

# Identity

“It’s expensive to be meeeee-e-e-e-e-e-e”

It’s 10.00 in the morning, the alarm goes off, ringing it’s melody out into the room. My own single XXPEN\$IVE is pulling me from my dream into yet another day of Erika Jayne... or Erika Girardi? whichever part of me gets to play the lead role today. You see, who I am, can be very different depending on what my day holds in store.

I push the button on the side of my phone to silence it and roll onto my back to stretch my body out. My silk pyjamas slide on my sheets as though I’m swimming in them while I yawn and let the clarity of my awakened state settle. I roll out of bed and make my way into my grand marble bathroom. I lean past the glass border of my shower and turn the knobs to make the water start streaming out of the waterfall showerhead. I step in and the warm water feels so good as it runs down my back. My muscles are sore from the last few days of rehearsal and I am grateful for the soothing sensation from the water.

- Finally Friday!

I exclaim to myself as I start mentally going through the different activities of the day. Today, I’ve got a luncheon at a fancy restaurant where I am accompanying Mr. Girardi, meeting a few clients. He’s actually at the office already putting together a few things in preparation for today.

My husband is a very successful lawyer, famous from the “Erin Brockovich” case which inspired the movie with the same name with Julia Roberts playing the lead. I’ve been married to Tom Girardi for almost twenty years. We met when I was working as a cocktail waitress and Tom used to frequent my workplace. After a year of serving him we started seeing each other and have been together ever since.

It wasn’t easy in the beginning, you see, Tom is 32 years my senior... And when I first started showing up at events on his arm, there were a lot of people who had an opinion about it. I knew it

was coming though and I was prepared... But it still feels unfair when someone decides who you are from what they see and puts you in a box of what they think you are.

Anyways, there is no need to go down that road in my mind. Anyone who works closely with Mr. Girardi knows me now and it's only when we are meeting new people that I prepare myself for that box. Luckily, today is not that day!

I rinse the last bit of conditioner out of my platinumblonde hair, inhaling the lilac fragrance filling the steam as it rises up around me. Letting the old memories get washed away with my expensive hair care.

- That's just who I be, it's expensive to be me!

I sing to myself as I giggle when I think of how cool it is to have a single with over 30 million views on youtube and as my own alarm clock of course.

I step out of the shower, dry myself off on my fluffyVersace towel and slip my robe on. Stepping onto the marble floor of my bathroom heading towards the golden door frame, I step through and take a right. In front of me is the entrance to my walk-in closet. The grand double doors with golden door knobs meeting in the middle usually make my girlfriends gasp... if they are lucky enough to get to see the master's quarters that is. I grab both handles and open the door.

The spacious closet has clothing hanging on both sides and all the way at the back shoes are lined up in rows, starting at just above floor level all the way up to the top shelf.

In the middle of the room there is an island storing accessories. The pieces seen around the room are all to be worn at some point... probably. Or may have been worn already, however today I am turning my eyes toward the floor. Eight different boxes are lining the walls. Four on one side, four on the other.

The box closest to me on my left has the word "Housewife" written on it. The next behind it states "Good Friend", followed by "Southern Mother" and "Daughter" all the way in the back. On my right hand side the first box that greets me has the word "Showgirl", followed by three boxes stating "Empowered Woman", "Bad Bitch" and "Gold Digger".

You see, today, I will embody two different identities. By day, I will be Mrs. Girardi but tonight I will be Erika Jayne, my showgirl alter ego.

You see, the boxes around the room are the roles I play in my life, roles I identify with. Most of these boxes I have chosen on my own and some have been given to me. Like the case of the “Gold Digger” box which is all the way in the back, neglected and all but forgotten.

I move towards the first box, on the left side of my closet. The box has the word “Housewife” written on the top. I keep this box conveniently placed immediately to my left as I walk in as this box is one I use most often. I open it up and find a multitude of clothing and accessories within.

- Ok, what shall I wear today?

I pull out a baby blue Chanel penn skirt.

- Ooh! I love this piece!

Luckily the skirt comes with a matching blazer creating a more refined look. Now I just need an effortlessly elegant white blouse to go with it!

I turn back to the box and rummage through it until I find the perfect blouse to match.

