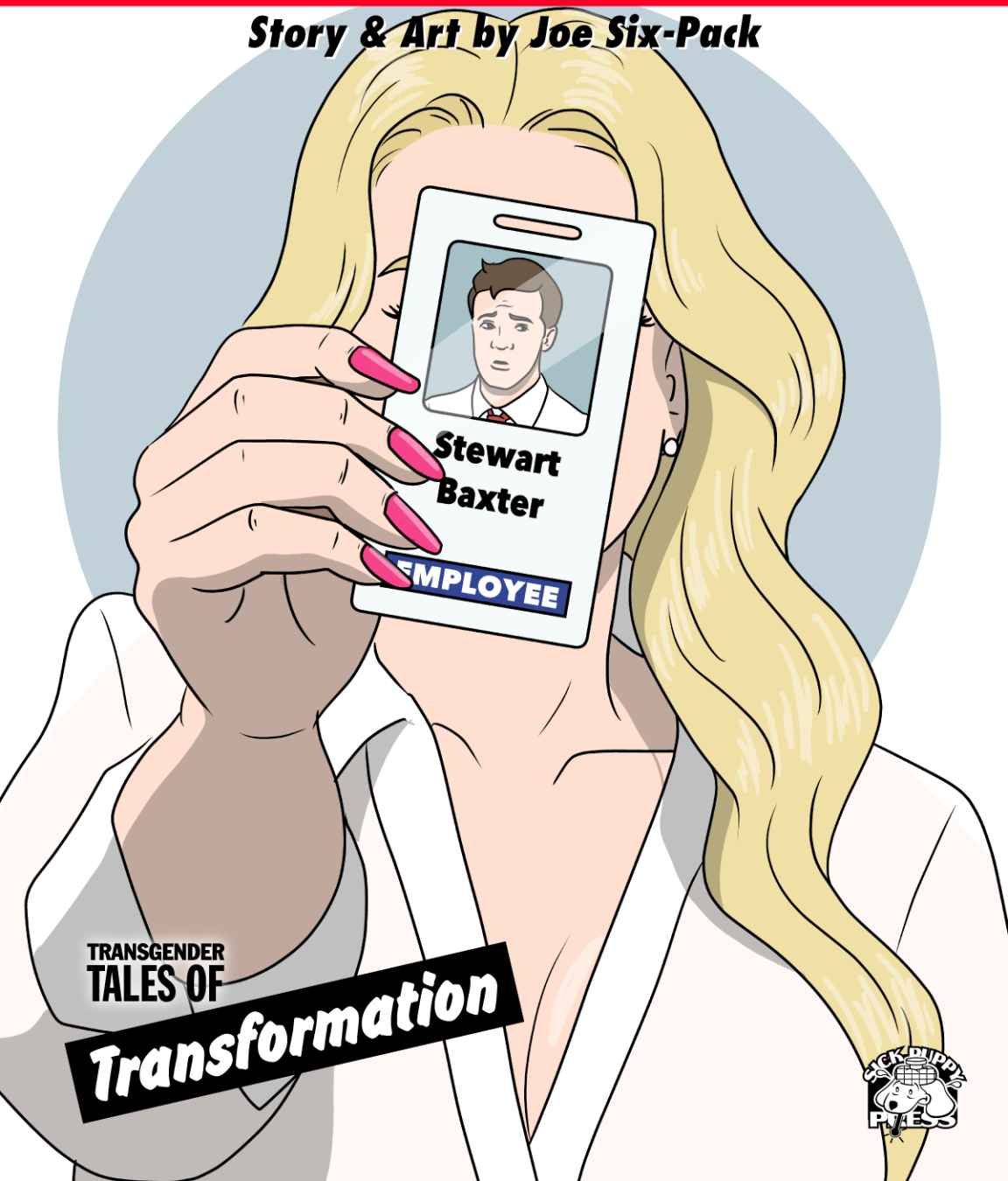


**ADULTS ONLY**

**67** pages **20** illustrations

# **HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack**



**TRANSGENDER  
TALES OF**

**Transformation**



**J O E   S I X   P A C K**

# ***HUMAN RESOURCES***

**Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack**  
**A Tales of Transformation story**



2025 Edition

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# HUMAN RESOURCES

Marsha looked into her mug. Three rings of coffee sediment, zero actual coffee. She sighed. She needed more fortitude. As she looked up from her desk, there he was. Her personal nightmare.

"It's not that I want to get anyone in trouble, but this is not something I can let slide," Byron said, as he held the offending item in his hand. "The margins of this document are one-and-one-quarter inches on the left, and one inch on the right. The company standards and practices manual clearly mandates an inch on both left and right sides!" He slapped the paper down on Marsha's desk. "I stand on the evidence! Right there with your own eyes!"

Marsha looked up at him wearily. "And this is a... Help me here, Byron... Your issue here is..."

"I've detailed these requirements in email after email!" He protested, in a huff.

Marsha checked her incoming email as he talked. There were five emails from Byron on this topic just today.

"Anyone who's not following them is making a deliberate attack on me!" He said, his heaving up showing the first signs of hyperventilation. "A personal attack! It's harassment! Pure and simple harassment!" He made a face. "Now *what* are you going to *do* about it?" He demanded. Byron stood there, motionless, his eyes trained on Marsha, waiting for the reciprocal outrage he was sure was coming.

