

EX-HUSBAND

Magazine
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*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.*

Cooper, Kadee and Cheelin



The organist raised her hands, and then the first notes of the wedding march rolled across the stone floor, and Markus took a deep breath, glanced over at his father and smiled, though his eyes were swelling with tears. Dad smiled back.

The two began to walk down the aisle of the ancient, gothic church, pillars lancing toward the vaulted ceiling, statues of saints peering curiously from niches in the walls, the stained-glass windows casting blues and reds across the packed pews filled with friends and family, all craning their necks to get a glimpse of him in his wedding gown. He heard the whispers: *...so pretty...* he heard whispered...*he makes a lovely bride...*

Markus had never felt prettier, happier... he'd been dreaming of this day since he'd been a little girl, and now it was happening,

exactly the way he'd always dreamt it would happen...

The room smelled heavily of fragrant candles and incense...

Markus looked toward the front of the church, where the groom and his groomsmen waited at the foot of the steps leading up to the gleaming, golden altar. The groom's face was hidden in shadow. Oh! Markus wondered. Who am I marrying? What does he look like? Closer and closer they moved toward the front of the church, but the face of his fiancé never emerged from the shadows... as he strained to try and see through the obscuring darkness, Markus felt something wet slap him in the face, then what seemed like slobber running down his cheek.

My makeup, he thought in a panic of confusion. It would be ruined. His wedding would be ruined. His perfect wedding, the wedding pictures. More slobber, this time splattering across his lips. "What's happening to me?"

He started to cry, and then he felt a hand like an icy claw seize his wrist, the fingernails digging into his soft skin. He looked down to see his Esther, his grandmother, her eyes blazing with rage. "Stop crying!" She hissed. "You're a man!"

A man? Markus remembered. Yes. He was a man. So, why the hell was he crying in the middle of a church wearing a wedding dress? Even as he pondered the question, the church began to melt and fade away into darkness.



Markus woke to the feeling of something warm and wet lapping at his cheek, then his mouth. He opened his eyes to see his dog's big, brown eyes filled with quizzical concerns. "Rawr?"

"Hey, buddy," Markus said, scratching Sam behind the ears as he pushed himself up, realized he'd been sleeping on the cold, tile bathroom floor. "What the—?" It came back to him then: looking in the mirror, the shock of seeing a woman's face looking back at him.

He touched his plump lips, his smooth cheek. He went to the mirror, fully expecting to see his old face, but he gasped as he saw *her* once more looking back at him. He touched his now sleek, feminine eyebrows while turning his side to side, eyes locked on the tiny, upturned nose that had replaced his own. "What the fuck?"

His eyes looked bigger, too, and they were now ringed with long, thick, curly lashes.

“How the hell am I supposed to face the world with this face?” He asked Sam, who just looked at him, wagged his tail, and then slinked off. Markus made some coffee. More of the tart Costa Rican he’d been into lately. He sipped and munched on a bagel while he did a search on the Internet—about *waking up with a woman’s face*. Nothing. Articles about waking with a puffy face or seeing faces. Nothing on waking looking like a girl.

It was a condition of Tatiana’s magic that people, including the recipient, accepted the impossible, and so though he didn’t understand it and knew it was impossible to just spontaneously experience a nose job, Markus also just accepted that, well, he had.

“I would call in sick,” he said to Sam, who seemed like he’d gone back to sleep in his comfy dog bed, “but since I own my own business, no work, no pay.”

Ava was watching and made a change. After a quick shower, Markus went to the closet, where he had a row of his basic t-shirts hanging. They were his work uniform. Only, now they were gone. “What the fuck is this?” Markus said, seeing a row of fuchsia t-shirts. “Since when do I even know what fuchsia looks like?” He wondered. The color alone was decidedly feminine, but when he looked at the front he cursed, “Oh, hell no.” There was a pink and purple unicorn and the words “Believe in Unicorns.” Even his ex-wife wouldn’t wear something that dumb, he thought. Shit, no. There was no way he was going out in public wearing that crap. He found another shirt.

Markus got his food truck downtown, did all his prep work, the interior filling with the smells of smoke and fryers warming, tangy onions and pickles. As he pushed open the window, he checked his face one more time, appalled at how feminine he looked. He felt a little scared, nervous, about how his regulars were going to react, and sick at the thought that all the women he’d slept with who might stop by were going to think, what? That he wanted to look like a chick?

There were already customers waiting, so Markus got right to work, for a time forgetting all about his face. Ava, who’d been busy doing chores,

tuned in and was immediately annoyed to see Markus had not worn the pretty t-shirt she'd conjured up for him. She realized she should have made him, but no matter. With the mere power of a thought, the shirt morphed into the unicorn shirt.

Markus had his back to the customers, putting the finishing touches on a couple of bacon cheeseburgers for a mother and a daughter. When he turned back around and put the tray with the food on the counter, the little girl clapped and said, "I love your shirt!"

