

Manic Pixie 4

Baxter followed Lew down the stairs to a club in a low-ceilinged basement, all neon lights and murky shadows, people crowding around tables with small, flickering lamps. The otherworldly sound of an armonica, like the tinkling hum of someone playing glasses, bounced around the room in muted echoes. Smoke swirled around the entranced dancers, and before he and Lew even hit the dance floor, someone handed Baxter a joint. He took a toke, laughing, then he and Lew began to dance, the world seeming like it moved in slow motion, even the sound seemed to move in slow motion, like it was made of syrup. The air was so thick with smoke—marijuana, tobacco, vape—Bax felt his head go light in mere minutes, and the room seemed to swell and recede around him. He became acutely aware



of his new body, the way his chest jiggled, the way his corset crushed his ribs, the way his diaphanous skirt swirled around his legs, themselves tightly bound in fishnet stockings.

Bax had no idea how long he'd been dancing when he turned and found himself staring into the face of his boss. "Mr. Powers," Bax said, surprised. Mr. Powers' eyes went right to Bax's breasts.



"Call me Pierce," the other man said, now boldly putting a hand on Bax's back, pulling him closer so their hips slammed together and Bax found his breast pressing against Pierce's body. Pierce wore the same suit he'd worn at the office, the same tie, the same everything. His hair was slicked back. He looked so out of place. "You're a woman now," Pierce said, stroking Baxter's cheek with the back of his hand. "An actual woman."

"Guilty as charged," Baxter said, breaking out into his new, high-pitched laugh. "I don't exactly know how I turned into a woman, but Lew says I manifested this body." Baxter shook his shoulders, rubbing his breasts across Pierce's

body. "Can you even believe such a thing?" He felt flirty, oddly drawn to his old boss. Something in Baxter sensed pain in the man, frustration, repression. "Also, I'm quirky."

"I'm glad you did whatever you did," Pierce said, letting his eyes once more drop to Baxter's chest. "I'm glad you manifested this face. You look like you're 19."

Pierce, his hands still on Bax's hips, began a kind of shuffling slow dance. Bax, not knowing what else to do with his arms, threw them around Pierce's neck. Lew was sitting at one of the tables now with a guy who had long dreadlocks. She met Bax's eyes and nodded, mouthing "yes."

The armonica playing sped up, grew more intense, frantic. The singer began to chant, "yes.... Yes... yes... always yes... yes..."

"What are you doing here?" Bax asked, conscious of how cute and pretty his voice sounded, how much shorter he was than this man, even in his high heels.

"I came to find you. I had to find you."

"Why?" Bax asked.

Pierce got a distant look in his eyes as he stared off into space. "I don't know."

Bax thought back to his meeting with Pierce earlier that day. It made sense to him now, made sense why Pierce had come looking for him.

Flashback

...he felt Eric pinch his ass. He yelped, jumped and rushed into his boss's office, then instantly froze as he saw Mr. Powers glaring at him. Mr. Powers had an aura about him, an aura of easy masculinity and unshakeable confidence. He had a full head of silver hair and a cleft chin that looked like it could be used to split wood as well as cold, gray eyes like a husky.

"Take a seat," Mr. Powers said, his voice flat, face expressionless.

Damn it, Eric thought as he walked over to the seat in front of Powers' desk. "I'm walking like a woman." He could feel his hips sway side to side, and he was holding his arms out, trying to stay balanced on his wedge heels. When he sat, he crossed his legs like a woman as well and put his hands in his lap. He felt like a fool sitting there in a blouse and slacks, with his pink hair and piercings.

“Explain this,” Powers said, waving his hand at Baxter. Powers had thick fingers, and he wore a heavy golden ring with a black onyx stone on his non-wedding hand. “Explain why a partner in my firm is suddenly walking around with pink hair and a nose ring like some kind of rebellious 14-year-old girl.” He never raised his voice. It stayed steady and flat, calm.

Baxter swallowed. “That,” he said. “The judge in this case is a little—”

“Don’t give me that shit,” Powers said. “I’m glad your client fell for it, and the judge may go for it, too, in this case, but don’t insult my intelligence. I’ll ask again: why? Understand, this is your last chance to be honest with me.”

“Honest...” Baxter said, nervously fingering his lip ring. “Yes, about my hair and the piercings...” He didn’t fully understand his pink hair, his piercings. He’d gotten really high, gone nuts with Lew, he wasn’t—

His ex-wife, Annie, decided to have some fun, taking over Baxter’s mind, turning him into the equivalent of a ventriloquist dummy. “I don’t know if a square like you can understand, Daddy-o,” Annie said, putting on an accent like a bratty teen from a 1950s B-movie. “I’m a bacchanalian babe, a spontaneous sprite. I do what I want, when I want, with who I want. I’m a Manic Pixie, old man, and the uptight rules of your conformist world mean nothing to me. I live for the chaos, for the madness, for the zazz. I wanted pink hair, so I got pink hair, and I don’t care what anyone thinks about it. Ya got that, Mr. Normal Pants?”

