



*Barry  
Anderson*

*An Unexpected Fairy Tale*

**BY CALISE SELLERS**

# 1

## Birthday

Barry Anderson was the son of an accountant and a fairy godmother.

And so on the morning of his sixteenth birthday—just about eighteen years after that quiet, bespectacled accountant had swept that fairy right off her already hovering feet—Barry wasn't surprised when his mother appeared in a flash of red sparkles in full powered-up fairy mode. He wasn't surprised, but he was annoyed.

"Mom!" he groaned, shoving his pillow over his eyes. "It's my *birthday!* Can't I sleep in on my birthday?"

"Aw, come on party-pooper!" Dania, his mother, hovered over the bed and poked him with the glittery red toe of her shoe. "It's Make-a-Wish Morning! You used to always love Make-a-Wish Morning!"

"Pretty much everything I could want right now, you'd say was cheating," Barry mumbled through the pillow fluff. "If you're not going to give me a driver's license or a girlfriend, can I at least go back to sleep?"

She scoffed lightly at him, flexing her wings out primly. "No, I'm not going to magically make your life all better; not my job, remember?"

"Mom, can I *not* get the Fairy-Duty Spiel on my birthday, please?" he requested dryly.

"But, come on!" she pushed. "There isn't anything fun or silly you want this morning? What about an ice cream cone or something? Or I could make you feel happy or give you more energy for your driving test! That's the best I can do toward giving you a driver's license."

Barry threw the pillow off his head. “No, I swore off magic bean coffee or mood changing stuff, remember? After that incident with Ramona when I couldn’t stop talking? Yeah, no good.”

“So I can’t grant *anything* for you this morning?” Dania asked, disappointedly.

Barry hesitated. “Bacon sounds good.”

She stuck her tongue out at him. “We already *had* bacon. I bought it last week for us to have this morning.”

“Mom, really, I’m fine,” he said, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. “I really just want to get my driver’s license today. If you really want to help, you can find some magic way to make the line shorter or something.”

She immediately perked up. “So that’s your birthday wish? To not have to wait long at the DMV?”

Barry sighed. “Sure, Mom, that can be my wish. ‘I wish I didn’t have a long wait at the DMV when we go later,’” he intoned officially.

She beamed and drew her thin wand up like a conductor’s baton. She flicked it at him, sending a bright little burst of red sparks showering over him.

It was nice and warm, like it always was, and he smiled despite himself. “Cool, so that should do it?”

“Yup, it should,” she smiled. “As far as I calculated, the parameters of the spell should just nudge everyone else to go at a slightly different time, as you head over there.”

“Awesome,” Barry said, not really caring about the logistics of fairy magic at the moment. “Okay if I get dressed now?”

She sighed and landed on her feet at the end of his bed, wings settling worriedly. “I’m sorry, Baz. I just want your sixteenth to be special! For me it was such a big day because I got my powers, and I just don’t want it to be disappointing because you don’t have anything like that.”

Barry smirked. “Mom, I’m about to get the power of *driving*, by myself! I seriously don’t see what could be better than that.”

“Okay,” she laughed, “cars are appealing, I get it.”

He laughed too. “Not nearly as appealing as never having to have my parents drive me to a date again!”

“Oh, the gloves come off, I see,” she teased him. “Well, okay, let me power-down and I’ll go get your bacon ready.” She released her wand and it floated in the air where she’d left it. She closed her eyes and it danced around her form like it was attached to an invisible string, slowly transforming her back into normal-looking-mom mode. All red, sparkly stuff gone, including her wings, she let the wand slip back into her pocket, where it seemed to disappear. Her hair was its regular brown again and she’d returned to her normal summer weekday jeans and t-shirt, instead of her fairy gown.

“Don’t take too long, okay?” she told him. “You don’t want your brother to eat all your birthday breakfast.”

“Sure,” he agreed as she smiled at him and went out of his bedroom door, closing it behind her.

As Barry rummaged for a nice t-shirt to wear on his birthday, he thought about his mom’s worry that he’d be disappointed not getting powers on his birthday. He didn’t think he was disappointed. Since he had never assumed he was going to get magic, he had never really thought of it as something to be disappointed about.

Magic was always “Mom’s thing.” His dad didn’t need it, so why would he? Even though he knew he had extended family members on his mom’s side that were male and had magic, especially on the “Blue Fairy” side of the family, magic just never really seemed like a guy thing to Barry. And

with fairy godmother magic being a particularly female brand of magic, being passed from mother to daughter, he had always been fine knowing that he wasn't going to inherit it. An extended life expectancy based on being half-fairy seemed like plenty enough of a bonus to him, and if he really needed something, his mom's magic was always right there.

And Barry had always felt like magic was a little bit of a cheap way to get things anyway; as much as he and his younger brother Nick would prod their mom to get ridiculous things from her magic, Barry had learned that it wasn't necessarily a good thing to learn to rely on it. Their mom was very careful not to spoil them, magically, and Barry appreciated that. She'd always had way too many first-hand stories to tell about people who had ended up with a serious over-reliance on magic that could even border on addiction in some cases. It wasn't to be messed around with.

As an easy-going guy, Barry wasn't really into the drama that magic seemed to bring with it, anyway. His mom's side of the family was way higher maintenance than his dad's. Not worth it, was his opinion. He liked that his mom had magic, but other than that, he'd really rather just be able to drive without an adult in the passenger seat.

Dressed in cargo shorts and a t-shirt with a doofy dinosaur on the front, Barry quickly ran a hand over his tired face and hair, glancing in the mirror to be sure it wasn't sticking up at weird angles, and went down for breakfast.

"So, you know you're going to have to take me to soccer practice and stuff, now you're going to be able to drive, loser," was the way Nick, his thirteen-year-old brother greeted him, mouth full of half-masticated eggs.

"Or I might dump you off on the side of the road somewhere, dweeb," Barry gave him a heartfelt shove, collapsing on the barstool next to his brother's.

"I *still* don't know why Mom doesn't just teleport us everywhere," Nick griped. "Do you know how much gas that would save, Mom?!" He widened his eyes in awe. "You could *save the planet!*"

Their mom turned from where she was flipping omelets. "I highly doubt us driving one less vehicle would have a substantial impact. I don't need your dad's comprehension of statistics to understand that. Besides, saving the world single-handedly is not my job. My job is to—"

Barry smacked the back of his brother's head. "Great, now you started her on reciting Fairy-Duty again!"

Dania put her hands up. "Okay, fine, I'll shut up! But just because it's your birthday."

The boys both chuckled and Barry helped himself to a large plate of bacon and omelet.

"Maybe I'll go off on the birth of my oldest baby instead," she grinned and Barry groaned loudly, although secretly he didn't mind that one so much. "Oh man, at this time sixteen years ago," she looked at the clock, "you were almost out, so I was screaming my head off! My mom could *not* believe I was going to have an unmagicked birth! But I did it, without any spell relief!"

"What time was I born again?" Barry asked, a little shy but pleased to be the center of the day's attention.

"9:42," Dania said, watching the clock closely. "So sixteen years ago, in about a minute, if these clocks are right." She turned and smiled at him. "Which, at *my* stroke of sixteen was exactly when I got my... Oh!"

She'd stopped mid-sentence and cried out; Barry didn't know what about, as he finished chewing his bite of eggs, but he followed her gaze.

Her stare pointed to right above his head, where he looked up to find a narrow stick hanging in the air. That was strange. It looked like his mom's wand, sort of, except hers was a reddish brown and it was hard to tell what color this one was, but it wasn't the same. He set his fork down, staring at the thin rod above him. Out of his peripheral vision, he saw Nick staring at it too.



“What is that for-” Barry started to ask, but before he was able to phrase it as a question, the floating stick began to move, dancing above his head like a wooden ballerina, looping in circles and swirls, getting faster as it went.

