earrings from Ilse's jewelry box and slipped them into his piercings like he'd been doing it his whole life. He looked in the mirror and nodded at his smooth, bright face, the dangling earrings. Yes, he thought, straightening his tie. Very professional.

He'd always prided himself on being a trend-setter. He was ready to do business

Chapter Four

Eric barreled into the office just minutes before the team from Amsterdam Trust was due to arrive. He'd been frantically texting with his secretary, Fawn, to make sure everything was arranged, and that she'd informed their guests about Eric's loss of voice. As Eric hurried through the office, people gawked. Was that really Eric? Hadn't he been taller? And was he wearing earrings? Everyone exchanged amused glances, thinking back to how he'd started to talk like a girl the day before.

As always, Tatiana's magic ensured that everyone who knew Eric would both notice and accept his changes, no matter how impossible.

Anxiety.... Anxiety... anxiety... Eric couldn't stop worrying he would—leak— during the meeting. He'd stuffed even more toilet paper into his underwear and could only hope that if whatever was happening, happened, because he was NOT on the rag— it wouldn't leak onto his pants and everyone would see the dark stain. That would be so embarrassing.

Dorothy grinned. Whether he leaked or not, he was about to be embarrassed.

The team from Amsterdam Trust showed up, and Eric greeted them at the door to the conference room. They all hid their surprise to see he was so short and skinny, and wearing earrings, and their boss, Harry, noted

Eric's soft hands and weak handshake. *I'm going to take him to the cleaners*, Harry thought.

The meeting started. Eric sat in the back while Fawn led the team through the presentation she'd made. Eric watched, toying with a long strand of hair, not even noticing that he suddenly had a long strand of hair to play with. He was surprised and impressed with how well Fawn carried herself. When the presentation ended, the team turned to Eric, and Harry did a double take. "Is this some kind of joke?" He said. Eric now had long hair piled up on his head, tied in a scarf, and he was clearly wearing



makeup.

Eric shook his head and looked to Fawn, who was also starrng. “You’re hair?” She said, not certain how to react, what to say.

Eric, who’d still been toying with a loose strand, looked, confused, then patted his head. His eyes went wide. He couldn’t speak. He couldn’t use his voice. He shook his head, panicking, grabbing his phone, and when he went to type out a message, he saw he now had long, painted fingernails.

“Fuck this,” Harry said, getting up. His staff followed suit. “What the fuck is going on here?” He said to Fawn.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. “But let’s focus on the deal and just get this done. We can all make a lot of money.”

Harry thought for a minute. There was potentially a lot of money on the table. “I’ll deal with you,” he said, deciding Fawn must be the real decision maker. “But not HER!” He pointed to Eric and laughed.

Her? It was a punch in the gut to Eric. Her? He went back to his phone, meaning to type out a message, to reassert his authority, but winced and put a hand to his tummy as another cramp hit, as he felt himself leaking.

Her. He remembered the doctor’s words when he cried out, “I’m not a woman.”

Technically, you are.

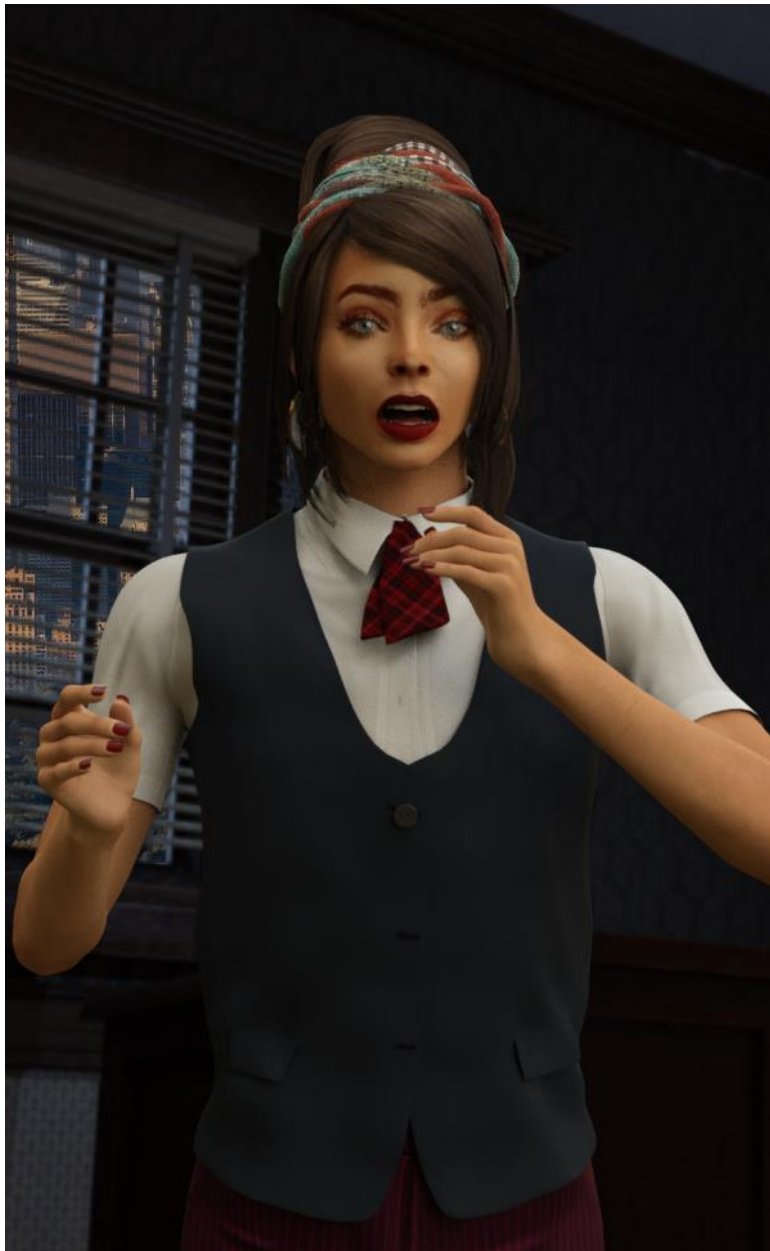
Her. He realized he was about to cry again.