"Why, thanks," Markus said, confused since he thought he'd worn a plain, black shirt, but when he glanced down, he saw pink, he saw purple, he saw fuchsia. His mouth dropped open. He froze, feeling his skin crawl. What the hell?

"You're so pretty," the girl went on, smiling up at him.

Pretty? "Uh, cool, cool," Markus said, shocked and humiliated. Does she think I'm a girl?

Ava had not come in just to mess with Markus' shirt. She had bigger plans. She saw her opportunity coming—a young guy in a suit, good looking. Yes. He would do nicely. She flipped Markus' orientation so he liked men now, and then made another little adjustment.

Markus, busy with his orders, didn't see the man coming until he was next in line. "Chance," Markus said, recognizing a regular, but even as he said the man's name his voice trailed off, his mouth dropped open. Omigod, he thought. He has the prettiest eyes. Markus felt himself falling into those eyes, getting lost in them, and then he let himself take in Chance's nose, his lips, that strong, manly chin. I bet he's a great kisser, Markus thought, as he thrust a hip out to the side, planted one hand on it while smiling brightly and tilting his head to the side, advertising his emerging submissiveness and availability.

Chance had been distracted by Markus new face, and he now noticed the body language. What the fuck? He thought. He and Markus had been bros buddies, talking about all the bitches they'd laid, keeping score. Now, the dude looked like a lady. "Um, cool new look," Chance said, at a loss for anything better to say.

“You like?” Markus said, gesturing toward his face, feeling his heart skip a beat as he suddenly found himself thinking, maybe this face isn’t so bad after all. He was checking out Chance’s broad shoulders now, his eyes drifting down toward his—

Omigod! Markus stopped himself, dragged his eyes away from that hunky man, struggling to keep himself from examining the bulge in Markus’ pants. He took a deep breath and tried to get back to normalcy. “Whaddya having today?”

Chance, who’d seen a whole three act play of emotions pass across Markus’ new face, almost left and went somewhere else for lunch given how weird Markus was acting, but his stomach growled. “Okay, yeah,” Chance said, placing his order.

Markus went to get it ready, not even realizing that all his movements were now sweet and feminine, nor that he was leaning over, keeping his legs straight and pushing his booty back toward Chance, presenting himself.

Ava laughed.

Markus, while not aware of his new body language, was very aware of the way his heart was racing, his dry throat and blushing cheeks, the fact he couldn’t stop imagining he and Chance watching the sunset from the Erchoi Bridge, a tugboat passing beneath them, blasting its horn as their lips met and Markus kicked his leg up...

What the hell am I thinking? Markus pushed the fantasy from his mind. Watching the sunset? Making out with Chance? Am I turning gay?

As he finished with Chance’s order, Markus began to chant in his head, just be normal... just be normal... don’t be a spazz... The possibility Chance might somehow figure out he’d been daydreaming about the two of them making out terrified him. He turned, a big smile plastered on his face and placed the burger on the counter. “Thanks. Good seeing you,” he managed, controlling his eyes.

“Yup,” Chance said, taking his food.

Seeing Chance about to leave, feeling there was too much unsaid, Markus burst out, “I love cooking for you!” Chance froze, staring. Markus immediately covered his mouth with his hands, his eyes wide.

Chance looked seriously and totally uncomfortable as he took his food and left.

I'm such a dork, Markus thought as he let his eyes drift down the length of Chance's back. Chance wore a coat, but Markus imagined the man's gorgeous body, a body like a hero from an old story. As he stared, he felt his cheeks flushing even more, he felt thirsty, and his chest began to ache. He imagined he and Chance in a rowboat shaped like a swan, rowing on a narrow creek, beneath a canopy of roses. Oh, it would be so fun! And then—



breasts— they just popped out on his chest and bounced into place, straining against his t-shirt.

Markus looked down and saw his newly blossomed breasts tenting out the front of his unicorn t-shirt. Breasts? Me? “Ahhh!” He squealed, wrapping his arms around his perky new puppies.

The next customer, a regular named Max, an old man from down the block, smiled and stuck his tongue out. “Nice bongos,”

he said. "I'll give you 5 dollars to flash me."

Markus' mouth dropped open, his brain short circuiting. Had a pervy old man just offered to pay him to give him a look at his tits? None of it was possible, could ever happen, and yet here he stood, blushing with shame as a man did, in fact, ask him for a glimpse of the breasts he shouldn't even have.

Ava, seeing the stunned and confused look on her dumb ex's pretty face, did another one of her little dances. "This is too good," she said to herself. "Thank you, old man, for the assist."

Markus looked like he wanted to sink into the floor and vanish forever. Boobs? Jugs? He didn't want to believe it, but he could feel their soft swelling under his arms. I'm losing my mind, he thought. I'm going insane. And, as for Max, how vulgar! "Did you want to order?" Markus said, slitting his eyes in feminine rage.

"Double cheeseburger," Max said, "and my offer stands. I would love to see those ta tas."