Suddenly the stick erupted with purple, gaseous-looking sparks of light, jumping off of it like misty little firecrackers. It then descended quickly and began swirling around Barry’s head and shoulders. It abruptly became clear that whatever it was doing, it was here for him. “Mom?!” Barry cried out, not a fan.

“It’s okay, sweetheart, just wait!” she soothed him through the purple mist.

The purple became suddenly more potent and sparkly, and Barry was lifted off the barstool, held aloft by warm purple sparks, his limbs extending outward without his having much control over them. Nick’s barstool squawked loudly against the kitchen floor as he backed quickly away from the magical pyrotechnics.

The wand shimmered and swirled around Barry’s legs, and he felt his toes point and slip into shoes as warm tingly light flooded over them. His leg muscles felt like they were contracting, and as he looked down he saw them shrink in both length and thickness, and his red-brown leg hair suddenly vanished.

The mist moved upward, clearly intent on its mission. It reached his cargo shorts, which suddenly melted and blurred into a purple liquid, which then fanned out and rippled around his legs like a gravity-defying, purple water feature. But before that could settle, the mist shot between his legs and Barry gasped as he felt all of his external features there abruptly sucked inside of him. His boxers seized like shrink wrap, forming some sort of briefs, illustrating to him that it suddenly wasn’t hard to hide everything in his nether regions.

He was so shocked, the rest seemed to go faster. The flowing liquid around his hips solidified into a short poof of some magnitude, something akin to a tutu, its color still a soft purple. His organs compressed next, around his belly button, while his t-shirt melted and reshaped itself.

Barry's head was abruptly thrown backward by the force of two purple mountain majesties bursting forth from his pectoral region in a spray of sparks, their sudden weight bewildering. He was nearly hyperventilating as his shirt morphed into a glittery, skin-tight bodice which secured his unrecognizable torso in place, but dipped low enough to demonstrate a generous portion of his brand-new features.

His arms shrank and thinned too, his sleeves becoming little wisps of sheer, off-the-shoulder fabric. The mist tickled his throat, Adam's apple shifting, and then he was hit in the face with a puff of magic, and finally it felt like a magical egg had been cracked on his head and was dripping down his hair.

Hair of new lengths brushed his bare shoulders and Barry was afraid to open his eyes. Was it over? Would it put him down?

But the magic's final act presented itself in a tingly warmth on his back that made him want to stretch like he had a knot between his shoulder blades. With a puff sound and an explosion of air, Barry looked in time to see large, iridescent wings burst out of his back with a butterfly's flourish. He could immediately feel those too, and he moved them slowly, with terrified awe. They flitted easily, like moving his own eyelashes.

The mist hissed quickly back into the otherwise unassuming-looking floating stick. Barry was set gently back on the kitchen floor and noticed he was wearing shimmery purple high heels, held on by delicate straps around his now slender ankles. Without thinking, he held an ethereal little hand out, and the wooden stick merrily dropped into it. The wood was stained a muted periwinkle, he could see now.

Barry just stared at it, trembling. The kitchen was totally silent, except for the regular morning sounds of birds and cars from the oblivious world outside.

Out of his periphery, Barry saw Nick was gaping, frozen with his mouth wide open.



Barry turned his head to look at his brother, and then at his mother. Curls tickled his shoulders when he moved, and as some fell down in his face, Barry realized his hair had turned a bright lilac color.

All the pieces matched, and yet still couldn't be comprehended. All Barry Anderson had wanted for his sixteenth birthday had been the ability to drive on his own. Instead, it seemed today was going to be about why the crap he was standing in his kitchen as a full-fledged, powered-up fairy girl.

"Oh wow, I can't believe..." his mom broke the silence, staring. "I mean I knew it was possible, but I never thought..."

"How is this possible?!" Barry cried, someone else's voice in his ears. "I thought only girls could be fairy godmothers!"

"Uh," Nick said, looking awkwardly at Barry's legs, sounding freaked out, "I don't know if you've noticed, but not being a girl doesn't seem to be a barrier for you anymore, Baz."

Barry gave him a death glare. "Oh, really?!" he retorted with furious sarcasm. "I hadn't noticed that!" He popped his brother across the back of the head with a strangely tiny hand.

The action seemed to jerk Nick out of his stupor, and he looked suddenly appalled and backed up to the counter, away from Barry.

"Mommm!" Barry whined. "What's going on?! Why the frick am I a girl and a fairy all the sudden?? Did you know about this?!"

"Well it's so rare, I never suspected," Dania still seemed dazed. "It happens sometimes when there's no granddaughter for the family legacy to be passed onto. I had a distant cousin, who everyone just called 'Uncle Larry.' But every so often, when duty would call, he'd suddenly be Larissa the Fairy Godmother!"

Barry made a face.

She shook her head, nostalgically. “Odd duck, Uncle Larry, even when he was powered-down.”

“Not helping, Mom!” Barry declared.

“Right!” she realized. “But it’s really a special honor!” she beamed. “They call the privileged few, ‘Glitter Babies’ because it’s sort of like being reborn in sparkles at sixteen!”

Nick snickered.

“No, no no,” Barry said quickly, “they can’t call it that because that would make something that couldn’t *possibly* be more emasculating, so much worse!!”

Dania got a far off realization in her eyes. “I have to go call my mother! She’ll be thrilled!” She started off through the kitchen archway.

“Mom! Stop!” Barry tried to say authoritatively, but it came out like a girly whimper. “You cannot leave me here, standing in a stupid little skirt, on my birthday! How do I change back?!”

“Oh, your birthday,” she remembered, coming back to him and taking his hands. “But this is better than getting your license today anyway, right sweetheart?”

He stared at her in disbelief. “No, Mom, this is not better than getting my driver’s license, because I don’t even want this!”

“You’re not excited to have magic?” she asked, seeming to take the idea personally.

“No,” he insisted. “Especially if I have to be a girl every time I use it!”

“What’s wrong with being a girl?” she asked.

“I’m not a girl!” he declared.

“Good luck convincing anyone else of that,” Nick muttered and Barry realized in horror that his little brother was trying hard not to check him out.

“Get out of here, Nick!” Barry shouted louder than he meant to.

Nick started protesting, but Dania wasn't paying much attention to him, her firm blue eyes fixed on Barry.

“Well too bad, because somehow this has always been a part of you,” she said adamantly.

“He's always been a girl?” Nick asked.

“Shove off, Nick!” Barry glared at him again, angry at how unthreatening his squeaky girl voice sounded. He'd never had a deep voice, but this was just ridiculous.

“No,” Dania answered her younger son's question, “he has always been a fairy. It's just part of who you are, Baz, like it or not. You got my eyes and you got this; now deal with it.”

Barry felt dazed. Was she right? Was this a part of him? But he had never had any desire for magic, and especially never to be a girl!

“I at least need to go call your dad!” Dania insisted. “He should come home and see!”

“No!!” Barry shrieked, then lowered his voice to a normal volume. “We don't even have to tell him, do we?!”

“Baz!” she scolded. “Of course he's going to want to know! This is going to be a massive part of your life now!” She smiled at him. “And he's going to want to see, Barry. I know I would!”

All parts of that made Barry feel like throwing up. Being a fairy would be a massive part of his life?? Well, he knew that it was a massive part of his mother's life. But he'd never agreed to that!

And Barry wanted to be a normal Anderson guy! Suddenly being both magical and girly felt like such a betrayal of everything his dad was. Barry felt like such a freak, going from blissfully average and magicless to an anomaly even among magicborn. An anomaly who was suddenly in possession of very glittery bosoms.

His body change was so surreal and unignorable that his hands were shaking with dismay. He saw that his fingernails had grown longer, and magic had given him a manicure... detailed-oriented jerk.

“Mom,” he pleaded, “tell me how to change back!”

Dania looked genuinely worried about him now. “Honey, this is your first time powered-up; I know it’s overwhelming, but there are things to take care of. But it won’t be hard for you to change back when it’s time, I promise.”

That helped some. Barry realized part of him had been terrified that he would *never* be himself again and that was a horrifying thought. “You promise?” he demanded desperately. “I’m not stuck like this?!”