Marsha was not new to her job. She had been at the Human Resources desk for decades. She knew how to handle just about any situation. Anything she couldn't handle likely involved calling first responders or a priest. Byron was testing her, though.

"Byron, I have to believe there's some sort of miscommunication here," she replied, playing the innocent. "I can't believe our own people would be so deceptive and... and... malicious. They're good people, Byron. I have to believe that." She drew her hands to the chin to look contemplative. "But what you're telling me... What you're saying is... We have an office full of vindictive, ignorant, willfully vengeful people. I can't help but feel deceived."

"Exactly!" Byron said, making a fist. "You understand exactly!"

"What can I do? What can I do?" Marsha said, looking very distressed. "I can't support this kind of behavior. What will the executives think? Our clients? Our customers? I have to weed out these people."

"I was just hoping for a memo," Byron said.

"A memo won't solve this. I need to start making some personnel decisions. People can't be trusted. Careers *will* be ended."

"Uh... Is that..." Byron was suddenly reversing field. "Is that really necessary?"

"I have to thank you, Byron, for being a champion of employee discipline. I'll be sure to let people know that it was your fastidious attention to procedure that gave them away when I terminate them for cause. Thank you very much, Byron you may return to your desk." She put her head down and started to furiously type on her keyboard. If Byron had seen it, it read "sa'ghir;gj wiugre pitphajlijag c juprotaxnlksmk 923 3poekkla[.]"

Byron turned, took three steps towards the door, and then spun around. Marsha had to credit his fortitude. She assumed he would take no more than one step before chickening out. "I... I... Don't want anyone to lose their job... On account of me."

Marsha stopped typing nonsense and looked up. "But Byron, I don't understand. We have them right where we want them!"

"Well... I... Uh... Why don't we drop the whole thing?" Byron said. "Please?"

There it was. Marsha knew how to play this situation all too well. She just had to turn it back on them.

"I can't let this kind of thing go..." She considered the request. "Maybe this is too sever. If I fire everyone involved in this conspiracy, we'll barely have any employees left." She looked at him, intensely. "You're going to need to take the point on this one, Byron. You write down more of these flagrant violations of our handbook. Gather the evidence. When you have enough, come back to me, and I'll do the dirty work. Sound good?"

"And no one gets fired? At least for now."

"We'll wait until the time is right." She smiled conspiratorially. "And then we strike."

"Uh. Right. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, Marsha," Byron said, before slipping out of her office like quicksilver.

Marsha looked at her empty coffee mug again. Time for a refill. She pushed herself up and headed for the break room. "I don't get paid enough for this shit," she said as she headed down the hallway. Before she could avoid him, the office manager suddenly stepped out of a doorway and right into Marsha's path. "Christ," she mumbled to herself.

"Marsha," the man said, in the way a schoolteacher addresses a troublesome pupil. "I did ask for the reception desk candidates files on my desk this morning," he said. "I came in this morning. No files. No emails. No report. I assume there's a reason? I'd like to hear it."

"Of course, Mr. Blomfeld," Marsha said to him.



The reason was that Mr. Blomfeld was asking her to violate every law and guideline that applied to this new hire. He wanted not just resumes for the receptionist candidates, but also pictures. Headshots. He wanted heights and weights. They had to be female. Ages 22-26. He wanted to interview them at dinner. In a fancy restaurant.

"I simply haven't gotten the responses," Masha said. "It's a difficult position to fill." Every girl they had hired since he had been office manager had been treated horribly. Sexual harassment was just where it started. Mr. Blomfeld bedded each and every one of them and discarded them when he got bored with them. Marsha simply wasn't prepared to throw another young woman into his lap.

"I need that position filled," Mr. Blomfeld said. "We have many important conferences coming up. Visitors every day. I need a girl — or a man, of course — to be there to keep them entertained. To give them that special impression we're famous for here."

"Of course, Mr. Blomfeld," Marsha said. "I did talk to Cheryl, though. She said she'll be here for at least four more months. We do have time."

"Oh, that's very... Fortunate."

Marsha had to give the girl a 200% raise, but she was going to stay. She had already been tossed aside by Mr. Blomfeld, so she was somewhat immune to him.

"Still, I'd much prefer to..."

"Corporate has taken a receptionist out of our personnel budget for the time being. Since Cheryl is staying on, you see," Marsha said with a smile. "But we can take another swing at it in a few months."

"How wonderful," Mr. Blomfeld said.

It was not wonderful. Marsha enjoyed seeing the hope drain from his expression. *Yup, you'll have to pay some hookers to keep you happy, you troll*, she thought to herself.

"I'll touch base with you in a few weeks to see how the new candidates are coming along, which you *will* have by then," the executive said, unwilling to let a conversation end without a threat of some kind.

"Of course!" Marsha said with a smile. She had no idea how she'd fend him off next time, but she had a few weeks to work that out.

With a mutual nod, they were off to opposite ends of the hallway.

The break room was full of the usual layabouts. People she had already sent warnings to about too much break time. But once she'd sent the warnings, that was the end of her responsibility. Now they were their supervisor's problems.