"Yeah, yeah," Markus said, unfolding his arms, staring down in horror at his girls. No work, no pay. He needed the money. The rest of the day, Markus just did his best to try and tune out the fact he had breasts now, but the darn things just had a way of reminding him constantly that they were there. They shifted and bounced, jiggled and just always seemed to get in the way. They felt huge and awkward, and it didn't help that his regulars kept telling him he was "brave."

By the time a shaken, exhausted and demoralized Markus shut down for the night, he just wanted a glass of wine, a good movie and a chance to chill.

He stopped at a drugstore on the way home and picked up a few things, barely aware of what he was even doing. A group of teenage boys saw him, and they all dropped their eyes right to his new assets. Markus cringed, thought about confronting them about ogling his puppies, but decided it wasn't worth it. As he passed them, he heard one whisper, "she's kinda butch, but I'd do her."

Do me? The words made Markus feel small, a little gross, scared even. These boys were thinking about fucking *him*? It was so crude! A spark of rage and he turned, put his hands on the small of his back and thrust his breasts toward the boys defiantly. "For your information," he sassed, head going side to side, 'I'm a man."

The boys stared for a moment, and then they all burst out laughing.

Markus looked around, wishing someone there would stand up for him, but the pimply faced kid at the register just looked at Markus' breasts and grinned. "I guess there aren't any gentlemen anymore," Markus huffed, then stopped. What am I doing? Looking for a knight in shining armor to save me? What the fuck is wrong with me?

A quick trip to the liquor store was not quite as humiliating. Omar, the owner, knew Markus well, though he did a double take when Markus entered, he refrained from making any comments or staring at Markus' perky new breasts. Markus couldn't help but express his appreciation for this good, decent man. "Omar, you are one of the last decent men in this city. Thank you for restoring my faith in men."

"Sure thing," Omar said, not even sure what Markus was talking about.

Back home, Markus pulled his t-shirt off, his boobs swaying free. It felt so strange to have a chest that moved, and he could feel his nipples, now seeming to float inches away from his ribcage. Looking in the mirror, he confirmed that he did, indeed, have breasts complete with fat, wide, pointy nipples. They were pretty good ones, too, if he did say so himself. Turning to the side, he saw how they thrust from his chest in a classic, tear drop shape. Cupping the soft flesh, he squeezed them together, looking down at the soft crescents forming a perfect, pretty valley of shadowy cleavage. He ran a thumb over one of his stiffening nipples as he imagined he and Chance running through the rain together in Paris, diving under the awning of the cutest little bistro...

He heard himself moan, realized what he was doing, thinking.

He dropped his hands. He'd need to see a doctor, he decided. A man couldn't just pop out a pair of breasts any more than he could just have a new nose. Something very weird was happening. Yes, he needed to do something and he would do something-- but right now he was just too tired.

Changing into his pajamas, Markus plopped down on the couch with a glass of Chablis. He'd decided to watch *Romeo and Juliet*. He'd always heard such good things, and he'd never bothered to read it back in high school, so he was pretty excited to find out what all the fuss was about. Turning on the movie, not really even paying attention to what he was doing but becoming engrossed in the tale of star-crossed lovers, he pulled some of the items from the drugstore out of the bag—press on nails, a nail file, nail polish.

As the movie played, he worked on his nails. The actor playing Romeo was hot. Omigod. And Juliet was really pretty. "What a cute couple," Markus gushed. "And they're so in love. I hope they find a way to be together." He sighed.



About halfway through the movie, Markus needed to tinkle, so he picked up the remote and paused the movie, then, setting the remote down, he stared at his hands.

Something was wrong.

Different. He wasn't sure.

Then, he finally recognized his now long, wet

crimson fingernails, became aware of the acetone smell of the nail polish.

"Fucking girl hands," he thought, embarrassed, humiliated, stunned as he realized he'd done this to himself. Even guys who used nail polish didn't

have nails like his. "I have to get rid of these," he decided, thinking he would break them off, clean off the nail polish. He had nail clippers in the bathroom. He'd cut them off, he thought, starting to stand.

Ave made a change.

Markus found himself turning his hands side to side, watching the way the light danced on his glossy nails. They were pretty. He sat back down as he stared at his pretty nails in fascination. They made him feel pretty, and they made his hands look more lithe, more feminine.

"Why would I want feminine looking hands?" Markus growled to himself. He would look like a fool. People would laugh. How would he even cook with these things? No. They had to go...

Ave planted another, absurd thought. "Maybe they *would* distract attention from my boobs," Markus agreed with the whisper he'd heard and not heard. Ava whispered again. He held up both hands, admiring his nails, then he shrugged and giggled. "I want them. I need them. Who cares what the world thinks?"

He tinkled and got back to Romeo and Juliet. At the end, as the star-crossed lovers lay in death together, he hugged a pillow to his breasts and wept. He wanted to find a love as strong as theirs. Something better, more pure, more radiant than any love that had ever been. A love that was more than love, that even the angels in heaven would envy.

He would find that love. He just knew it. He would find his soulmate.

Bonus