“No, Baz,” she soothed. “It should be just as easy for you to power-down as it is for me.”

“Okay,” Barry tried to calm his breathing, determining that he was *not* going to cry, despite the panic and frustration welling up inside him. “Can you at least fix my clothes?”

“What’s wrong with your clothes?” Dania asked, confused.

He stared at her in disbelief. “...*Everything!!* If I’m being forced to turn into a girl and use magic, is there any good reason that I can’t do it in pants? With like,” he looked down at his chest again, “an entire shirt?!”

Nick seemed to be struggling not to eye Barry’s top, after the mention of it.

Barry tried to cover the cleavage with one arm, under the feigned pretense of scratching his opposite shoulder.

Dania’s facial expression was managing to be both sympathetic and stern at the same time. “I’m sorry, honey. There are lots of things that as fairies we can change the default for, but our uniforms aren’t one of them.”

“Uniforms?!” Barry challenged skeptically. “You’re calling a corset and a tutu, a ‘uniform’??”

“Yes,” Dania was growing less patient as he was being critical of her fairy terminology.

“Besides the fact that uniforms are supposed to be outfits of *utility*, and I don’t know what situation would ever make this practical,” Barry ranted, “aren’t they supposed to be *uniform*, from one person to another? Yours does *not* look like this!”

She sighed at him. “Fairy uniforms are what you consistently power-up into. They’re mostly ‘uniform’ across your life, with subtle changes as you age.”

Barry did not want to hear that, given his current attire.

“They can’t be changed, because they represent who each fairy is, uniquely. Everything from the color of our magic, to our fairy gowns are unique to each of us, and are a reflection of who we are,” Dania impassioned. “Just like dark red is a reflection of me.”

Barry hadn’t fully internalized that before Nick looked at his outfit and started laughing again.

“Oh har har, very funny,” Barry glowered, between Nick and his mother. “Yes, clearly I am best represented by pastel purple gauze and glitter. ”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying,” Dania said flatly, and Nick continued his snickering. “I don’t know exactly how, but both the color and the uniform are sum-ups of *you*.”

Barry made an upset noise that sounded unfortunately like a cheerleader getting punched in the stomach. He felt so unseen and unknown, having magic assert that this stupid and embarrassing persona was all he was. “I want to change back,” he pouted.

“Don’t believe me?” his mother said. “Here, I’ll let the Book explain it better.”

He knew exactly what book she meant, having watched her reference the giant tome religiously over the years.

Dania strode into the den, not waiting for her sons to follow, although they did (one not knowing if he qualified as a 'son' or not).

Barry wobbled, walking for the first time since his transformation, befuddled by the changes to his skeletal hips and pelvis. His legs just didn't move the same. It felt like someone had moved his hinges. He'd never noticed how solid his walk was before. Now his every lower movement was all...swishy. The heels only worsened the penduluming of his hip swing.

He made it the short distance from the kitchen to the den, where Dania was pulling out the old heirloom book from the shelf, where it was nestled inconspicuously between a few hardback fiction novels.

Barry looked at the familiar title, *The Compendium of Fae*, and thought miserably that he'd never expected the contents to apply to himself, outside of wishes perhaps.

It didn't take her long to find what she was looking for, since Barry thought she practically had the giant book memorized. It wouldn't have been in nearly as good of shape, had she not magically repaired it repeatedly.

She pointed to a paragraph partway down the page, and extended the book to him. "Here, read it."

He took it reluctantly, looking at where she was pointing.

"*Out loud*," she specified.

"I don't want to read it out loud," he protested, "I sound five years old!"

"You do not," she chided. "You don't sound like a child, you sound like a teenage girl."

"I don't see that as better," he stated.

"I'll read it!" Nick volunteered, over-helpfully.

“I want Baz to read it,” Dania insisted.

Barry exhaled frustratedly, but began to read the passage aloud. “Blue is as a living river, red in the fires of passion, and yellow as the persistent fields of golden wheat, but the magic of the fairy mothers sits apart, cradling in its arms the jewel of each soul. As such, it befits each fairy mother to shine with her own select color, in her very own gown. Her upward empowerment is a window to her own soul, shining forth as a twinkling star of benevolence, of nurturing who each child can be, just as she nurtures the effulgence of her own glorious light.”

“See?” Dania said proudly.

“That’s the girliest thing I’ve ever read,” Barry complained flatly.

“It’s a little flowery,” Dania admitted, “but did you get the point? The three color magics have their unified themes, but fairy mother magic is themed around the individual. Its very theme is that it reflects the uniqueness of the fairy godmother herself. So our uniforms and colors reflect who we are, and that helps us take care of each fairy godchild.”

Barry thought that sounded pretty, but that didn’t mean he wanted to be a part of it. He didn’t want to become a mommy for his sixteenth birthday! And surely magic had screwed up somewhere along the way. His current shape and outfit were *not* a reflection of who he was... right?!

He was pulled out of his rumination by hearing Dania’s voice from the kitchen, on the phone. He hadn’t even realized she’d walked away.

“Hey honey, did I catch you at a bad time?” her voice echoed off the kitchen tile. “Okay, well I’m sorry, but it’s pretty important.” It was clear she’d called Frank Anderson, their dad.

“No no no, don’t tell him!” Barry’s girl voice reached his own ears.

Nick perked up, like there was no way he was missing this, and darted back through the kitchen archway.



Barry followed awkwardly, as quick as he could without turning his ankles in his new foot-stilts.

“No, everybody’s okay,” Dania was telling her husband on the phone, “it’s actually pretty exciting.”

Barry gave her a corrective glare.

“If unexpected,” she amended. “Did I ever tell you about ‘glitter babies’? No? Well, remember how I’ve said that fairy godmothers are always the oldest daughter, and inherit it from their mother at sixteen? Like I did from my mom?”

Barry felt a breeze on his face, and realized his wings were flapping nervously. He tried to still them, but they continued to vibrate anxiously.

“Well, I’d forgotten that it was a very very rare possibility for the oldest son to inherit it, when there aren’t any daughters,” Dania was continuing, cautiously.

“Okay,” Frank’s voice could be heard warily over the phone, in the bated breath of the kitchen atmosphere.

“But because fairy godmother magic is female...” Dania looked at Barry’s current appearance, clearly trying to decide how to explain it, “...when boy fairy godmothers power-up, they kinda have to transform into girls to use their powers. Temporarily.”

There was a long silence and Barry didn’t hear anything over the phone’s small speaker.

“And it kinda happened to Barry this morning,” Dania finished, when Frank didn’t say anything. She shrugged at Barry, like she hoped that was a good enough explanation.

There was a longer pause.

“Okay...” Frank’s voice sounded. Even through the constricted sound of the earpiece, Barry could hear his father’s bewilderment and guardedness. He asked a question, but Barry couldn’t make out the individual words.

“Yes,” Dania nodded. “Just when he’s powered-up. Yeah, still at the moment,” she looked at Barry again. “But it’s really a big deal, and an honor, in fay culture. I mean a *good* big deal,” she emphasized, which seemed to be as much for Barry’s sake as Frank’s. “So everything’s going to be fine,” the pitch of her voice was getting high. “But you want to come home and see? I mean, it isn’t urgent, because it’s not like it’s going anywhere. Yes, it’s *permanent*, it’s just not *constant*.”

At hearing his condition called “permanent,” Barry accidentally released a girly whine.

“But you’ll come home?” Dania confirmed with relief. “It won’t need to be for very long. You can go right back to work. Okay, thank you, sweetheart. Love you too!” She hung up the phone and gave Barry what she seemed to think was a reassuring smile. “He’s going to come right home!”

“Great,” Barry’s female voice dripped with sarcasm.

“And he was excited for you, just a little taken off guard,” Dania reassured herself.

“He didn’t *sound* excited,” Nick stated what Barry was thinking.