Overwhelmed with shame and anxiety, he stood and fled from the room, running to his office and collapsing at his desk in tears, his mascara running down his cheeks as he cried out, “Why? Why is this happening to me?”

Dorothy actually thought he already made a pretty cute woman with his hair up like that and his make-up, but she wanted him to be super pretty, so

she made another change, his features growing softer, eyes bigger, nose smaller.

When the tears had finally stopped, Eric went to the mirror. He looked, stunned, at his hair, his scarf, his earrings and the makeup on his face. He touched his cheek. He looked like a woman now, and with that hair he reminded himself of– “Dorothy,” he whispered. The hair, the earrings. They were all her style. She must be the one doing this to him somehow!



He thought to tear off the scarf, pull out the earrings. He would wash this makeup off, get a haircut and then he'd, well, he'd speak with Dorothy. He'd give her a piece of his mind!

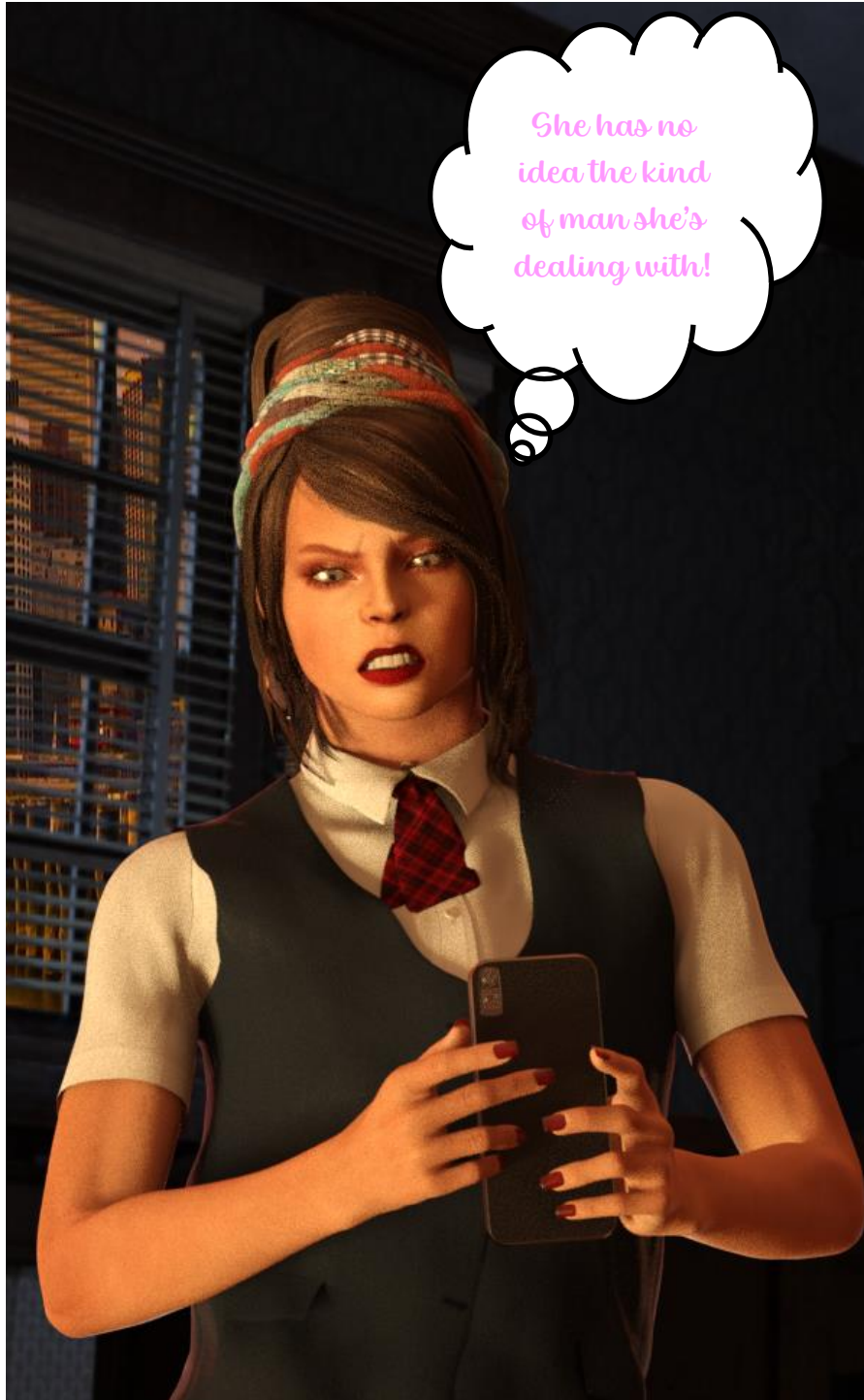
He reached up, but instead of pulling the scarf out of his hair, he adjusted it. Actually, it looked pretty. He looked pretty? He looked– pretty? Eric smiled. He wanted to undo all of this, to scrub away the makeup he was sure had obscured his rugged, masculine face, but yet–

He couldn't. His hands trembled, hovering over his hair, but he couldn't. Just then, his phone buzzed. Eric went to look and saw a message from Fawn— Signed. Sealed. Delivered.

Eric squealed with joy and twirled, forgetting all about his changes for the moment. They'd gotten the deal! Just like his horoscope had promised!

Chapter Five

With the deal taken care of, Eric fired off a text to Dorothy: *I know you're doing this to me! Stop or suffer the consequences!*



Dorothy texted back: *Let's meet, cutie. I love your nails, btw.*

No. Change me back! NOW!

Meet or keep changing, doll.

Eric screamed in frustration and stomped a tiny foot, but immediately covered his mouth, blushing as he was sure everyone in the office must have heard his feminine shriek.