"Who do I need to blow to get a freakin' *decent* cup of coffee around here?" Bellowed Dean Herrera, from in front of the coffee maker. He practically

threw his steaming hot cup of fresh coffee into the sink, splashing back, and narrowly missing several employees. The looked back at Dean in wild-eye disbelief. What Marsha saw was narrowly avoided insurance claims.

“Dean, what the fuck?” Yelled Craig Hellman, who was standing nearby.

Dean walked right up to him and challenged him like a lion challenging for dominance of the pride. “Mind your own fucking business, Craig! No one wants to hear you bullshit!”

Marsha sighed. She really picked the worst times to run out of coffee.

“Jesus, man, maybe you’ve had enough coffee,” Craig said, as he ducked away, unwilling to engage. He left quickly.

Dean was on of those employees who was so intent on being a type-A executive that he had completely bent himself into the picture of a no-nonsense exec in his style, but not in his substance. He was short-tempered without the cachet to back it up, and was a constant generator of complaints that would up in Marsha’s inbox. She had a filter for him.

“Losers!” Dean barked to himself. He started to search the fridge. He picked up a bag that had the name “Jennifer” written on it. He tore it open, picked up every item in it and then tossed them into a wastebasket, one by one. “This company is nothing but...” He stopped on a bag of chips, opened them up and started snacking. He tossed the rest back in the fridge. “Victims,” he continued, muffled by his chewing.

The population of the break room rushed through whatever they were doing and left, eager to be anywhere else. People scurried away, leaving Dean to whatever crazy “driven executive” act he was workshopping.

Everyone, that is, except for Marsha. She was going to have to deal with this sooner or later, so she figured she might as well do it now. She crooked her neck and stepped into it.

“Oh, goodness sakes, Dean. I think there might have been a mistake.” She pointed to the chips. “I don’t want to alarm you, but those may not be yours.”

“They’re mine now,” Dean said. “Don’t leave your stuff lying around.”

“It’s a known courtesy to respect people’s property,” Marsha replied, waiting for Dean’s egotistical reply.

“A man like me takes what he wants, and doesn’t ask for permission,” Dean said. “Only pathetic losers worry about people’s *feelings*.”

“Oh, I see. Kind of a ‘law of the jungle’ approach.”

“The jungle sorts out the strong from the weak,” Dean added. “Apex predators like myself don’t stop to think about these beta cucks crying to their mommies!”

He was really on it, Marsha noted. “I don’t understand, Dean. This is theft.”



"You trying to make something of this, Marsha? You better think twice if this is the hill you're willing to die on."

"Dean," Marsha said, with a caring, soft voice. "I'm not sure you're in a safe mind space right now. Are you in mental distress?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I think you are in a state on mental distress, Dean. I feel that medical intervention is called for." She was making it up, of course. "I'm going to call for an EMT." She picked up her phone from her pocket.

"Put that down," he said.

"I'm not willing to jeopardize your mental health, Dean." She made some very deliberate taps on her phone.

"Stop it!" He said, diving to push her fingers away from the phone. Marsha easily dodged the attempt. "Please don't escalate the situation, Dean."

"I said stop!" He made another attempt to stop Marsha, but this time she let him succeed.

"This is an health emergency, Dean. I don't want you to hurt yourself or others."

"Look, I'm fine!" Dean said. "Look, look." He grabbed a twenty from his pocket and opened the fridge, putting the money into the torn lunch bag. "Okay, are we good?"

"Dean, this isn't about money, it's about your erratic behavior. I need you in a facility that can look after you properly."

"What? No! You can't do that!"

"I'm the head of human resources, Dean."

"Okay, you can do that! But you can't do it to *me*!"

Marsha thought for a moment, making a show of taking some deep breaths. "Maybe we both need to back down."

"There you go," Dean said.

"I think maybe you should consider heading home for the day, Dean."

"What the fuck?"

"Why don't you call it a day. And I won't use the security cam footage of this event to have you prosecuted."

Dean's eyes immediately scanned the ceiling, only for his eyes to freeze on the small black globe poking out in the corner.

"Maybe... That's... A... Good idea," he said, gritting his teeth, as he reluctantly had to admit he was not going to bulldoze through this problem in his usual fashion.

"Although I do think medical supervision would be best..."

"No, no. Don't do that."

"I don't think this exhibit of aggression is just going to go away, Dean... But maybe if you took a couple of weeks off."

"Two *weeks*?" Dean growled.

"Oh, I can make it a leave of absence if it would be easier," Marsha said. "That may be a better solution."

"No, no. No. I can... I can take two weeks off."

"Well, we'll do that, then," Marsha said, trying to look like she was compromising. "Two weeks starting now." She stood still, not budging, indicating to Dean that if he wanted to end the conversation, he was going to be the one to leave first.

"Two weeks," he said, defeated. He grunted and headed to the door.

"Oh, and Dean, there will be a drug test when you get back," Marsha added. She recognized his behavior and the cause of it. She also knew why he didn't want to be treated. He knew what they would find. "Because using ketamine on the job is a fireable offense."

With the expression of a woodland squirrel trapped in a cage, Dean gave the game away. He quickly scurried on down the hall.

Marsha let out a heavy breath and headed to the sink to rinse out her mug before getting to the coffee machine. "Finally," she said as she turned on the spigot.