“Well, you know how Daddy is about fairy stuff,” she replied, “he can get a little overwhelmed. But I think he’s going to be happy as long as you’re happy, honey,” she told Barry.

“Who said I was happy??” Barry retorted.

“In any case, I’m glad we told him,” Dania stated, although she still seemed a little nervous about it herself. She started absently cleaning up the forgotten breakfast mess. “Oh, you didn’t eat any of your bacon, Baz!” she noticed. “Did you want any now?”

Barry stared at her in disbelief again, still holding *The Compendium of Fae* to his chest in one arm, while his other hand was in a fist around his wand. “I’ve been a little distracted!” he understated massively. “Not exactly hungry at the moment!”

“Right,” she laughed like she felt a bit guilty. “I’ll save it for you for later, sweetheart.”

“Can I change back then?” he pleaded.

“Soon, honey,” she reassured him. “Oh, can I call Nanna Susan about it now? Baz, she’s going to be so excited!”

“Aww,” Nick adopted a baby voice, “grandma’s little princess!”

Barry elected to ignore him this time. “Why do you want to tell everyone?!”

“Your dad and my mom are hardly ‘*everyone*’, Barry,” she acted like he was exaggerating. “And you’re part of Nanna Susan’s direct fay line! She and I both thought our magic line was going to run out, since you don’t have any female first cousins. There has to be one fairy godmother in each generation, otherwise the line just ends. But your being a glitter baby changes everything!”

Barry cringed; why did it have to be called that??

Dania put a piece of bacon defiantly in her mouth. “I’m going to call her,” she insisted. “I could use *someone* else being excited about this.” Not waiting for his approval, she pulled her phone back out and speed dialed Barry’s grandmother. “Hi Mom,” she said almost immediately. “Yes... yes, I’ll tell him, thank you.” She mouthed “Happy birthday,” to Barry, passing along the message. “Yeah, Mom, that’s actually why I’m calling.” She was clearly trying to get to her point as quickly as possible, probably while trying not to rudely talk over her mother. “You’ll–yeah... Yes. But Mom, you’ll never believe!” She paused for dramatic effect. “Guess who’s a glitter baby!”

*Stop calling it that*, Barry moaned in his mind.

“*What?!*” their grandmother’s shock and thrill echoed over the receiver.

“Mm hmm,” Dania confirmed, pleased to finally get the reaction she seemed to feel Barry’s predicament deserved. “I wasn’t expecting anything, and then poof, at his stroke of sixteen! Transformation, whole shebang.”

There was more enthusiastic murmuring over the phone.

“I know! I know. Yeah, we were completely stunned,” Dania agreed.

*Less stunned than someone who didn't even know male fairy godmothers existed*, Barry thought sourly.

"You want to talk to him?" Dania repeated Nanna Susan's request and looked hopefully to Barry.

Barry shook his head adamantly, purple hair whipping back and forth around his shoulders. This was *not* something he was willing to discuss over the phone at the moment.

"Uh, Mom, yeah he's still pretty flustered about it, so I don't think he's ready to talk," Dania relayed back. "Well, certainly. A huge deal, and he wasn't expecting it at all. Mm hmm. Purple. We hadn't gotten to that part yet."

As Susan's replies grew longer, Dania started pacing behind the kitchen counter.

"The only one I'd ever known was Uncle Larry, and that was, what, back in the '70s?" Dania continued, pacing.

Whereas he was hanging on his father's every reaction to the news over the phone, Barry was realizing he'd rather tune out the details of his mother and grandmother bonding over the idea that he had inherited their magical girl powers. He went back into the den under the pretense of returning the reference book to its shelf.

Frowning down at the book which he now felt foretold his doom, Barry flipped open to a random page. It probably opened more easily to that page because Dania had spent a lot of time there.

It had a half-page spread with a gorgeous, full-color illustration of a splendid fairy lady in a soft pink fairy ballgown, bestowing a magical blessing onto a baby, her wings outstretched and her wand tip ablaze. On the opposite page he saw, first in some Celtic dialect, and then translated into English below, a rhyme he knew well, as the rhyme used by fairy godchildren to summon their fairy godmothers. He knew it from summoning his own mother, soothed as a child when she'd appear shortly thereafter in sparkling warm red light.

"Come like sun, like morning dew;

Come like stars in navy hue.

Come like deer to rivered glen,

Come like lioness to den.

Come like bird to yonder tree;

Come fairy mum, watch after me.”

Barry had certainly never imagined being summoned with the fairy rhyme himself. He looked at the placid expression of the woman in the illustration, dreading a sudden future where people could just call him at will and he'd have to show up in the form of a sparkly ballerina and give obeisance to their every whim.

Barry felt something touch his back all of a sudden, and he flinched and whirled.

Nick was withdrawing his hand, but had snuck up behind him and touched his wings.

“What are you doing?!” Barry demanded, feeling invaded upon in his already compromised state.

“Sorry I—” Nick started. “You can feel that?!”

“Yes!” Barry affirmed irritably.

“Can— can—” Nick stuttered, “can you feel those too?” Expression sort of dazed, he extended a finger towards Barry's swollen chest, like a mosquito entranced by a bug-zapper.

Barry grabbed his brother's pointer in his slender fist. “You touch, you die.”

Nick's eyes grew wide. “Sorry, you just don't look like you! It's so weird.”

It made sense to be strange and even scary from an outside perspective, seeing someone change before your eyes like that. Barry released his finger and sighed. “I know, it's pretty messed up.”

Nick's gaze was still lingering on him, with confusion. "Y'know what it's like? Those flip books we had as kids, where you could switch which head was on which body, and which legs. And you could mix up the scuba diver or the princess. And put the bodybuilder's head on the princess's body."

Barry knew *exactly* the books he meant, and remembered well how hard they'd laughed as children to see how ill-fitting the square head and chunky, muscular neck of the strong-man looked superimposed on the thin, hourglass figure of the princess. It was the brokenness of the image that made it amusing.

"Not that you're really a bodybuilder, usually," Nick stipulated with a smirk. "And it's not just your *head* on a girl body, you're like all... integrated." He motioned to Barry's current figure with a wavy hand motion.

A punchline; that's what this whole fairy business was boiling him down to. Nick's description made him feel like a funhouse mirror version of the person he had hoped he was growing into.

Barry turned to the bookcase so Nick wouldn't see the hurt in his eyes. "Thank you for reducing this entire horrific experience to a children's comedy book; I really appreciate it," he said sarcastically, nestling *The Compendium of Fae* back into its home on the shelf.

"No, I'm just trying to explain why it's so freaky!" Nick dug the hole deeper. "You were just you—eating breakfast, being dorky," he motioned to the left, as if that was where normal, dorky Barry sat.

"How was I being dorky *then*?!" Barry protested; he'd felt confident and cool (ish anyway), *before* all this.

"And then, *waboom!*" Nick motioned to the right, making an explosion with his hands. "Sparkles happen, and suddenly you're jugged-out like a fashion doll..."

It took Barry a second to process what Nick meant by “jugged-out,” and then he felt his face flush with embarrassment. He pictured what Nick was describing, his body deforming grotesquely and bimboishly. “Why do you always have to make things gross?!” he deplored Nick.

“Hey, it’s not my fault you look like the ‘all grown up’ version of a Victorian baby doll,” Nick retaliated, “whose dress shrunk in the wash.”

Barry was shocked into open-mouthed silence for a moment. “I do not!” he insisted, hoping Nick was exaggerating, for his own twerpish reasons. That was probably the worst comeback of all time, but he was too concerned about the accuracy of Nick’s mockery to come up with anything more clever and digging, just then.

“Yep,” Nick maintained smugly, clearly pleased to be getting to him, “like a little boy who got *queerious* and tried on mommy’s makeup and bra.”

Rage bubbled up inside Barry, and he felt his face grow hot. Nick’s ridicule was far too close for comfort to what he felt was happening to him against his will, on this worst birthday ever. He *did* feel like a little boy accidentally playing fairy-girl dress up. There was no comeback that would suffice this time, so instead, he used the closest weapon at his disposal. He stomped on Nick’s bare foot with the spike of his purple, glittery high heel.