Dorothy's defiance infuriated him, and once more, a sense of

powerlessness overcame him. No one listened to him anymore. No one did what he wanted. "I'm being erased," he thought. "Erased..." He didn't notice that the voice in his head was now the same as his sweet, pretty voice in real life.

He hated that Dorothy was dictating where they would meet, when, all the terms, but what choice did he have? He looked at his long, crimson fingernails, his dainty hands. None. Dorothy had all the cards— for now. He would find some way to turn this around, to get the upper-hand, however dainty. He texted back. *Fine. Where and when?*

Tonight. Spiritual Center.

Fine.

Wear something pretty.

Fuck you.

LOL.

I'll get the last laugh, Eric assured himself, taking a deep breath, trying to calm himself. There was nothing more to do at the office. He decided to head home, maybe take that nap he'd been wanting, or a long, hot bath. He'd been seeing Dorothy at her stupid spiritual center in a few hours, and he would put her in her place.

Eric got into his car, and as he started the engine, he happened to glance at the trip record. It showed that he'd averaged 18 miles to the gallon. What? He felt horrified. This car was destroying the environment, he realized, flooding the atmosphere with carbon. Knotting his fingers together, Eric chastised himself. How could I have been so selfish? He wasn't that kind of girl. Or, guy? Whatever.

He would have to find a way to be a better caretaker for Mother Earth. Maybe he should trade in this gross, gas guzzling monstrosity for an electric car?

As Eric walked into the house, he was rehearsing the big argument he planned to have with Dorothy when they met. "Oh, yeah" He mumbled in his soft voice. "Well, *what about* karma? What do you think is going to happen to you as payback for this? Oh, you never thought of that, did you? Well, let me—"

"Eric?" He heard Ilse say, her voice filled with shock.

Eric yelped in fright, having thought he was alone, and immediately put a hand over his heart as he looked up... and up... at his girlfriend. A supermodel, she was now much taller than him.

"Is that really you?" She asked, taking in Eric's hair, his pretty face, the earrings and makeup, let alone his diminutive size.

Eric blushed with shame. He seemed to be blushing all the time now. He hated having his woman see him like this, having her see him so utterly reduced. "Something is going on," he said, the need to explain over-riding his shame at his little voice. "Dorothy. She's put some kind of spell on me. She's changing me."

"You're so cute," Ilse said, approaching. "And your voice is adorable."

"This isn't me," Eric said. "And don't call me cute."

"You're a little cutie pie," Ilse said, adopting the tone she might use to address a child, putting her hand under Eric's chin, tilting his head back, the same way he used to do to her. "Look at you. I love that shade of lipstick!"

Eric wanted to slap her hand away, but when he reached up, he suddenly felt like aggression was so wrong, and instead found himself

covering it with his own small, soft hand, keeping her hand pressed against his cheek as he looked up at her. She was so tall. So confident and strong.



“You’ve got to help me,” he said, batting his long lashes.

Ilse gazed down at the pretty little thing Eric had become, rubbing her thumb against his cheek. “Your skin is so soft,” she said, still amazed at this delightful little creature.

“Please stop,” Eric said. “You’re making me feel...”

“Like a girl?”

“Yes,” Eric whispered. “But, I’m a man, still. I am. On the inside. Help me,” he said again. “Please?”

“Oh, honey,” Else said, drawing him in, giving him a hug and a kiss on the head. Then, she held him by the shoulders at arm’s length and looked him over once more. “I like you better this way.”

“But, I’m your boyfriend.”

“Not anymore. Bye.”

Ilse turned and headed toward the door.

“Don’t leave,” Eric said as tears once more filled his eyes.

“We can still be girlfriends,” Ilse said, smirking. “Maybe we can have a spa day together. Get facials.”

She walked out the door.

Eric collapsed to the floor, sobbing.

It took two hours and a long, hot bath for Eric to recover some semblance of emotional balance. When he finally did, he looked at the clock and realized he needed to get ready for his meeting with his awful ex. He went to the closet and started to look through the clothes there, confused. All he found were skirts, dresses, blouses. Ilse had moved some of her clothes in, sure, but where were his?

Wear something pretty.

No!

He went to the dresser. Bras. Panties. Women’s clothes. Nothing but women’s clothes.

No!

At least he had his suit, he thought. When he’d gotten undressed to take his bath, he’d laid it out on the bed so it wouldn’t wrinkle and— what? Instead of his suit, he saw a skirt, a crop top that would leave his tramp stamp visible. Hippie shit like Dorothy wore. *Fuck no*, he thought. *No. Never.*

But he found himself drawn toward the bed, the outfit. It was pretty. Cute. It screamed love and rainbows. He would look so good.

“No. No. No,” he whispered, horrified at what he found himself thinking.

But those words were quickly replaced by, “Okay. Wow! Yes! Groovy!”

I have an iron will, Eric tried to tell himself. Dorothy can’t control me. He found himself turning away from the bed. Ha. He knew it. He was stronger than her— and then he walked over to the dresser and then slipped into a pair of panties.

He went to the bathroom next, trembling as he strained against doing what he knew he was about to do. He opened the cabinet and stared at the box of maxi-pads. He slipped one into his panties, squirming at how uncomfortable it felt, how awkward, how unmanly. But what could he do? He was on the rag, he finally admitted to himself. He was having his period, and there was no way he wanted to have an accident in front of his ex-wife.

He got dressed, stepping into his first skirt, his first halter top. He slipped a waist chain with a pretty butterfly around his waist, and barely even managed a whimper.

Looking in the mirror, his mouth dropped open in shock and shame-- he looked pretty? He looked like a woman, a crunchie granola hippie chick, he looked--- hot. The thought shocked him, scared him. Guys, men, would want to have sex with him. He also noticed that Dorothy had added another tattoo to his growing collection—a heart on his right shoulder. She’s going to pay for this, Eric thought, but then in his conflicted state, quickly added, “though it is kind of cute?”