As her mug filled with steaming hot brew, Marsha heard a rustle behind her. The flash of blond from her peripheral vision told her who it was. "Good morning, Cheryl," she said to the receptionist.

"Oh, there you are!" Cheryl, said with a giggle. "You're never at your desk!"

"I'm *always* at my desk," Marsha said in a dispassionate monotone.

"Oh yeah," Cheryl replied. "Who am I thinking of?"

"You," Marsha replied, dryly.

"No, someone else. Maybe it's Wednesday Adams."

"That is a TV character," Marsha pointed out.

"Yeah, I never see her at her desk! So, um, I said I would be here for a few more months n' stuff, but I'm not gonna do that, "kay?" She then began to leave.

"Wait, hold on," Marsha said, stopping her mug halfway. She turned to face Cheryl, who's big eyes indicated she was unaware what the trouble was. "I said I'd double your salary if you stayed on until April."

"Yeah, I *knooooow*," Cheryl said, apologetically. "But my boyfriend has this coupon book." She then turned to leave again.

“Cheryl!” Marsha barked.

“Yes? Did you have a question?” Cheryl replied, as if someone had pressed a reset button in her tiny brain.

“Why,” Marsha started, knowing she was going to hate the answer, “would a coupon book make you quit your job?”

“Um... Oh! You see, Joby — that’s my boyfriend — got this coupon book from a boy scout and it cost him a hundred dollars and so we figured that if he didn’t use it, we were out a hundred dollars, so we started using the coupons, and we went to this place where they show movies in a room, which I totally didn’t know was a thing — but I guess they call them theaters — and then we went to a soul food place but they totally didn’t serve any fish, and then we did zip lines, and then we went to a place where they throw axes, and then we went to go see a psychic, and he told me that my chakra was all out of alignment, and I was all ‘why is my chakra out if whack,’ and Joby said it was probably my job, and so he made me promise to quit, and the psychic said that Joby was right, so if I want to get my chakra back, I need to quit, and so, I am.”

“You make 175 thousand dollars a year here,” Marsha said.

“But what does my chakra cost?” Cheryl said. “You can’t put a price on chakra alignment. So I’m gonna leave at the end of the month.” She turned her head at the sound of a trilling phone. “I gotta go answer that.”

Marsha didn’t like the sound of this at all. The only way she was keeping the lecherous Mr. Blomfeld out of her hair was not hiring a receptionist. Without that, she was in deep trouble. With a growing sense of dread, she went back to the coffee machine. Pressing the lever on the spigot, yielded just a momentary spray of liquid before dying out. It was empty.

So, half a cup. That’s all she was going to get. Marsha needed so much more.

She sipped some. The weary middle-aged woman could taste the sediment at the bottom of the batch. It was time to get back to her office, so she headed back with what she had.

There didn’t seem to be any limit to the problems these idiots at the company could make. It was hard to understand just what happened to them after they were hired. She had signed off on each and every one of them. Each one of them felt like a good hire. Now they were basket cases.

“Marsha!” A yell came as got back to her office door. Someone jumped out, whacking the coffee mug from her hand and onto the floor, spilling its’ contents. “Oh, sorry.” It was a young man by the name of Stewart Baxter, a recent hire in logistics.

“Stewart.” Marsha said.

“Yeah, hey, did you get that email about my vacation? I never heard back.” He looked down at the spill. “I’ll grab some paper towels.”



The young man sprinted down the hall and returned with a fistful of paper towels, and began dabbing up the spill.

"Anyway, the dates changed. The flight was going to be on United, but I found a better fare on American but that meant I have to leave two days later and..."

"Stewart." Marsha repeated.

He looked up at Marsha who was still standing with her hand gripping a mug that wasn't in her hand anymore. "Yes?"

"That was the last drop of coffee in the building."

"Yeah, they really don't refill that after ten, do they?"

A red mist was slowly coming over Marsha's mind. Her left eye twitched. "Stewart." Marsha said again.

"Uh, yes?" Stewart replied and he stopped sopping up the spill.

"Do you ever wish you had an easier job?" Her voice was still even, measured. Some might even say pathologically emotionless.

"Sure, who doesn't?"

"Have you ever thought about working... the front desk?"



Marsha sat behind her desk, her hands folded, her face set in the flat expression that her co-workers had come to know all too well. There was a rumor that she kept dry ice hidden somewhere in her office to drive the temp down twenty degrees when you came in. The young man in front of her fidgeted in his chair. Stewart spoke fast, his words tumbling out as though speed might give them more weight.

"Look, I don't want to be paired with Cheryl. She's shallow. She's self-absorbed. She only talks about hair and shoes. I don't see the point of trying to make me the receptionist!"

Marsha looked at him for a moment, her eyes steady, her tone dry. "The point is that this is a team, and you are a part of that team. The team needs a receptionist. If she knows how to do the job, then you will learn what you need from her. *That* is the point."

Stewart was a young man with a lean, athletic build, his body still carrying the remnants of his college sports days. His facial features were sharp and angular, with a strong jawline and a straight nose that gave him a commanding presence. His eyes were a deep brown, framed by thick, dark eyebrows that added to his serious demeanor. Stewart's hair was cut short, in a style that was neat and professional, styled with a side part. His clothes were typical for a corporate environment: button-down shirts, khaki slacks, and dress shoes.