Inside, Baxter was horrified. What the fuck am I saying? He wondered. What the hell is wrong with me? It was too late, though. The words had come out. All he could do now was wait for Powers to answer.

At first, Powers didn’t react at all. He just stared at Baxter. Then, he said, “You’ve gone insane.”

Annie giggled and Baxter giggled. “Freedom looks like insanity to a mind in chains,” Baxter said getting up. Then, he saluted. “Are you really happy?” He said, saluting. “Are you really alive?”

“I’ll get help for you, Baxter. I will.”

“I am a jelly donut!” Annie screamed and Baxter screamed, then he turned on his heels and marched out, putting an extra sway in his hips, throwing his nose in the air. He looked back over his shoulder just before he left the room and winked. “If you ever want to escape from your prison of fear, come find me.”



Powers watched, shook his head. It was a shame to see someone suffer a total break down, especially someone who'd been such a good lawyer. For some reason, though, the questions lingered in his mind. Was he really happy? Was he really alive?

Back to the Present

“I got through to you,” Baxter said, reaching up, touching Pierce’s face. “You heard my words. Even though my voice was false, you felt my truth.”

Pierce took Baxter’s hand and said, “come with me.”

Baxter glanced at Lew. She mouthed “yes.”

The performer was pounding on the armonica now, pounding and pounding, shouting “yes... yes... yes...”

Baxter smiled and said, “yes.”

Annie, watching, said, “yes!”

Pierce smiled and said, “yes.”

Though Pierce led them out of that club, Baxter took over from there, leading Pierce now on a tour of the underground: clubs, bars, al fresco performances of forgotten theater pieces from the 19th century... there were drugs and drinks and more drugs, there was laughter and dancing. As the sun rose, they stumbled into Pierce’s apartment, the one where he took his mistresses, his flings. He and Baxter got themselves undressed, and then Baxter found himself on his back, legs in the air while Pierce thrust into him, taking his virginity as a woman. It was pedestrian, Bax thought, but Pierce was new to all this, and he would need time to really loosen up.

They woke in the afternoon and lay in bed eating burritos wrapped in tinfoil. “Oh, hell,” Pierce said when he took a bite and a small avalanche of black beans tumbled down onto the sheets. He started to get up, but Baxter grabbed his arm, pulled him back down and kissed him.

“Life is messy,” Baxter said. “Leave it that way.”

Pierce shrugged. “I just slept with a former partner who was a guy until a day ago, so why not?” He took another bite of his burrito. “So good,” he said, his mouth full of food. “I haven’t eaten in bed since... college.”

“How does it feel to just let go?” Baxter asked. “To just do whatever feels right?”

“Good,” Pierce said. “Incredible.” He looked over at Bax and touched him on the shoulder. “I never noticed this tattoo before.” Baxter looked over to see the tattoo of a Pixie on his little shoulder. He’d never seen it before, either, but he smiled when he saw it.

“That’s so perfect,” he said. “That’s so me.” A sudden sadness filled his eyes, and he looked away. “It all goes back to my childhood trauma.” He fought back tears as he remembered the story Annie had planted in his mind.

“Trauma?” Pierce asked. “What happened?”

“When I was a little boy, and that seems so, so long ago now. When I was a boy, I got a dog for my 8th birthday. It was a labradoodle. All Black. I named him All Black.” Bax nuzzled his head against Pierce’s chest. “I loved that dog more than anything, and we did everything together. We went for walks in the woods, we played in the pool, and most of all, we spent hours and hours playing Twister.”

Pierce raised an eyebrow. A dog playing Twister? Total bullshit, but he just listened. He’d already concluded Bax was insane. “Well, around the time I was nine, I stole a neighbor’s pickle barrel. It was only half full of pickles—”

“Hold on,” Pierce said, trying not to laugh. “Were they dill pickles?”

“Bread and butter,” Bax answered without hesitation. “Tasty. Anyway, thinking of the old George Washington story, I walked right up to my father and said, ‘I cannot tell a lie. I stole the pickle barrel from Mr. and Mrs. Klunkerfunker.’”

“Go on,” Pierce said, still trying not to laugh.

“Well, it did not go like the Washington story. My father took All Black away. I cried. I screamed. ‘Oh, you’ll be seeing your stupid pet again,’ he said, ‘only also he will not be the same when the Doctor Victor VonSurgeon is done with him.’”

“What have you done, you evil old man?” I shouted through my tears. “What have you done?”

“You will see, pickle fingers,” he answered. “You will see.”

Annie, herself, was rolling now as her dumb ex shared the absurd story, but one that he believed, thanks to her, was totally true.