“*Ouch!*” Nick yelled out, grabbing his foot and hopping up and down dramatically. “Jeez, Baz!”

Barry returned his smug smile to him, feeling mildly vindicated.

Their mother had finished her phone call and was looking much happier again as she came into the den where Barry and Nick were. She didn’t seem to have noticed they’d been spitting.

“So, Nanna Susan reminded me, you’re going to need a fairy name,” Dania said, making sure the screen of her phone was off before she put it back in her pocket. “I already knew the one I wanted when I turned sixteen, but that’s just because I had decided on it when I was seven.”



“How about, ‘My-Life-is-Over’?!” Barry quipped. “Because that’s the first thing that comes to my mind every time I realize that I am a *male fairy godmother!*”

Dania looked very put-out by that response.

“Or Froo-Froo-Glittery-Puff!” Nick suggested with malicious glee. At Barry’s hate-filled stare, he added, “Don’t worry, we can combine it with yours! You can be ‘My-Life-is-Froo-Froo-Glittery-Puff!’ It’s accurate *and* catchy!”

“Why is Nick still here, why am I still dressed this way—” Barry began complaining.

“‘Dressed’ implies you don’t have the plumbing to match... which I’m guessing you do,” Nick muttered.

Barry flushed with anger and humiliation, so close to hitting his stupid little brother. “Little slug—” he started to threaten.

“Nick,” Dania reproached, “there are some things that aren’t okay to joke about, and Barry’s girl-parts are one of them.”

“Mom!!” Barry cried, covering his face. “These are the kinds of things I am talking about! Life: Over.”

“Come on, both of you!” She gave them each a stern look. “This is important. This is the name you’re always going to be known by out on assignments, Baz, by all your fairy godchildren. It needs to be something that really just fits, and then it’ll just stick. When a fairy name is chosen correctly, there’s great power in it!”

Barry was still made uncomfortable by so much of this conversation, but he figured it was pointless to argue about a topic she was so passionate about.

“So most fairies have a name that’s similar to their usual name, but different enough to not be obvious. Like Dania to Dayspark,” she observed, making little hand pedestals for her two names as she said them. She thought for a moment. “What about Berry?” she asked happily.

“My name?” he asked skeptically.

“No, *Berry*, with an ‘e.’ Like the fruit.”

“Well fruit makes sense,” Nick snarked, winning another frustrated look from Barry.

“Think about it;” Dania said excitedly, “it matches your color scheme, and it’s like your regular name, but girlier!”

“In audio, it *is* my regular name, Mom!” he pointed out in disbelief. “They’re homophones!”

“*Homo*-phones sound oddly appropriate for the situation,” Nick needed.

“Nick,” Dania and Barry glared at him at the same time.

“Besides the fact that I don’t want to be associated with a small fruit,” Barry grumbled.

“Well, if you were fruit, berries are more red anyway,” Nick noted. “You’re more like grape-colored.”

Dania’s mouth opened. “What about Grape?”

“That’s not even a name!” Barry shook his head skeptically. But there was an odd little click in the back of his mind.

“I don’t know,” Dania went on, “it’s cute! And Barry, into Berry, into Grape sort of works, I think, without anyone knowing that it’s you.”

“What about...” Barry tried to think of a name, any other name, but Grape kept thrumming in his mind like it was supplying the only answer. “Oh crap. What did you do, moron?” he accused Nick.

Dania gasped with a smile. “Did it work? Did it attach to you?”

“Yes,” Barry groaned, “but if I think of something else, fast, I can change it, right??”

“No, sir,” she answered him, pleased, “that’s the one, then.”

“Grape?” Nick repeated, laughing. “That’s it then, huh?”

When his brother said “Grape,” Barry’s head came up like he was being talked about. “Oh gaw, it feels like it’s mine already! How did it do that?! It’s weird!”

“Really?” Nick beamed with malevolent pleasure. “Grape! Grape! Grape, Grape, Grape, Grape, Grape!” he taunted, as Barry was unable to think of it as any less his name than Barry or Baz.

Barry threw one of the couch pillows at his brother, with decent aim.

“Nick,” Dania censured mildly. “That’s the way it’s always been, Baz. Your fairy name is part of your identity, and it’s part of how you communicate with magic. It defines your fairy-self.”

“But ‘Grape’?? Really?!” Barry moaned. But he knew, as he said it, as much as he hated the title, she was right. He was already feeling unbiddenly protective of the part of himself that was suddenly named Grape.

With a mournful sigh, he sank wearily to the couch, skirt poofing out around him. Having the cushions press against his nethers made him squirm, feeling like in the skirt there wasn’t a lot to protect his strange lack of dangling. He would usually sit with his legs comfortably apart, but he pushed his knees close together to shield everything, feeling his legs and hips form a strange v-shape. Even that, though, didn’t really stop him from feeling like the slightest breeze had access to his thighs, the gauzy skirt basically an upside-down exposure bowl. He was still

holding his wand, and he rolled it between his now petite fingers. He was tempted to try and break it, but with his luck that would probably just get him stuck powered-up forever.

“Grape, honey?” It was Dania’s voice this time, and his head once again came up automatically, which bothered him. “Sorry,” she apologized to him, smiling proudly, “I just wanted to try it out.”

He sighed annoyedly. “It’s good to know I’m a Pavlovian experiment, and that this amuses everyone.”

“Baz, I’m not making fun of you, I’m excited,” Dania told him gently. “There’s a big difference.”

“*I’m* making fun of you,” Nick proclaimed.

“Nicholai, *stop*,” Dania finally told him sternly.

Nick seemed temporarily quelled.

“All the same, your fairy name is the one you’re going to be known by, throughout the fay world, and by all your fairy godchildren,” Dania said. “It’s good for you to get used to it anyway.”

That notion made Barry feel queasy. “I don’t *want* to be known throughout the fay world! I mean I don’t want to have fairy godchildren either, but it doesn’t sound as if I’m going to get a choice about that one.”

She gave him a long look of consideration. “Sweetheart, come back in here, I want to show you something,” she said, gently, motioning with her head toward the kitchen, although this time she actually waited for him to follow.

Reluctantly he stood back up, trying not to lose balance between his unfamiliar center of gravity and his impractical shoes, and went back with her to the scene of magic’s crime.

Nick, of course, was right behind.

Between the two archways which led from the kitchen into either the foyer or the dining room, hung Dania's small office desk. She didn't have a profession, other than stay-at-home mom and fairy godmother (which wasn't a paid position, Barry thought bitterly), so she didn't need a big office area, but it was where she'd browse her laptop or pay bills. And above the desk she had a hanging bookshelf, with a light selection of cookbooks, notebooks and papers. Dania went up on her tiptoes, as she wasn't wearing her fairy heels at the moment, and pulled down a red binder. She held it lovingly.

Barry supposed he had noticed it there before, but had never really wondered at its contents. As she turned to show him too, he saw it had written on the front in her best calligraphy, "Godchildren Memorabilia."

Nick was looking over Barry's shoulder so he could see, too. This was disconcerting, both because Barry didn't want his exposed shoulders looked at, and because it made it clear that Nick was quite a bit taller than he'd become in this shape, which was *not* usually their dynamic. Barry did accidentally hit him in the face with a wing, though, which was a little amusing and satisfying, despite the situation.

"See? I've saved things from all my fairy godchildren, over the years," Dania was revealing the inside of the binder. It was stuffed with page protector pockets, each of which held a paper, tied to those she fairy-mothered. There were newspaper clippings about successes of people Barry didn't know, and a lot of letters and what looked like thank-you notes. "This is my sixth binder," she told them proudly. "Next to you guys, these are some of my most prized relationships."