Chapter Six



Eric's skirt swirled around his legs as he made his way into the spiritual center, tugging on an earring and glancing around nervously. The room was crowded with women and a few men Eric considered effeminate, then choked on the thought as he remembered how he was

dressed. He couldn't believe he'd gone out in public wearing a skirt, a belly chain, but Dorothy's changes were so advanced he also found himself feeling terribly self-conscious about how poorly he filled out his halter top, and he was sure the girls would all be snickering at how flat chested he was. Well, maybe they would be cool about it. He could only hope.

A small group separated, and Dorothy emerged. Their eyes met and she covered her mouth, obviously amused.

Eric walked towards her, intending to grab her and drag her off for a one on one, but she threw her arms in the air and shouted, "Sparrow! Everyone, I want you to meet my friend, Sparrow Sunbeam!" She then threw her arms around Eric, drawing him in for a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Eric was horrified to realize he was smaller than his wife now, and he struggled to squirm free of her grasp.

"Is this her?" An older woman with gray hair that flowed down to her waist asked, walking up to Dorothy and slipping an arm around her waist while looking Eric up and down. "The one with the chakra issues?"

"This is Sparrow. Yes."

"Um, my name is Sparrow, actually," Eric said, having meant to correct her, his eyes going wide as he realized what he'd said. "No. I mean, that's not right. I'm Sparrow. No. I'm..." *Sparrow*, he thought. *My name is Sparrow* now. Fuck! He glared at Dorothy who just smiled sweetly and shrugged.

"Your chakras are all out of alignment," the older woman said, shaking her head. "Oh, you poor thing. We must take action immediately! I'm Rainbow Skies. Come with me!"

Eric started to say no, to turn his back on the woman. He needed to confront his wife and get her to change him back! But Dorothy made a

change, and Eric found himself turning back to Rainbow, his brow furrowed. “Oh, my God! Did you say my chakras are out of alignment?” They seemed so important to him now. His chakras.

“The worst I’ve ever seen,” Rainbow said.

Help me! Please!” Eric said. “My chakras! Oh, my God, my chakras.”

“Come. We’ll get you straightened out,” Rainbow said, taking Eric’s hand and leading him from the room.

“Oh,” Eric said as he followed her. “Um, by the way, what’s a chakra?”

“She is a flighty spirit,” Rainbow said to Dorothy. “You were so right.”

When they got to one of the meditation rooms at the back of the center, she handed a square of paper with the image of a peace sign on it. “Lick it.”

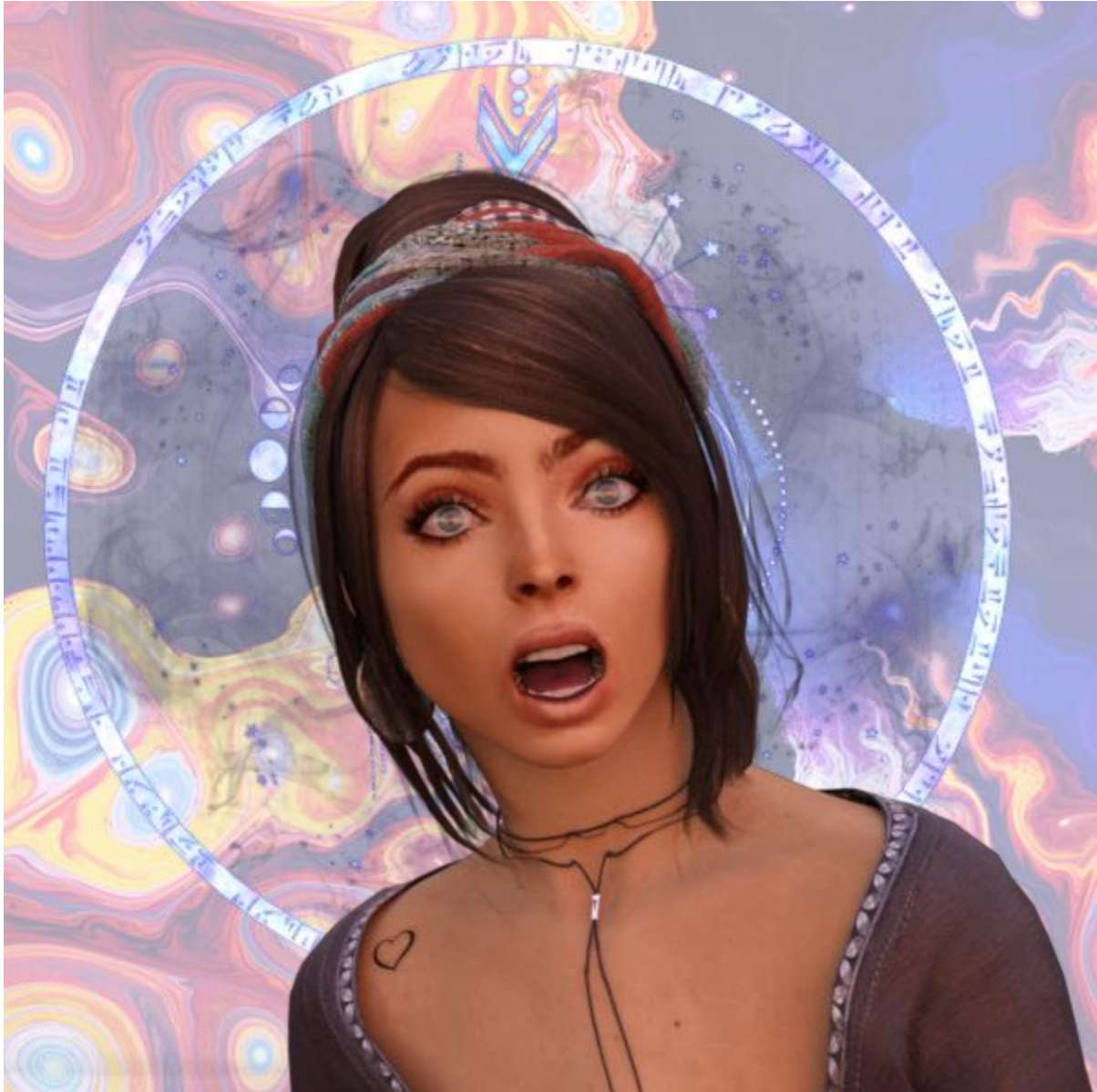
Eric scrunched his nose. More hippie shit. “What is it?”