“It turned out my father had sent All Black to a diabolical surgeon who lived in Transylvania. Some months later, a box with holes in it arrived at our doorstep. I heard a meow. My father was there, watching. ‘Open the box,’ he said while smoking his pipe, which he always filled with kiwi-flavored tobacco. I did. Inside was what looked like a kitten—all white. ‘What is this?’ I asked. ‘What does it mean?’”



“My father began to laugh. Don’t you recognize your stupid dog, now transformed into a kitten? Hahahahaha!” Baxter paused. “Not only was he a kitten, but he was too small to play Twister. The one thing that had brought us more joy than anything was gone. His tiny little kitten legs were too short. To this day, I cannot look at a white kitten without being brought to tears.” He began to cry then, overcome with emotion over his false memories.

“Twister,” he cried out. “Twister.”

Pierce held Baxter as the other sobbed. The crazy story had seemed funny, but the tears changed all that. He felt bad now for his one-time partner.

“My poor dog. He would always try to play with the other dogs, but they would say, go away. You are a cat, and we hate you. Then, when he tried to play with the cats, they would say, you stink at cat games. Get out of here.”

“It was from this that I learned to live life to the fullest, to treat each day as the only day,” Baxter said. “Because, as the old Slovakian saying goes, you never know when you may wake up to find yourself a kitten and too small to play Twister.”

Pierce felt a protectiveness come over him. Yes, Baxter was mad, but he wanted to help her, to rescue her. There was a question he needed to ask. “What did you name him after he got turned into a kitten? All White?”

“That would have been too cruel,” Baxter said. “No. I named him Used to Be All Black. USTEBAB for short.”

For the next several weeks, Pierce and Baxter hung out, did drugs, had sex, lingered in jazz clubs. Baxter pushed Pierce to try new things, to let loose, to experiment with different sex positions. Then, one day, it just seemed like Pierce was over it, and he said so. They'd just gotten done making love, and Pierce has sat up. "It's been fun, kiddo," he said. "But, time for me to get back to my real life."

Baxter felt sad, abandoned, betrayed. He made his way over to Lew's, and she talked him down. "This is what we do for these uptight guys," she explained as they traded a joint back and forth. "We're manic pixie dream girls. We're fun and obligation free. They spend time with us until they get all that out of their systems, and then they go back to their two and a half kids and nice, boring housewives. Don't feel bad that he left you. It means you did your job."

"And what do I do now?" Baxter said.

"Just live your life and, before you know it, some other uptight citizen come looking for a crazy girl to spice up his life."

Baxter grinned. "Sounds like a plan."

Pierce had bought Bax out, and he'd made a generous offer, so Baxter found himself with a lot of money. He didn't need to work, but he was an artist now, a dancer, and he needed to share his gifts with the world, so he found himself wearing a tutu and a corset along with stiletto heels, twirling and dancing on a subway platform while his boombox played a Tchaikovsky- Menudo mash-up an artist friend had made. He had a bucket which people threw money into as they passed, though most just walked by, eyes blank, just trying to get to the next stop.

Bax felt sorry for them. Were they even really alive? How many would be happier if they could just perform free-style modern dance in the subway?

As the music finished and he ended his dance with a bow, he heard clapping coming from behind him. Turning, he saw his ex-wife, Annie, grinning. "Annie Bananie!" He squealed, running up to throw his arms around her for a big hug.

"Baxter," Annie said, pretending to be surprised. "You've become a woman."

"Oh! Yeah," Baxter said, looking down at himself. "I forgot. How crazy, right?"

"I love your tutu," Annie said.

"Thanks," Baxter said, doing a twirl. "I feel so me in a tutu."

"Wanna know a secret?"

A subway train came blasting through the station without stopped, just filling the whole tunnel with thundering noise and a blast of air.

“Sure,” Baxter said once the noise had died down. “I love secrets.”

“Zazz,” Annie said, using the trigger word she’d selected.

Baxter’s mouth dropped open as a lot of the mental conditioning she’d applied to him melted away. Suddenly, he tottered on his high heels. He was himself again. He was the arrogant male lawyer, the man’s man, and----- and he was wearing a tutu, and he had breasts and he, he was standing on tippy toes, his feet squeezed into stiletto heels, and he was a woman now, a girl. “What the hell have you done to me?” He squeaked, his hand going to his throat as he heard himself speak in the tiny little girl voice she’d given him.

“Dance, dream girl, dance,” Annie said, laughing. “This is what you get for dumping me.”

The music started to play, this time a Bach fugue mashed up with bluegrass banjo. Baxter found himself dancing in spite of himself. A small crowd gathered, a lot of them guys who were looking him over, obviously horny. Baxter smiled and danced, but inside he was screaming.

“Zazz!”





The End