Stewart blinked several times. “But receptionist? *Receptionist?* That’s not what I signed up for. I wanted *more* responsibility, not less. I’m not going to sit there and answer phones all day. I went to college! I might as well go back to being an unpaid intern or unemployment.”

Marsha did not shift in her chair. “You should be careful with that kind of talk. The job of receptionist is not something to dismiss. I was a receptionist when I started here. I did the job well, and it helped me move forward. You’d be insulting me if you meant what you just said.”

She paused.

“And you don’t want to insult a team member, Stewart.”

He opened his mouth, then shut it. His shoulders dropped a fraction. “I didn’t mean it like that. I just don’t see any future in that role. It’s not a path up. It’s a dead end. How am I supposed to build a career out of answering phones and signing for packages?”

Marsha’s voice stayed even. “It’s a stable job. It has low stress. You will not be buried in deadlines. You will not be given projects with no guidance. You will sit at the desk, and you will do the job that must be done. There are worse things.”

Stewart shook his head, frustrated. “But that’s the problem. No challenge. No growth. No chance to prove myself. I want to move up. I want to show what I can do. Sitting at that desk feels like being shoved aside.”

“I can assure you, this company would cease to function efficiently without a receptionist.” Marsha said. After all, where would all the horny male employees do with all their spare time, if they couldn’t flirt with a brainless sexpot like Cheryl? “I’m going to schedule an appointment with Dr. Howser, our company therapist.”

“Therapist? That’s not really necessary... I’d really rather not.”

“It’s a mandatory part of your health care package — and you’re overdue.” None of that was true.

“I can’t take time off...”

“It’s paid.”

That was different. Stewart had no trouble being paid for doing nothing. “*Fine*,” he said, making it look like a burden.

Marsha leaned back slightly, her gaze never leaving him. Money seemed to be the key with him. It was time to bring out the big guns. “The receptionist’s salary is three times what you make right now.”

Stewart froze. He could feel the temperature drop another ten degrees. His eyebrows bent. His forehead rippled. “*Three* times?”

“Yes.”

He rubbed the back of his neck, his earlier fight draining from him. "I didn't realize that."

"You didn't ask."

He shook his head. "Well, that changes things."

"Can I expect you to make this transition, Stewart?" Marsha asked. "Because I'd like your full cooperation."

"I mean, I still don't love the idea of shadowing Cheryl..."

Marsha inclined her head a fraction. "You will let her mentor you. You will be evaluated on how well you listen to her advice and instructions."

Stewart straightened in his chair, the light in his eyes already shifting from resistance to excitement. "Yeah. Yeah, I'll do it. I'll learn what I can. It'll be good. Thank you, Marsha."

"You're welcome."

He stood, energized now, his hands moving as he spoke. "This is going to be a great opportunity. I'll make the most of it. You'll see."

Marsha gave him a thin smile, though her eyes stayed flat. "I'm sure I will."



Stewart sat at the reception desk with Cheryl perched on the edge of her chair, filing her nails. He assumed this task couldn't last more than a couple of minutes, but she had been at it for about an hour. Then again, she did have a lot of fingernail.

She pointed lazily at the phone. "It doesn't ring much. When it does, you just say the greeting and transfer. Easy. Most of the day I just catch up on my phone or fix my makeup." She pulled a compact from her bag and began brushing powder across her face.

The phone rang once, sharp and loud. Stewart leaned forward, but Cheryl lifted a hand without looking up. She let it ring twice more, then picked it up. "Carter Dynamics, this is Cheryl," she said in a flat tone. "Please hold." She transferred the call, then set the receiver down with a smile at her reflection in the black screen of the monitor. She pulled a small mirror from her purse and checked her lipstick.

"You have to keep yourself fresh," she said, dabbing at the corners of her mouth. "People notice how you look before they notice what you say. It's the most important part of this job."

Stewart shifted in his chair. "I thought the most important part was answering phones and helping visitors."





She giggled, brushing her hair with her fingers. "If you look good, people don't seem to care!" She giggled. "18 inches, please," she said, pointing to the gap between them. Stewart scooted away to fulfill her requirement.

Every few minutes she excused herself for the restroom. Whenever that happened, Stewart sat alone at the desk, tapping the keyboard, scrolling through the files on the computer. If the phone rang, he answered it, transferring the call like Cheryl had shown him. She would return after twenty minutes, give or take ten, her hair shining and her perfume heavy in the air.

"You're back," Stewart said on the return from her fourth trip of the morning.

"You need to look professional," she said, settling into her chair and pulling out her phone. She began typing quickly, smiling at the screen. "Don't hunch your shoulders like that. Sit up. People like confidence."

'Confidence' seemed to be a term to substitute for 'sticking your boobs out.' He sat straighter, though his face showed a high degree of distress. He had been here for three hours and he still had no idea what this job even entailed or how to do it. "I'm not sure that's what Marsha expects me to focus on."

Cheryl waved her hand without looking up from her phone. "She doesn't get it. She's always telling me: Cheryl, you can't leave. Cheryl, don't encourage the executives. Cheryl, you can't kiss the deliverymen. Cheryl, you have to wear panties. Don't listen to any of that. You'll learn from me how to survive here. Wear your best clothes, go to the salon three times a week, have incredible hair, wear a scent that people remember. Smile all the time. The rest will take care of itself."