She paused adoringly on one particular page, which was a child's drawing. Beside what could be made out as a self-portrait of a little girl, there was a drawing of a person with very circularly drawn wings, and a dress colored in dark red crayon; obviously Dania's powered-up form. The little girl had drawn a giant, lopsided heart between herself and Dania, and in scrawled handwriting that almost fell off the page, she'd written "i lov u!"

"Saralee is twelve now," Dania smiled fondly, "but she drew this for me when she was three."

Barry was mildly tempted to be jealous that their mother had this close of relationships with a whole bunch of kids who weren't her own children, but it was fleeting amongst his carousel of many other feelings.

"Mom, I understand that this is special and fulfilling for you," he gave a wispy sigh, "but don't you think it's different mothering people when you're *actually a woman?!?*" His voice grew ornery at the end.

Dania finished her nostalgic flip-through, and closed the binder. "Barry, you don't have to be female to help people," she said, a bit of reproach to her voice, as she put it back on the shelf.

"Gee, seems like magic missed the memo on that one," he gave her a surly glare.

"*Grape,*" she said with firmness, "you're going to be a wonderful fairy godmother. You just have to get used to the idea."

"Mom," he whined, "do you have to keep calling me it?!"

"Grape, Grape, Grape, Grape, Grape," Nick whispered evilly under his breath.

Barry looked balefully at him. "Keep it up and I will clock you, I swear."

Suddenly the sound of the garage door was heard through the house, and all three of them turned toward the sound.

"Frank!" Dania declared excitedly.

Barry felt his stomach tumble. He really wanted to wake up from this bad dream before his father could see him. He shrank against the kitchen wall, but one of his wings knocked over a bunch of pens and notebooks from Dania's desk organizer.

She turned back around and saw Barry's obvious apprehension. "It's okay, honey; I'll talk to him first, alright?"

That was mild relief, compared to his father just walking in and gawking at him, but it was really only forestalling the inevitable, in Barry's mind.

Dania didn't wait for his response anyway; she strode ahead into the den, where the garage connected to the house.

Barry and Nick were left alone in the kitchen, and Barry avoided his little brother's eye. Everything happening seemed of utmost fascination to the thirteen-year-old, but Barry had no interest in being watched like a cringey internet video.

The door to the garage opened cautiously, and Barry straightened, wings perking up like dog ears as he listened desperately for his parents' conversation.

"Thank you for coming right home, Frank," Dania said, kissing him. "What did you tell them at work?"

"Family emergency," came the concerned-calm voice of Barry's dad. "Where is he?" he asked in a quiet that wasn't intended to carry.

"In the kitchen," Dania answered, then lowered her voice too, but Barry could still hear. "He's really nervous for you to see him."

"I hope he doesn't think I'll be upset or anything," Frank said. "I just feel really blindsided."

"So does he, I think."

"I just had no idea... Why didn't you tell us this was even a *possibility*, Dane?" Frank's voice was still measured amidst his upset.

"I'm sorry, it just seemed so unlikely..." she repeated her answer to Barry. "Seriously, there's less than ten in the whole world, I'm pretty sure."



“Woah,” Nick muttered under his breath. It was very like Nick to be impressed by someone doing something rare or unprecedented, but Barry couldn’t care less. Sounded to him as enjoyable as being among the rare few to get repeatedly struck by lightning.

“And you’re sure he can change back? We don’t just... have a daughter now, right?” Frank inquired further.

“No no no, it’s just when he’s powered-up,” she assured him. “That certainly would make things much more complicated.” She paused and then spoke very quietly, Barry having to strain to hear. “And you won’t react too much, right? He seems to think his life is over.”

“No, of course,” Frank reassured her. His voice smiled, “Come on, have you ever had to have me rein in my reactions before? If anything, I’m usually *too* reserved for you.”

She laughed softly. “You have a point.”

They were about to come in, Barry knew. He shuffled awkwardly in his high heels, totally unsure what to do with his body, wishing he could just hide it.

But suddenly it was too late, even if he had known how to hide with a three-foot wingspan, because they entered the kitchen.

Dania gave him what was intended to be a reassuring smile. Frank saw Nick first and gave him a familiar smile... before his eyes fell on his older child.

Barry could tell Frank had been preparing himself mentally for the last half hour for this moment, but his characteristic calm, lack-of-fluster hiccuped at the sight of his first-born. His eyes widened behind his glasses and he took a literal step back. His gaze considered Barry with bewilderment, brow furrowed.

“Dad?” Barry prodded in a very little and unfortunately feminine voice.

“Frank...” Dania said, like this wasn’t part of the deal.

Frank came to himself and shook it off quickly. “Hey sport, how are you holding up?”

“I’ve been better,” Barry admitted.

“Well it’s a big... change, but from what your mom says, it’s all going to be just fine.”

Barry was not convinced. “You think it’s really weird, don’t you?” he said flatly.

Nick snorted.

“I–no, no,” Frank shook his head. “I was just surprised. You didn’t look like I expected. But considering I’ve only known this was possible for less than an hour, I was really shooting in the dark with my expectations anyway.”

“What did you expect?” Barry asked, wanting to know but pretty sure he’d regret asking.

Dania looked like she wasn’t sure if she should let her husband answer.

“I was expecting less drastic changes, I think,” Frank admitted. “More Baz-in-a-dress, rather than...”

Barry waited with bated breath.

“...a filled-out young lady with Barry’s face,” Frank finished uneasily.

“Right?!” Nick burst out, like he was relieved he wasn’t the only one who’d noticed. “Like he’s ready to be on the cover of the swimsuit issue of *Dorks Illustrated*.”

Barry balled up his fists, realizing his wings were moving agitatedly again. Dania and Frank exchanged an awkward look.

“Honey, could you at least change his outfit to make him a little more... covered?” Frank’s brow was furrowed again.

“First question I asked,” Barry grouched. He folded his arms, but then seeing how it brought prominence to his two most obvious problems, he dropped them again quickly.

“Frank, I’ve told you that about *my* uniform; you can’t change the default,” Dania repeated for her husband, with a touch of exasperation. “It reflects things about the fairy and who she is in her current stage of life.”

“Well, that’s one thing for you, you’re an adult,” Frank reasoned. “He’s just…” he came up short. “Wait, should I be calling him ‘she?’ How does this work?”

Barry cringed hard. “Oh god no. Please don’t, Dad.”

“Technically it’d be more accurate,” Nick said sagely.

“I think it depends on the glitter baby,” Dania said, “but it seems like Barry would much prefer we not change how we reference him, even as Grape.”

“Grape?” Frank asked, skeptically.

“It’s his fairy name, like mine’s Dayspark,” Dania enthused. “It just stuck a few minutes before you got here!”

Frank made a little bit of a face, and Barry couldn’t blame him. It was a really stupid name. All the same though, it felt like an actual part of him, no matter how dumb, was being scorned by his dad.

“That wasn’t my idea either!” Barry protested loudly, finding it imperative that his father didn’t think he’d asked for either the ridiculous outfit or the ridiculous moniker.

Frank looked between Dania and Barry, lips pinched. “Well if he didn’t have a say in either the clothing or the name, is there anything that *can* be changed?”

“Franklin!” Dania said with disappointed reproach. “This is a huge deal for Barry; I thought you were going to be encouraging!”

Mr. Anderson seemed to realize he wasn't fulfilling the fatherly role he'd been hauled in for. "I'm sorry, Dane; I know I'm not always hip to fay culture... but if he didn't ask for this, and as his parents we didn't get any say in it, is it really something we just have to *accept* as part of his future now?"

Barry and Nick both watched their parents, riveted. Barry felt enormously conflicted, standing there with the kitchen air pressed against an unseemly amount of bare skin. On the one hand, there was nothing he wanted more in that moment than the ability to dial back this whole hideous morning; on the other hand, it didn't seem that easy, from what his mother kept saying. And as much as it shocked Nick, he couldn't pretend that he couldn't feel his altered body shape and wings, and he couldn't pretend that "Grape" didn't feel like his name.