“For your chakras.”

“For my chakras?” Eric would do anything for his chakras, though he still didn’t know what they were. He looked at the piece of paper. “Is it drugs?”

“It will free you, Sparrow,” Rainbow said. “Sit with me and take my hands. Let’s begin with your Anahata, or heart. It resides in your chest and is the source of truths which cannot be stated in words. Once we remove the blockages, you will feel open to all experiences in life, and it will feel like challenges, especially in relationships, flow through you and are resolved with ease. An open-heart chakra allows us to see all of the beauty and love around us, and truly connect to ourselves, our loved ones, and the natural world. This chakra also helps direct love back to ourselves to truly be able to love and accept ourselves and our bodies. Does that sound good?”

“Yes,” Eric sighed. “Yes.” He licked the blotter. It tasted like paper, with a bitter, almost metallic after-taste.



The world seemed to explode into rainbow colors, and Eric suddenly found himself in a crowd of people, dancing...

Spinning, laughing, his skirt swirling, earrings brushing against his cheeks... drums beating, beating an insistent rhythm that demanded Eric dance, twirl, raise his arms above his head and shake his breasts, letting them sway from side to side...

Breasts? He looked down at the large swelling of his chest. “I have boobs!” He called out, cupping them, squeezing. “Oh, my God, they’re so soft!”



The people around him laughed— joyful, loving laughter.

Women, men, hugging, touching, kissing. Eric felt connected to everyone, felt he knew them, knew their spirits and their souls. They were all connected by a golden light that flashed and pulsed around them all as they whirled and danced and laughed.

Later, outside, a guy with mutton chops and piercings sat on a

log with an acoustic guitar singing softly, strumming... Eric found himself

squeezed between two guys who kept kissing him.... He just giggled... love was free, man! A joint was going around and each time it came to him Eric took a hit and smiled, amused as he thought of his old self. "I used to be so uptight," he said to the guy who'd passed him the joint. "In the past. I was always, like, trying to control everything and stuff... what a downer. The problems was my chakras! Would you believe I'm really a guy? What a



trip!"

"Well, you're the hottest guy I've ever seen," the guy said, "and now you're free of all that macho bullshit, honey." The guy took Eric's chin, turning his face and kissing him. It was a gentle, loving kiss.

"I'm so free!" Eric said, standing, swaying, lifting his

skirt and shaking it side to side. "I'm free! I'm free!"

Dorothy smiled and took a hit. It was cute seeing him like this, but she knew Eric would feel a little different in the morning once the drugs wore off. She wanted him to suffer a little more before his new life became his new normal.

Chapter Eight

Eric cursed the sunlight streaming in from his bedroom window. His head hurt, and he just wanted to sleep! Fluid flashes of last night played through his mind... hugging, kissing... smoking weed and listening to that old hippie sing peace songs... A scornful frown came to Eric's plump lips as he remembered it all... lifting his skirt—he still couldn't believe he'd worn a skirt-- twirling, feeling his breasts sway and...

Breasts? That memory shocked him awake. No. No. He didn't have breasts now. Even Dorothy wouldn't be so cruel.

Slowly, cautiously, he put his hands on his taut belly, let them slide up the soft skin, over the ridge of his ribcage... please no... and then they slid up against two soft mounds... He felt his chest jiggle as he slipped his palms up and into his breasts... over his nipples, which seemed to be floating far above his chest. His breasts felt huge, and he opened his eyes and looked down to see them jutting from his chest; they looked huge.

“Fuck.”

Eric sat up, still cupping his breasts, shaking his head, refusing to believe he had tits now— like a woman. Letting go of his boobs, he started toward the mirror, but his breasts jiggled and swayed with each step, and they were heavy! Unnerved by the feeling of his now bouncy chest, he cupped them once more, trying to hold them in place as he went to the mirror and looked at himself? Herself?

It wasn't just his chest that had changed. He now had wider, rounded hips, a tiny waist... turning to the side, he cringed at the swell of his firm, plump booty, his now utterly female body topped by a pretty, feminine face— big eyes wide in shock, plump lips open in an O of dismay. He had to

check, and he was surprised and relieved to find he still had his junk, though it had shrunk to a tiny, child-like size.



Still, though he may have still technically been a man, he looked like a girl, and not just a girl with huge tits, but the exact kind he despised the most: a hippie chick. Eric started to shake his head, no. He couldn't be this crunchy hippie girl. He wouldn't be—

That's when he noticed his apartment. He looked around, stunned. The

dark man cave of leather and old wood was gone, replaced by plants and candles and dream catchers and peace signs. “Dorothy!” He spat, humiliated at the shrine to feminine hippiedom his ex had made of his space. Well, he would just change it all back and–

“Like, wow!” He suddenly found himself saying. “So groovy!” He realized he loved the soft colors and it was such a peaceful space, like a mirror of the Spiritual Center.

There probably was something he was supposed to be doing at work, but Eric felt a sudden need to honor and embrace all this totally amazing change that had come into his life. It was, he decided, definitely time for some aroma therapy and intense meditation! He got dressed.

Eric found a capsule labeled “Mountain Rose Herbs” for relaxation and put it in his diffuser, wafting the flowery odors into his nose, smiling. “So pretty!” He soon found himself sitting in the lotus position, chanting “peace, love, understanding” in his soft voice, eyes closed, as he invited those qualities into his life, his soul. He didn’t want to be a mean, aggressive man anymore. It was so uncool.

As he meditated, he saw a golden pyramid shimmering in the distance, and a voice spoke to him, not in words, but in images, rainbows and sunbeams, and when he opened his eyes, Eric knew what he must do.