Stewart noticed many of the company executives seemed to drop by frequently, however once they noticed him sitting at the desk, they just nodded and did a u-turn back the way they came. "Now I know why they're never in their office," he mumbled to himself.

The rest of the afternoon moved on glacially, with little to do and a lot of time to not do it in. Cheryl played a jewel game on the computer while Stewart watched. She tapped the screen of her phone, laughing quietly to herself, and shielding it. When the phone at the desk rang, she sometimes picked it up, but often left it for Stewart, who handled the calls with growing frequency. Cheryl leaned back in her chair, checking her messages.

"See? You're already a natural," she said. "Just don't forget. Smile. It's your best tool."

Stewart was pretty sure it was not.



Marsha sat at her desk with the receiver pressed against her ear, and the voice on the other end belonged to Dr. Emmitt Howser, her own hand-picked therapist for the company. He was giving a long summary of his first session with Stewart. His tone was professional but soft, with the careful phrasing of a man who spent his life listening to other people's problems. He described Stewart as insecure, overeager, and unsettled, just like ninety percent of the young men who walked into his office. He said Stewart had a constant need for validation, but also a fear of being overlooked. "Nothing I haven't seen several times a day," he said. "He should probably just take a few days off."

Marsha spoke in her steady, flat voice. "Well, thank you, doctor. Your expertise is always appreciated." She paused. "Maybe I shouldn't mention this, but I do have several... *troubling*... reports from his colleagues."

"Oh?" The doctor asked.

"Reports from co-workers that he manifests an intense desire to be a woman."

"A woman? Well, that's a surprise. He seemed to be quite comfortable in his sexuality. He loves his wife. What kind of reports?"

"Well, the reports describe behavior that goes beyond some slight insecurity. Now, you are the professional, but I see a deeply closeted transsexual." She was lying, but Marsha had long ago brushed aside her conscience about such things. "I have dozens and dozens of reports from co-workers saying he only associates with the women in the office, openly avoids men when in groups, takes an uncomfortable interest in female employee's clothing, has been reported to be wearing women's underwear under his own clothes, and has been caught several times using the women's restroom."

The doctor hesitated before replying. "I didn't see any of that in session. He seemed harmless, more nervous than anything." Dr. Howser cleared his throat. "That's troubling if it's accurate. He didn't show me that side."

"It is accurate. I have these reports in front of me," she said looking at her empty desktop. "They are consistent across departments. His behavior is disruptive. Right now, he is bordering on being a liability. He needs more time with you. One session will not be enough."

The doctor let out a small sigh. "It sounds like there may be deeper issues than I thought. Perhaps unresolved anger, maybe even avoidance patterns. If he's deeply closeted, that could explain the contradictions. I'll need to schedule several more sessions."

"That is what I recommend," Marsha replied. Her tone did not change. "He needs understanding. Of course, he will deny. I've tried to broach the subject with him and he couldn't have been more defensive, claiming my reports were fabricated. You must help him admit to his transsexual nature."

The doctor agreed, now sounding certain where he had been doubtful at the start. "I'll do that. I'll dig deeper. Thank you for the color. It helps to know the workplace side of the picture."

"You're more than welcome," Marsha said. "Let me know if I can be of any more help." She set the receiver back on its base without expression and moved on to her next task. The next step in finding her new receptionist would depend on the good doctor.



Stewart unlocked the apartment door and stepped inside. Jill was in the kitchen, moving between the stove and the counter with practiced ease. The smell of onions and garlic filled the small space. She looked up when he set his pack down by the door and loosened his tie.

"You're late," she said, stirring the pan. "Dinner's almost ready. Traffic?"

Stewart paused, slipping off his jacket and hanging it on the back of a chair. "Something like that." He sat down, smoothing his shirt with his hands.

She turned, leaning against the counter, her eyes catching on his shoes. "Are those new?"

He glanced down. The polished leather gleamed under the light. "Yes. I bought them last week. They're Italian."

She raised her eyebrows, smiling. "And the tie too, I assume. You've been dressing sharper every day. What's going on? Did they give you a raise?"

Stewart had started to pay much more attention to his clothing, opting for nicer, more fashionable men's attire, including dress shorts and tailored shirts. His hair became more styled, often with a slight gel to keep it in place. Stewart's posture improved, and he began to walk with a more confident stride, although his movements were still stiff with discomfort.

He shook his head, tugging at the knot of the tie. "No raise. I just need to look right for the job."

Jill tilted her head. "You're a receptionist. Do you really need Italian shoes for that?"

Stewart leaned back in the chair, his jaw tightening for a moment. "People see me first when they walk in. I can't look careless. The job demands I look my best."

She chuckled, turning back to the stove. "Well, you look like a fashion plate. It's like being married to a male model. All you need is a runway."

He gave a half-smile, but his eyes moved to the window. "It's not like that."

She set the pan aside and began plating the food. "Then why were you late?"



He hesitated, fingers tapping against the table. “I stopped on the way home.”

“Where?” she asked, placing the plates down.

“The salon. Just for a trim.” He looked at the plate instead of her face. “I didn’t want to mention it. It sounds... indulgent.”

Jill sat across from him, laughing softly. “You’re trimming your hair every week now. That’s indulgent. But you look good, so I’m not complaining. I just didn’t think you’d be the type to care this much.”

