

Boys With Antlers, Girls With Wings

by Rob Hartzell

Cranial mods have become passé these days. There was a time when only the most daredevil body-modification devotees could be persuaded to get them, whether a smaller set of devil horns, or a full-on curling set of Pan-like antlers. That was when getting a body mod was a commitment: you had to be willing to go under the knife or the needle to get your work done. Now that you can go to a body shop and get nearly any mod you can imagine printed and attached in about an hour, every cracker-ass redneck is sporting a twelve-point rack, at least until they get drunk and start fighting outside some dive bar, the young men charging each other like rutting bucks in the parking lot while their white-winged girlfriends yell at them to stop.

The wings aren't much more original than antlers, especially when they're bleached as severely as the girls' hair, but the horns are confined to the younger guys (the older guys look down on antlers, complaining that they make deer hunting dangerous). It's nothing anymore to see some leathery middle-aged barmaid with peroxidized bangs tooling around the grocery store, flicking her greying flightless things at any man who'll pay attention to her. They're at least a bit more aesthetic than antlers, but it's annoying to have to listen to every chump who bags a winged chick going on about how, naked, she "looked like an angel." I wonder sometimes if the winged girls get as tired of hearing that as I do. I could ask Amy but she's as distant from all that as I am.

I know my own additional arms are hardly unique -- most drummers, especially in metal and prog rock, have four now instead of two -- but they're functional. I'm lucky, I guess: my parents encouraged me to pursue music and let me get the arms as soon as I turned 14 (the earliest a body shop would let me through the doors). Some of my friends won't be able to get theirs until they leave home; by then, they'll have to spend so much time catching up, learning to use their new appendages, that most of them will never be able to play professionally. The arms are also useful for defusing wannabe bullies with antlers; last year, some assclown thought he was going to show off for his friends by charging me. I sidestepped him, then grabbed his antlers with two hands while twisting his arm behind his back with the other two. Stupid fucker was sure I was going to snap his precious 12-pointers but I'd already made my point by the time I released him, slamming him into the floor.

Amy gets a lot of shit for being "gothic" even though she doesn't really look the part, not from a purist perspective: blue-skinned from nanotattoos, bat-winged and pointed teeth. I remember the first time I saw her totally naked, her wings outstretched, her skin just starting to lighten into the bright blue it is now. She stretched out her translucent blue wings while I caressed and nibbled at her purplish nipples: "What do you think?" and I answered her honestly: "You look like a force of nature." She stroked my face with her wing tips while I ran my hands over her body as if I had eight of them; when I lifted her onto me, she enfolded me with her wings, an embrace none of those 12-point jackasses will ever be able to appreciate.

They -- the Serious Responsible Adults who always weigh in on these kinds of things -- say that these body mods are just a phase, something we'll shrug off as we get older. Pure condescension. I didn't get my extra arms just to piss off my parents, and the same is

true for Amy and the rest of our friends, each of us with our own unique mods and our own aspirations for them. Amy has her eye on a sci-fi theatre troupe in Portland she wants to join when we leave high school; as long as I'm playing drums, I'll need four arms. We aren't like the antlered kids, who will, however unwillingly, shrug off their horns to get a job (or their wings for a Normal boyfriend). Our mods are a part of who we are, a mark of the lives we've chosen to live. The others are just boys with antlers and girls with wings....