His company. It was a machine of violence! He would change it. Start a recycling program and emphasize sustainable, low-carbon developments that did not displace the disadvantaged. It would be a holistic paradise making the world a better place!

Wait. It all sounded good, but then Eric remembered he hadn’t checked his horoscope yet. Like he would ever make a major decision without

consulting the stars. What if Mercury were in retrograde? Eric pulled up his horoscope, giddy with anticipation:

If you've needed a change of scenery, you may want to consider sprucing up your space as the moon continues its journey through Cancer. Meanwhile, a sweet connection between the Taurus sun and Mars, your ruling planet, will motivate you to invest in yourself and the life you've envisioned for yourself.

“Far out!” Eric shouted, doing a twirl, his skirt swirling around his legs. It was too perfect, and totally aligned with the vision from his meditation! “Wow!” He sang. “Like, wow!” He was so thankful he'd gotten his chakras aligned and embraced mediation. It was so much better than the life he'd known!

Making himself a kale smoothie, Eric excitedly texted his secretary and asked her to set up a meeting. He couldn't wait to make the announcement to the whole team! They would, he was sure, be so excited!

Inside, the old Eric cringed and raged. He struggled to regain control, horrified at this ditzy, superstitious thing he was becoming, but he found himself just an impotent speck, trapped far back in his now pretty little head. All her plans were stupid, he thought, and he had no way to stop her.

He needed a bath with lots and lots of bath salts. After, his resolve to fight his new longing to wear women's clothes crumbled with barely a whimper, and he put on a skirt, did his hair and makeup. He didn't seem to have any choice anymore. He couldn't stand the thought of leaving the house if he didn't look pretty.

He grabbed his bag without thinking and slung it over his shoulder, pausing to check his hair and makeup one more time before heading out for the big meeting.

Big meeting? Eric struggled with himself once more. He would cancel the meeting as soon as he got to work, he decided. There was no way he could allow everyone to see him like this, to make the loony announcements he'd been thinking about.

I am Sparrow Sunbeam, he thought, slitting his eyes in the mirror. *I am in control.*

Going downstairs to the garage, Eric saw his big, powerful sports car, and for a moment he surged with pride. It was a man's car, a powerful car, and— omigod. He remembered how terrible it was for the environment. Such a gas guzzler. He now saw the bike leaning against the wall of the garage, complete with a wicker basket.

“Oh, come on, Dorothy,” he called out, planting his hands on his hips. “Really?”

Oh, yes, Dorothy thought. Really.

Eric fought with what little fight he had left, but eventually found himself climbing on his new bike. At least it's a girl bike, he thought, noticing how the brace between the handlebars and the seat dropped down, making it



easier for him to get on the bike wearing his skirt.

Soon, Eric found himself peddling along, ringing the little bell on the handlebars, smiling as he rode along in the fresh morning air, weaving in and out of other bikers,

walkers. *I'm saving the environment*, he thought. *Look at me!*

Chapter Nine

If it hadn't been for Tatiana's magic, no one would have recognized the petite, busty girl in the flowing boho skirt as Eric Carmine. As much as his physical transformation stunned his employees, it was the complete and total change in his personality they found most surprising as he fluttered gracefully to the front of the conference room, flashing a big bright smile. "Hey, peeps," he sang, and he not only had the small, pretty voice they'd been growing used to, but he was now speaking in a feminine, singsong cadence.

"Peace and love to everyone," he said, and they all noticed he now talked with his hands, waving them in a pretty, feminine manner. "Like, I have so many cool new announcements. I'm sooooo excited. First, I now prefer to be called..."

No. Eric struggled to stop himself from announcing the ridiculous new name. "I'm... Errrrr.... I'm Errrrrrr...."

"I'm Sparrow!" He finally sang, wilting in horror. "Sparrow Sunbeam!"
Everyone sat back, stunned.

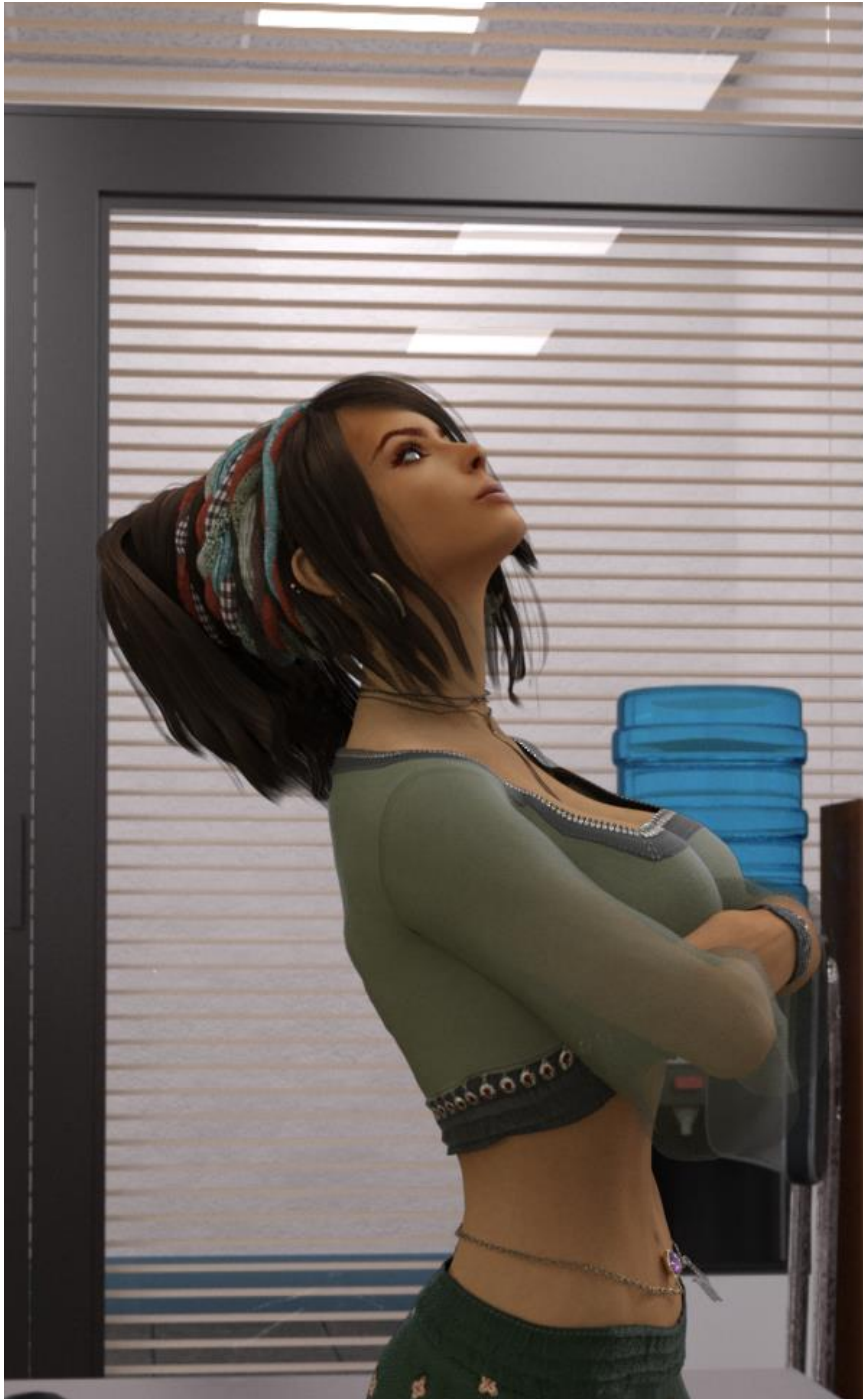
"I know, right?" Eric said, twiddling with his hair. He had totally lost control, overcome with a rush of feminine excitement and a need to share all the things he'd seen during his trippy meditation experience. "Also, I was meditating, and I saw a golden pyramid, and it told me we need to make this company progressive! Also, my horoscope said so, and, like, we are going to reduce our carbon footprint and save the whole world!"