Stewart moved the food around his plate with his fork. “I didn’t either. But Cheryl keeps saying that how I look is what matters most. That it’s the part of the job people notice. She says it’s my best asset.”

Jill leaned on one hand, watching him. “And you believe her?”

He let out a short breath. “I don’t know. But since I started listening to her, I’ve been getting noticed. People smile more when they walk in. They comment on the tie, the shoes. Maybe she’s right. Maybe this is what the job is about.”

“Not going to complain,” Jill said as she sipped a drink.

Stewart ate in silence for several minutes, his fork moving across the plate without urgency. Jill spoke about her work as a podcast producer, the guest she had booked for the next recording, the edits she needed to finish before the weekend. He nodded when he should, but his mind was elsewhere.

He thought of the last session with Dr. Howser. The doctor had leaned forward in his chair, his questions circling back again and again to the same themes. Was Stewart avoiding being honest about his inner desires? Perhaps he had feminine tendencies he was burying beneath a facade? Stewart had answered no, each time with more certainty, but the doctor never seemed satisfied.

Now, at the table with Jill, he felt less certain. Maybe there was some truth to it. There was a little bit of femininity inside everyone, even a stone-cold heterosexual man like himself. He did care about fashion and appearances more than before. He had started to enjoy the compliments, the nods of approval from strangers who noticed his fancy clothes. It wasn’t what he had set out to do, but it had become a part of him anyway.

The doctor had told him that denial was common. Stewart remembered the way he had said it, calm and matter-of-fact, as though it were a fact instead of an opinion. At the time, Stewart had pushed back, insisting he knew himself better than anyone. Yet now, with Jill looking at him across the table, the thought returned.

He set his fork down and rubbed his temples. Maybe it wasn’t weakness to admit it. Maybe it would make the questions stop if he agreed, just once. The

idea unsettled him, but he was tired of answering all these dumb questions from the doctor.

Jill reached across the table and touched his hand. "You're quiet. Long day?"

He gave a small nod, forcing a thin smile. "Something like that."

She squeezed his hand before going back to her plate. Stewart stared at the food in front of him, but his thoughts stayed on the questions he couldn't stop replaying. Who knew being a receptionist was this hard? Or hard at all, really?



Two weeks later, Stewart sat at the reception desk beside Cheryl. They looked oddly matched. Cheryl wore a cream blazer over a silk blouse and a short skirt. Stewart wore a pale blazer too, paired with a sleeveless silk shirt and pressed shorts. His shoes were polished, with no-show socks. He kept glancing at his reflection in the darkened monitor, smoothing his hair into place.

Cheryl stood up, slinging her bag over one shoulder. "I'm taking a quick touch-up," she said, heading toward the restroom without waiting for a reply.

Stewart leaned back in her chair, folding his smooth legs and letting one foot bob in the air. He opened the Jewel Crush game on the computer and played a few rounds before picking up a file and running his nail buffer across his thumb. His phone buzzed, and he scrolled through the messages, smiling faintly to himself. The phone at the desk rang once, and he answered it smoothly, transferring the call with practiced ease.

Marsha appeared a few minutes later. She rested her hand on the counter and looked down at him. "You're doing a good job at the front desk," she said, her voice flat but clear.

Stewart straightened in his chair, his face brightening. "Thank you, Marsha. I'm really enjoying it."

"You're excelling at this work, and I'm getting very good reports about your competency," she continued. "I don't remember the last time I had so many compliments about an employee." Praising his performance doing these new tasks was an essential next step. Making him feel valued and appreciated for his efforts would encourage him to take on more responsibilities, and feel like any compromises he was making were worth it.

"Wow," Stewart said, feeling a strange rush of pride. "I didn't think anyone noticed."

"Of they certainly have." Marsha leaned in closer, her voice low. "How are your sessions with Dr. Howser going? Any progress?"



Stewart nodded, a hint of excitement in his voice. "Oh, yes. I've had a big breakthrough. Dr. Howser helped me realize that maybe my gender is just a state of mind. I'm becoming much more comfortable with myself."

Marsha's eyes flicked to Stewart's ears, where a pair of small, delicate earrings sparkled. "And what's this? New earrings?"

Stewart touched the earrings self-consciously, a blush creeping up his cheeks. "Yes, I got them yesterday. Do you like them?"

Marsha smiled, a rare show of approval. "They suit you, Stewart. You look very... polished."

Cheryl returned, her makeup flawless, her hair perfectly coiffed. She placed her bag on the desk, her eyes flicking between Stewart and Marsha. "Everything okay here?"

Marsha nodded, her gaze lingering on Stewart. "Stewart was just telling me about his breakthrough with Dr. Howser. It seems he's becoming much more comfortable with himself."

Cheryl grinned, her eyes twinkling. "He is. And he's really getting into the vibe of the job. We're even going shopping after work to get him a few new things."

She had no idea what that really meant, but the blush on Stewart's cheeks seemed to hint at something more than just buying some socks. Marsha's expression softened, a hint of satisfaction in her eyes. "That's wonderful to hear. Stewart, keep up the good work. You're doing great."

As Marsha walked away, Stewart stood up, his bag in hand. "I'm going to the restroom for a quick touch-up."

