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## Please Don't Be An Airhead

If you're going to be a female ...

Originally published in the Rainbow Newsletter of the Rainbow Gender Association by E. Fenton, the Belittled Woman  
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And, for God's sake, if you must emulate a woman, don't be a bimbo.

**I**t's been nine months since my husband revealed he was a transvestite, and I'm fed up. Not with the fact that he likes to wear women's clothing; that's still a shock, but I'm coming to terms with

it. No, what's riling me is, shall we say, a certain underlying attitude that he (and some of the other would-be gals I've met) seem to have about what it means to be a woman. The last straw came tonight, when I found him curled up on the couch reading *Cosmopolitan*. The requisite blond bimbo graced the cover, wearing a red leather bra, a drugged expression, and not much else. This issue had insightful articles like "Confessions of Three Gigolos" and "The Lowdown on the Topless-Bar Scene". My favourite piece, however, was "The Bear Truth: Life from Fuzzy Wuzzy's

*It's not that easy to articulate, but I feel you're mocking my gender by focusing your attention on aspects of appearance and manner that ... some women find offensive.*

"Point of View". It was (I am not making this up) a spread consisting of photos of an oh-so-cute little bear cub and his lovable parents. Enough already!

If I sound somewhat bilious, it's because I am. Let me calm down a bit and explain why I'm writing this. I'm thirty-nine years-old, and about two decades ago I made a decision to reject some of the feminine frippery that I found - to dust off a phrase from the 1960s - demeaning to women. I'm talking about make-up, unnaturally curly hair, nails long enough to impair dexterity, shoes two sizes too small, starving oneself thin, and so on. (What twisted piece of karma gave me a husband who wears high heels is beyond me, but I can't help but see the humour in it.) I'm not saying I'm anything other than a product of my times, but the point is that I came to believe that while clothes make the man, they sure as heck don't make the woman. It really upsets me to see someone I love actively embracing the very aspects of femininity that I find trivial and silly, while at the same time making statements about "getting in touch with his female nature". Granted, I don't expect to find my husband poring over *The Second Sex* - but I'd be happy if he (and some of the rest of you ladies) would give a little more thought about what it means to be a member of the weaker sex (as they used to call it). Now, I understand that to realise your fantasy, you have to put on lots of make-up, do your nails and hair, wear a dress, adopt exaggerated mannerisms, and so on. That's fine. But please don't tell me that doing so transforms you into a more feminine being. If you're going to say that (and perhaps not all of you do), then show me some evidence. Show me some compassion, some communication skills, a heightened sense of aesthetics, some emotional adroitness - something! If you can't, please don't claim to have crossed any gender boundaries; you're just a guy in a dress.

And, for God's sake, if you must emulate a woman, don't be a bimbo. Don't read *Cosmo* and prattle on at length about nail polish and stockings. If you do, please don't do it around me. I have other things to think about. Don't talk to me about the Imperial Court and then - as my husband made the grave mistake of doing - tell me my work for woman's rights is pointless. I'm sorry to sound so hard-hearted. Perhaps I should show a little more compassion myself. But I'm writing this partly as an exercise in catharsis. Sometimes it's easier for me to write something down than to say it out loud. More importantly, though, I hope I can at least begin to express some of the frustrations many of your wives or girlfriends might be experiencing. I can only speak for myself, of course, but I have talked to a number of partners of transvestite men, and several of them have mentioned the same annoyance at men thinking they can enter "our turf". It's not that easy to articulate, but I feel you're mocking my gender by focusing your attention on aspects of appearance and manner that [some] men find attractive and [some] women find offensive. If your wife or girlfriend seems angry at you sometimes, perhaps this is part of the reason. Maybe you should talk to her about it.

I hope that this article does more than allow me to vent my spleen. I hope it can help couples start talking about at least some of the issues (and there are many) that are bothering transvestites' significant others. Perhaps it will initiate some discussions that will help some of us understand why you do what you do. I know that many S.O.s, for one reason or another, don't attend discussion sessions or support groups, or even talk about these issues with close friends. It must be very hard for these women, and it's up to you to try and dispel some of their frustration, anger, and feelings of helplessness.

Here's a request. Perhaps some of you could write to my ex-partner, giving your opinions on "what it means to be a woman". I, for one, would be interested in what you think, and I bet a lot of other women would be too. Thank you for reading my tirade. I feel better

already.

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