Nina, who he'd been screaming at when his voice changed, smirked. She really loved seeing Eric turn into this kooky little hippie girl, and she also saw it as a chance to get rid of him. She raised her hand.

“Yes!” Eric said. “Good. I adore input.”

“Sparrow,” Nina said, smothering the name in contempt. “Won’t these progressive innovations hurt our profits?”

“Ugh! Profits scmofits!” Eric said, tossing his nose in the air. “Who even cares about profits?”



Will and Nina exchanged a glance. They were both thinking the same thing: who cares about profits? The board of directors. Eric had clearly lost his mind and turned into a total dingbat. Will, wanting to help Eric dig an even deeper hole for himself, raised his hand, and did not wait to be called on. “Sparrow,” he said. “I have a great idea!”

“Okay? See? Yes!” Eric said. In the past he’d been a *my*

way or the highway guy, but now he was all about inclusion. "Let's just throw our ideas out there!"

"Why don't we save that community garden we were going to destroy?"

Eric's pretty mouth dropped open. "Omigoddess... *Hell no*, Eric wanted to say. Thinking of Dorothy and her collection of groovy losers. *Hell no*.

But instead, he heard himself squeal, "yes!" as he clapped his little hands. "We have to! It'll show everyone what this company is all about."

Inside, the real Eric was dying of horror.

"Okay, so, let me tell you some of my other ideas, and I totally want your feedback and thoughts and... This is a collective now and all opinions are valued and cherished and ..." Eric rattled on, no longer able to stop himself from airhead ramblings and delivered a scatter-brained free form talk, diving off into tangents on the *I Ching* and things he thought Buddha had probably said.

As soon as the meeting was over, Will and Nina huddled up. "We need to inform the board," Will said.

"We play this right," Nina affirmed, "there are promotions for both of us."

"And we get rid of Eric Carmine once and for all."

"Don't you mean Sparrow Sunbeam?" Nina said, and they both laughed.

Chapter Ten

Eric danced and twirled his way back to his office, buzzing with excitement and the great “think-in” they’d all shared. As he opened the door, he saw that, just like his apartment, his once masculine office had now been transformed, looking like the reception area at a spa with tinkling waterfall fountains, soft, comfy chairs, and even some bean bag chairs tossed in a corner. The painting of a great white shark that had hung behind his desk had been replaced by a painting of a group of young women with flowers in their hair, sitting in a circle holding hands. His leather power chair had been replaced by a papasan chair with a big, soft bouncy cushion in tie-dye colors and instead of a desk he now had a low table covered in trinkets and knick-knacks.

“Omigod,” Eric said, putting his hand to his heart. “I love it and hate it so much.”

The office was nothing Eric, and everything Sparrow.

Another wave off anxiety overcame Eric. He no longer feared losing control, but was confronting the reality he had lost all control. He was Sparrow now. He couldn’t even say or think his old name. He was what Dorothy had molded him into, his willpower utterly useless.

“Oh, well,” he said with a little shrug. “I guess I’ll just have to get used to it!”

The words stunned him. Was he giving up so easily? Was he just going to surrender to becoming Dorothy’s doll, a toy for her to change and play with and turn into whomever she chose?

I'm running out of time, he realized. It's now or never. I have to fight this, but how? Eric had no idea. This was all so far out of any kind of world he ever believed in. There was only one thing to do.

Eric turned on a recording of Tibetan singing bowls, got into the Lotus position and began to meditate. There was no golden pyramid this time. He found himself wandering in a foggy plane, lost, confused, with no sense of direction.

"Someone help me!" He called out, his voice muted. "I am feeling so uncool right now! Please, help!"

A face seemed to materialize from the mist. "Rainbow Skies!" Eric called. She was the one who'd helped him align his chakras.

"Come to me, Sparrow," Rainbow Skies said in a soft, maternal voice.