In the restroom, Stewart took out his makeup kit, carefully applying a light layer of foundation to cover any blemishes. He checked his reflection, making sure his face was still smooth from his morning shave. Satisfied, he grinned at his reflection. He remembered Cheryl's advice, and smiled just the way she did. She was right, it could be his best tool.



Stewart stood in the bedroom, his eyes meeting Jill's across the room. Her face was flushed with anger and confusion, her hands clenched tightly at her sides. It had been quite a night in the Baxter home, as the husband and wife had been shouting until their faces were red, with tears coming down their cheeks. "Stewart, you still haven't told me why you are wearing my panties!"

"You don't understand, Jill! You could never understand what I'm going through!" He said, as he wailed. Stewart, once stoic and simple, was now melodramatic and emotional in ways Jill had never seen him before. It had been getting worse every day.



"I can't take any more of this!" Jill fired back. "You shave your legs and won't tell me why! You come home with designer clothes and hide them from me! You spend half your salary at the salon! You got your ears pierced and tried to tell me it was an accident with a stapler!"

Stewart's visits to the salon became more frequent, and he started to experiment with different hairstyles. Thanks to Cheryl, Stewart's clothing had become even more fashionable, with a focus on fitting well and accentuating his physique.

His therapist, Dr. Howser, began to plant seeds of doubt in his mind, suggesting that he might be a woman trapped in a man's body. He started to steal his wife's panties, wearing them secretly under his clothes, a small act of exploration. His eyes were often caught in the mirror, admiring his reflection.

"You just don't understand!" Stewart cried again, putting his face in his hands. Stewart took a deep breath, trying to keep his voice steady, but his chest was heaving with every breath. "Jill, I've been going to therapy. Dr. Howser helped me see things differently. I think... I think I might not want to be a man anymore."

Jill's eyes widened in disbelief. "*What?*" Stewart, we're married. We have a life together. We're planning on kids! You can't just decide to change who you are. This is crazy!"

"Don't call me crazy!" Stewart yelled. "This is who I am! I've felt this way for a long time."

"You never said anything!" Jill yelled.

"There's always been something inside me, something I couldn't explain. Now, with Dr. Howser's help, I understand it. It's my desire to be free from my masculinity."

Jill paced the room, her voice rising with each step. "But Stewart, where did this come from? You've never mentioned anything like this before. We've been happy, haven't we?"

Stewart's eyes softened, a hint of sadness in his gaze. "We have been happy, Jill. But it was a lie! I can't ignore this feeling anymore! I need to explore this part of myself. I need to understand who I truly am." He then took a moment. "And you should be supporting me!"

"I do support you, Stewart! It's just so sudden!" Jill stepped back, her voice cold and distant. "Stewart, I don't understand what's happening. I don't understand who you are anymore. I'm going to need some time. I think... I think you should move out. At least for a few days."

Stewart nodded, his heart heavy with regret. "Okay, Jill. I'll go. But please, know that I love you. I always will."

As Stewart gathered some things, Jill watched, her heart aching. It was as if he was leaving with a piece of her, a part of the life they had shared. Stewart paused at the door, his eyes meeting Jill's one last time.

"Goodbye, Jill. I'm sorry."

With that, he walked out, leaving Jill alone in their home, her heart shattered and her mind reeling. She sank to the floor, her tears flowing freely, as she tried to make sense of the sudden and dramatic turn her life had taken. The room felt empty without Stewart. Then she noticed he had taken her makeup, her hair dryer and the contents of her panty drawer.



Stewart sat on the couch in Cheryl's apartment, his legs crossed, his skirt neatly arranged around him. He was wearing a blouse, his makeup flawless, thanks to Cheryl's expert touch. Cheryl, dressed in a tight-fitting dress, bounced into the room, her heels clicking on the floor. "Like, omigawd, Stewart, you look so cute in that blouse! It totally matches your aura!"

Cheryl flitted around the room, her heels clicking on the hardwood floor. She picked up a makeup brush, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Okay, bestie, let's get you all dolled up. We're going out, and you need to look your best!"

Stewart smiled nervously, his fingers fidgeting with the hem of his skirt. "Cheryl, I don't want to seem ungrateful... And you know I'm grateful for you letting me stay with you until Jill and I can patch things up... But I'm not sure about all this. I mean, I like the clothes and the makeup, but I'm not sure I want to be a woman. At least, all the time."

Cheryl waved a hand dismissively, her voice taking on a soothing tone. "Oh, Stewart, don't worry about it. You're doing great. Just go with the flow, you know? Embrace your inner goddess!" She grabbed Stewart's hand, her grip firm and reassuring. "Come on, let's go to my salon. I gotta get you a makeover!"

At the salon, Cheryl led Stewart to a chair, her eyes shining with anticipation. "Okay, so I was thinking, like, bleach job, and, oh! Hair extensions would be totally awesome for you. They'd give you long, wavy, feminine hair. You'd look so hot!"

"Omigawd! You're so right!" The hairdresser agreed, in almost the same voice Cheryl spoke in.

Stewart's eyes widened, his heart pounding in his chest. "Hair extensions? Cheryl, I don't know. That's a big step. I need to think about it."

Cheryl pouted, her lower lip jutting out. "Aw, come on, Stewart. It'll be fun! Think of how amazing you'll look."