"Honey," Dania said very quietly, "he's a fairy godmother now. There isn't just an 'off switch' for that."

Frank's eyes were narrow and frustrated, as he looked over Barry again. He of course didn't know enough about magic or fairydom to question what Dania was saying, but it was clear that he wanted to.

Barry gazed hopelessly at his feet. Or at least he would have if they were easier to see. His chest and skirt obscured his high heels, unless he bent over to look. But he stared dejectedly at the kitchen tile.

"Well, what do *you* want, Barry?" Frank asked, seeming to force himself to look his oldest in the eye.

The question caught Barry off guard. Very little about this seemed to revolve around what he wanted. He laughed mirthlessly. "To go from fifteen to seventeen and not have today have happened?"

Dania gave him a lovingly concerned look.

But he really considered it more. “I think in some ways I don’t want this to be possible, or if it is possible, I want it to happen to someone else, not to me. ...But then, look at me,” he sighed.

All three of them did; Dania looking thoughtful, Frank looking troubled, and Nick looking confused.

“I meant that figuratively!” Barry exclaimed. “Don’t actually look at—!” He sighed, putting a slender hand tiredly over his eyes. “I just mean I can’t pretend this isn’t happening to me. Even though I *want* to.”

“I think that’s very mature of you, hon,” Dania came over to him and put an arm around his shoulders and wings.

He noticed, with more dismay than perhaps it should have caused him, that if shoes hadn’t been enhancing his current height, his mom was probably taller than him again, a milestone he’d managed to pass up as a boy around Nick’s age.

“I’m not trying to get in the way of something you want to do,” Frank told him.

Barry’s eyes widened. “I never said *that!*” He ran his words back through his head, wondering if anything he’d said made it sound like he was accepting this role that magic seemed determined to give him. “I meant it more like I seem to have contracted a serious illness, and I don’t want to pretend I haven’t.”

“Instant-Boob Disorder?” Nick wisecracked, causing Barry’s flush to act up again.

“Barry,” Dania chided, removing her arm from around him so she could look at him fully, “you’re making it sound like such a doom and gloom thing! You have magic now!”

Barry looked down at the wand in his hand, not really comprehending that it had magic in it besides what was out to ruin his life.

“She has a point,” Frank shrugged. “Most people would leap at the chance to have magical powers.”

“Did they have to come bundled?!” Barry frowned bitterly. “Here, have a chocolate sundae, with a side of waterboarding.”

Dania seemed very offended by this analogy. “Hyperbole, Barry!”

“Sorry,” Barry mumbled, realizing it was probably a crass comparison. “It was the first thing I thought of for ‘something that’d be kinda nice to have, coupled with the last thing you’d ever want.’”

“*Drama queen,*” Nick jabbed quietly.

Well that was a stab right in his misshapen chest; it seemed that Nick knew just how to hit him. He didn’t *want* to be being overdramatic, especially not in a stupid, girly, high-maintenance, diva way. Really, he just didn’t want to be in the room anymore, didn’t want to have to deal with being looked at, prodded and poked, mocked or scolded, anymore, when he’d *never asked for this in the first place!!*

“Can I *please* change back?” he begged, not meeting any of their eyes anymore.

Dania frowned lovingly at him, stepping over to him again and giving him a hug. He grew rigid in her arms, his body feeling so alienly soft when squeezed!

“Honey, I know it doesn’t make any sense to you right now. But I know magic! You wouldn’t have this if it didn’t go with who you are, okay?”

He didn’t say anything, humiliated she was bringing up faydom being befitting of him again, in front of his dad.

“I know it doesn’t feel like an honor or a special thing right now,” she went on, “but it *is*. Truly Baz.”

He sighed mournfully, and it was breathy and soft. He didn’t even want to be honored or special in the first place. He just wanted to be Barry and be a guy! Was that too much to ask??

She pulled out of the hug slightly, to look him in the eye. “*Grape*,” she repeated firmly.

He glanced over at his dad, observing the discomfort there when his fairy name was used. But then he looked obediently back at Dania’s intense, caring expression.

“You’re a fairy godmother. That’s not going anywhere. But you’re going to be a *great* one. And with each passing day, it’ll feel more like a part of who you are.”

Barry looked again at Nick and Frank, thinking how they already seemed to be struggling to see past his new feminine exterior. Was Dania right, and each day he’d adopt the mask more? That seemed like a horrifying thought, given the powder-puff pinup he’d been transformed into.

But he knew she only wanted to help, and she was more comforting than anything else he had at his disposal at the moment.

“If I say okay, can I change back?” he asked.

Frank laughed at that, breaking a bit of the gravity in the air.

Dania sighed exasperatedly, giving him an understanding smile and releasing him from her hug.

“Yes, I think we’re done for today.”

Barry exhaled in relief. He was going home soon! Maybe not forever, but it was something.

“Frank, you want to watch him power-down?” Dania asked with a smile. “The initial power-up was pretty exciting.”

“Sure, that’s one word for it,” Barry rolled his eyes.

“Honestly, hon, I’d really like to get back to work,” Frank said a little desperately. Barry suspected his desire was much more about getting *away* from what was happening at home, rather than getting back *to* work. Still, Barry would really rather his dad not watch, if it was going to be anything like before.

“Of course, love,” Dania nodded, although Barry wondered if she was secretly disappointed her husband wasn’t more engaged and excited with her.

He was like a purple circus act, after all, Barry thought sarcastically; what wasn’t there to be excited about?

“But I’ll be back this evening, in time for cake and ice cream, right sport?” Frank gave his firstborn an uncomfortable smile.

Normal birthday activities seemed a world away, but Barry nodded, trying to smile back at him.

“Thank you again for coming home, sweetheart,” Dania reassured Frank, going to him. “I’m really glad you were here.”

“Of course,” Frank nodded, still serious, “you guys needed me.” He gave his wife a kiss, and then Nick was in range that Frank patted him fondly on the back. But there was a tense pause as he was divvying out affection and got to Barry in the lineup.

His dad looked him up and down once more, and Barry felt his body language being jittery and nervous again. He was all too aware of the burstiness of his upper torso, and the swish of his hips, and the fragile look of his arms and legs. It was all wrong, and Frank was still looking at him like he didn’t even know him.

“Um, Baz,” he seemed to be reminding himself it was Barry in there, “did you want a hug?”

Barry’s eyes went wide, thinking that sounded like one of the only things that could make this moment more awkward than it already was. “That’s really okay, Dad!” he replied instantly, voice high and vibratory. “I’m good, thanks.”

“Okay,” Frank nodded quickly, looking relieved. “Love you though, kiddo.”



That meant a lot, and Barry's lower lip trembled, wanting so badly to still be able to be the kind of son that was making his father proud. That seemed much more difficult today than yesterday. "Love you too, Dad."

Frank nodded again, before heading back out to the garage, leaving Dania, Nick, and Barry to themselves again.

Barry was glad that their father's presence had seemed to pacify Nick's incessant caricaturing of him.

Nick chose that moment to give him a look-over again. "So is Barry going to stop looking like he got squeezed out of a tube of glitter toothpaste?"

*Spoke too soon*, Barry grumbled in his head.

"You ready to be done with your first power-up, sweetheart?" Dania asked, ignoring Nick's way of saying it.

"Holy crap, yes!" he declared. "What do I do?" He looked at the wand in his hand, wondering how the stick could be made to obey, rather than vanquishing him.

Dania regarded him pensively, and Barry was fearful she'd take back his permission to change back at long last.

"Actually," she said thoughtfully, "why don't you do it alone, this time."

"Hey, I wanna see though!" Nick dissented.

"You saw earlier," she shook her head. "Baz needs to do this solo."

Barry did actually appreciate that. "By myself? Like upstairs?"

She nodded. “Just make sure your curtains are closed and stand away from the windows. It’s okay if neighbors see purple light coming from your room, but we try and keep it all on the DL, okay?”