Eric snapped out of his meditation, long lashes fluttering. Yes. That was the answer. To fight magic, he needed magic, and he knew that Rainbow Skies could help him fix what was wrong with him. He'd felt it in his vision, and to Sparrow Sunbeam, visions were truth.

Eric rode his bike to the spiritual center, elated, excited. He found he loved riding a bike and wondered why he hadn't started sooner. Not only was it great for the environment, but also for his legs, and having tone, pretty legs was so important.

Hmmpf. Stupid Dorothy. She thought it was a curse, but making him ride his bike was a total gift! Shows how much she knows.

Chapter 11

When Eric arrived at the spiritual center, Rainbow greeted him with a hug and a cup of tea. "Come, child," Rainbow said, leading him to a meditation room. They sat on the floor. "Tell me what troubles you."

"Omigod," Eric said. "So much. I mean, there's animal rights, domestic violence, the environment, legalizing marijuana though that one is pretty much..."

"Sparrow," Rainbow interrupted. "Tell me why you sought me out, why our minds connected."

"Oh." Eric took a deep breath. It took all his courage to admit what he was about to say, but it was also his only hope. "I know I may not look like one, but I am actually a man," he said, waiting to see how Rainbow would react, whether she would laugh or think he was crazy, but she just smiled.

"I'm Dorothy's ex-husband," he continued. "She's changing me somehow, turning me into Sparrow." He paused.

"And what would you ask of me?"

"I want you to fix what's wrong with me," Eric said. "Please?"

Rainbow smiled. "I can fix what's wrong with you, Sparrow. Are you ready to begin?"

"So ready."

She had Eric lay on his back. "You're feeling a loss of control in your life, yes?" Rainbow asked.

"Yes! Omigod!"

"You're experiencing a blocking of your Swadhisthana or Sacral Chakra," Rainbow said, placing her hand on Eric's lower abdomen, a little below his belly button. Her touch alone caused a sudden sense of peace to

wash over him. "Take this tiger eye stone and hold it where I just touched you."

"Okay." Eric took the stone and held it against his abdomen.

"Now, close your eyes.

He felt Rainbow rub some water across his forehead. Then, she said, repeat after me... "Make me a flower...."

"Make me a flower..."

"Give me a flower..."

"Give me a flower..."

"Bless me with a feminine soul..."

"Bless me with..." Eric struggled, the old Eric... no... no...

"It's okay," Rainbow said. "Trust me..."

"A feminine soul..." Eric said, because he did trust her. He had to trust her.

"Make me a woman...."

"Make... make..." Eric screamed inside. Get up! Run! He begged. "No," he managed to whisper. "I don't want to be a woman."

"All your suffering and confusion can end," Rainbow said. "You can let go of your pointless pursuit of material things, and enter the realm of the spirit, but you must cleanse your chakra..."

My chakra! Yes. Eric had to cleanse his chakra, and he needed so badly to move into the realm of the spirit! "Make me a woman..." he gasped..."make me a woman!"

In his mind, he saw a long, narrow stalk topped with a tiny, hard, round bud thrusting into the sky. The bud shuddered, then split, spread, opening, blossoming into a bright, pink rose, the petals dappled with sparkling drops

of dew... he felt a warmth spreading between his legs, a budding and spreading... and he knew he was truly becoming a woman.

Sobbing, Eric sat up. "What have you done to me?" He said. "What have

you done?"

"I fixed what was wrong with you," Rainbow said, drawing him in for a hug. "Just like I promised."

Rainbow and Dorothy had worked it out ahead of time. Dorothy was quite pleased to see Eric ask to be made a woman, almost as much as she enjoyed seeing the horror on his face as he realized he had become one.



Chapter 12

“Hey, Sparrow!” Dorothy called as she spotted Eric walking along the rows of eggplants, a basket at his hip, picking the ripe ones ready to be made into his famous Baba Ganoush, which of course he loved sharing with all his friends at the collective.

“Hi!” Eric sang back with a little wave.

“You look so pretty!” Dorothy said. She loved constantly telling her ex how cute and pretty he was, especially because of how he reacted.

“Thanks!” Eric sang, clearly pleased. Being pretty was so important, probably the most important thing. Oh, he knew he should probably be more enlightened or something like that, but gosh, wow, couldn’t a girl feel good about herself and also want to save the world?

They were both at the new community garden, which had been relocated further out, in a still blighted neighborhood that had so far escaped gentrification. This time, though, they had no fears they would ever be displaced. A certain rich hippie chick by the name of Sparrow Sunbeam had bought the lot for them.

The board had not even bothered to notify Eric of the emergency meeting or the vote. Having gotten news of his loopy schemes, they’d simply voted him out and sent him packing— along with a huge check to buy out his stake in the company.

Eric had cried, of course, because he’d had such amazing plans to save the world and stuff, and he’d been devastated for awhile when the news stories had broke about his sex change and new identity— almost all of them mean and snarky.

But, like, wow, the universe was love, and Rainbow had helped him to see all he had to do was look at all of this as one totally awesome blessing, embrace his new life and surrender to the stars, and he'd found so much happiness with all his new friends and especially his boyfriend—

“Hey, babe,” Virtue said as he grabbed Eric around the waist.

“Hey,” Eric said, turning his head and accepting a kiss from his hot, handsome boyfriend.

And his girlfriend—

“Leave some for me,” Mystic said, coming up and putting her arms around Eric's waist, kissing him on the cheek.

Dorothy smiled as Eric giggled and blushed, smothered in kisses. Tatiana had been so right. She really had done him a favor by turning him into a hippie chick. He, and the world, were better off.

Of course, Dorothy knew the real Eric was trapped somewhere inside there, raging impotently against his fate. She felt almost a little guilty for having done it to him, and in spite of all her self-talk about it being a gift, she knew at least part of it was just merciless cruelty, payback for the way he'd mocked her and disrespected her over the years of their horrible marriage..

Yin and Yang, she thought with a shrug, watching Virtue and Mystic leading Eric by the hands back to the barn for a literal roll in the hay. Inside every light is a little darkness.

The End