Barry was disconcerted that he’d never noticed Dania being careful about where she did big magic, before. How many considerations were there to doing magic that would never have occurred to him?

“Here, I’ll see you off,” she winked, putting a guiding hand behind his wings, and nudging him forward toward the foyer, following behind him.

Nick began following too, but Dania turned and looked at him. “No, Nick you stay here, I’ll be right back.”

His expression clouded over. “Why can’t I go up to *my* room?”

“Because you and I are going to have a little talk, so I want you to wait for me here,” she said with motherly sternness.

“What’d I *do*?” he acted offended.

“You’re not in trouble, love, we’re just going to chat a bit,” Dania informed him.

Nick still looked very grumpy and Barry internally rolled his eyes at him. Who was the drama queen now?

Barry let himself be escorted through the open archway into the foyer, and to the base of the stairs. He looked up them pensively, having descended them in such a different state that morning.

“Hon,” Dania said, and he turned to look at her. “I think maybe you should take a minute alone, before you power-down, just to take it all in,” she suggested gently, tucking his new hair behind his ear and patting him softly on his more rounded cheek.

As much as Barry disliked that idea, he admitted to himself that she was probably right. He felt so overwhelmed and out-of-body this way, he really did need a minute to take it in without his mom squeeing over the change, or being embarrassed because Nick was in the room, or not really wanting his father to see him that way.

He just nodded mutely.

“So just go take a bit in your room, maybe become a little more friendly with the mirror when you’re powered-up,” she encouraged shrewdly, “and then just think to your wand that you want to power-down, and release it to transform back.”

“That’s all?” he asked. “If I had known that I would have done it an hour and a half ago!”

Dania looked like she wanted to scold him for being mouthy, but seemed to think better of it after the morning he’d had. She paused thoughtfully. “I think you may really come to love it, Baz. The way I do.”

He said nothing, not sure what he would have said if he had been up to it.

She understood. “Well, I’m proud of you, sweetheart. I’ve always been proud of you.”

“Thanks, Mom,” he mumbled, feeling close to tears again and wanting to get alone before any sort of dam broke. “Love you.” he said quietly before ascending the stairs.

“Love you so much, Barry!” she called after him.

But he didn’t feel like Barry as he went back up to his room. His movement felt odd as he climbed and his skirt swiveled around wildly, like it had a hula hoop attached to the hem.

He closed the door and was immediately faced with his reflection in the full-length mirror that hung on the back. It was like a stranger... and yet not. His body’s shape and proportions were all off, but despite being framed by soft purple ringlets, his face wasn’t all that different. Sure, it

was stupidly girly, in Barry's opinion, but all his regular features had just been softened, like an ultra delicate, almost chibi version of his regular face.

His body was super jarring, though. He was in most ways teeny-tiny, in height and weight and just bone structure, but he seemed exaggeratedly curvy for how petite he was. It was like magic was trying to prove his womanhood to everyone, screw normal body shape!

His chest was particularly ridiculous, almost cartoony, but that wasn't the only change. In addition to the skirt's own buoyancy, as he put his hands on them, he could feel that his hips had expanded to fill it out further.

Swallowing hard, Barry locked the door in a swift motion, just in case. Then, ever so slowly, he lifted the hem of the skirt, painfully curious about what lay beneath. He knew he was being unduly nervous, especially because he could feel he wasn't naked underneath there, but this was uncharted territory for Barry.

His legs were both thinner and more fleshy at the same time, somehow, and magically hairless. His thighs seemed oddly spaced as they approached his hips. Closing one eye apprehensively, he flipped the skirt up the rest of the way at once.

There was some kind of light purple lycra panty between his legs, but it was attached to the bottom of the skirt, like a leotard, and that part of the garment itself wasn't too bad, even though it was a little high-cut. But beneath the piece of fabric there was no sign of his usual boxer bulge at all. It was completely flush and smooth.

He released a scared little gasp and let the skirt fall back down again, the soft cheeks of his reflection very pink. Maybe he wasn't ready to face that aspect yet. And he felt a little like he'd walked in on his sister changing.

The full lips of the girl in the mirror trembled, and he sighed in her voice, a few of the tears he'd held back all morning finally escaping. He brushed them off her stupid round cheeks, defeatedly.

His brows were currently stuck in a constant state of concern, and those too were purple, though of a darker shade than his hair. The hair itself was bouncy, with shoulder length, porcelain doll-esque ringlets, and was shiny like lavender satin. His regular copper-brown hair had some natural wave to it, and could get a little curly when he hadn't had a haircut, but he hardly thought this was the continuation of that.

He turned around so his back faced the mirror, looking over a smooth shoulder to see. He moved his wings, dazed to watch them cooperate. They protruded from a slit in the bodice of his "uniform" (he used the term with scathing sarcasm in his mind). Other than that, the garment had no obvious seam or zipper in the back, like he'd been sewn inside. Well that was painfully metaphorical: a purple, bust-accentuating straightjacket.

He looked down at the licentious purple perpetrator in his hand. The scepter of evil just lay there innocuously, like it hadn't just flipped everything in his world upside-down.

"Okay, time to let me go," he muttered angrily at it. He recalled what Dania had said to do. "Power me down!" he declared aloud. Nothing happened. She'd said to release it, so he took it between mini fingers and let go.

It fell, as any wooden object would, and he barely caught it before it hit the ground, feeling his weight shift in unusual places as he lunged downward for it.

Maybe he had to say it at the same time? "I want to power-down!" he insisted, bouncing it on his palm, like it was a baby bird he was helping to fly.

Still nothing, and the bouncing was making his pectoral orbs shake also. "Come on!" he rebuked the wand. "Change me back!" he pleaded.

What was supposed to make these dumb things magick?!

Not entirely sure why he did it, Barry closed his eyes, hand closing around the wand. It felt almost alive there, as he slowed down and coaxed it with his mind. There was a sort of energy

that pulsed back at him, like static on a breeze. He breathed it in and something inside him connected with it, snake-charming it to his will. It was soft and elegant, and eager to please.

Despite his diminished vocal chords, his voice within his own mind was still male, and it was that voice that spoke to the thrumming song within his conductor's baton. *Power-down*, he willed. He felt a sort of click, like something slipping into a slot designed for it, and opened his eyes.

To his astonishment, the little stick rose into the air of its own volition, and began to huff and puff its foggy purple haze again. It cycloned around his body, top-down this time, cleaning up its misdeeds along the way.

His wings retreated into his back, then his hair did the same into his head as he watched it in the mirror. It browned like old fruit, until the female reflection was wearing his own haircut, which looked more like a pixie cut with his face and body still transformed.

His neck and shoulders broadened before his eyes, and the angles reappeared in his face, jaw thickening. His eyes looked proportionally half the size they were a moment before.

To his relief, his chest flattened like an earthquake among sand dunes, as his shirt reformed to the green cotton he'd picked out that morning, the cartoon dino having no idea the ordeal it had undergone.

His skirt lengthened and split into legs, just as magic warmed his crotch and he felt everything springing back into place. It was nervy down there and he made a "Gah" sound, happy despite the discomfort to hear his own voice.

His legs beefed up and lengthened, growing his hair back, and the sparkly purple pumps were finally gone, leaving him barefoot and himself on his bedroom carpet.

The power-down had been much faster than the power-up, and Barry was panting with both the quick change and the relief he was feeling.

He touched his own face, never remembering being so consoled by seeing it. Also, with a bit of chagrin in his expression, he patted the front of his cargo shorts, double checking that everything was where it should be. "Hey guys, welcome back," he murmured aloud, laughing wearily.

He hadn't really noticed, but the wand had returned to his hand, like a boomerang. Or a bad penny. Still, it had done its job, and he was back in his home shape... for now.

Barry Anderson had awoken in that same room, that morning, as the son of an accountant and a fairy godmother. But now, on the afternoon of his sixteenth birthday, he *was* a fairy godmother, like it or not, and part of him knew that there was no going back to a time where "Grape" wasn't a piece of who he was.