With my outfit picked out and hung up to the side I turn my attention to a smaller box the size of a jewelry box with the word “Signs” on it. Within the box are signs with little words on them as well as a golden chain, kind of like the one old school watches used to hang from. However, instead of a clock at the end of it, this chain has a clip on both ends of it.

You see, all of these identities are built up of signs, signs which on their own may not hold further meaning than what word is written on them. However, when put together in a chain, it equates to an identity. I take my chain out and start clipping signs to help me remember the framework of my identity in the different situations I will find myself in today.

The first word I pull up is “Cooking”

- Do I need “cooking” for my version of housewife today?

No. We’re having lunch at a restaurant so I won’t need that sign. Actually this particular sign is not needed very often for me but generally when other people think of a “Housewife” they assume this sign is a given.

I place the sign back into the box and pull out another. The word “Doting” is written on this sign. This will be useful today. In my housewife role I think it’s important to me to show my allegiance and care for my husband whenever I accompany him to an event. As I add this sign to my chain I look for my “Caring” sign and my “Loyal” sign. I find them and add them as well as I will need them today.

In my housewife role it is also important to me that I allow my husband to be in focus. Especially in this particular situation as it is his job and his role within this work that is of focus today. To make sure I keep this in mind I look through my jewelry box to find the sign stating “Husband in focus”. This luncheon is not about me, but about Mr. Girardi and I am there to support him in his venture.

To make sure I show my support for him I always speak highly of him in front of others. I highlight all of his good sides and affirm them through my actions. I reach into my jewelry box and add “Caring”, “Complimenting” and “Talk highly of Mr. Girardi”. I have now collected the appropriate signs to keep in mind as I embody my role today at lunch. I clip the chain to my Chanel suit and leave the end with the signs attached in the left hand pocket.

With my first identity of the day, ready to go, it’s time to turn my focus toward preparing my outfit for tonight. Erika Jayne has got a performance at a Gay bar in Los Angeles. I’ve been rehearsing every day this week getting ready for my performance and I am so excited to hit the stage!

I turn to my right and shift my focus to the first box in the row of four. The box has the word “Show Girl” written on it in rhinestone letters, glittering from the spotlights of my closet. I get down on my knees in front of it and open it up.

I find a black, mesh, full-body leotard with solid details for cover. I take it out of the box and hang it on a hanger just above the box. I will be wearing this for my performance tonight. I reach back down into my Show Girl box and pull out a pair of thigh high shiny black stiletto boots. I get a hanger with clamps on it and hang my boots up next to my leotard. At the very top on the inside of my boot, the part that covers my thigh, has a small pocket for the gilded chain connected to this identity.

Reaching back into the box I pull out a bejeweled hot pink jewelry box and open it to take out the chain. There are a lot of signs in there, many which have been given to me, whether I wanted to accept them or not. I've received them and I let them stay in the box but I generally don't allow them to get attached to the chain I choose to define my Show Girl identity.

I start with the obvious, "Performer", "Singer" and "Dancer". These are foundational for Erika Jayne's existence. I pull out some more signs: "Make up", "Costume", "Hair", "Glam" and "Beauty" which are all essentials for the chain as well.

- Ok, time for the edgy stuff...

I pick up the sign saying "Erotic". The sign feels heavy in my hand and I realize that a few other signs have stuck to the back of it like magnets. I pick them off one by one. "Provocation" is the first one I pull off. To be honest, there is no way of getting rid of this sign as long as "Erotic" is part of the chain of equivalence. "Shame" and "Judgement" are the next two signs I pull out... Like the "Gold Digger" box. These two signs are not ones that I ever want to place on myself and though people may react to my Show Girl identity with shame or judgement. I decided a long time ago to never internalize these signs no matter how many times others want to place them on me. Content with my chain of signs, I attach them to my boots. My outfit is complete and ready for me later when I'm back home before heading out to the performance tonight.

- Ok Mrs. Girardi! Let's do this!

I get a pair of nude pantyhose and put my hand down one of the pantyhose legs making sure I do not cause a runner in them from my long gel nails. They are neon pink, ready for the performance tonight. A little hint towards Erika Jayne even when my main identity is Mrs. Girardi. At the end of the day, they're all me and no matter what others may think, who I am is ultimately decided by me.

I take one last look in the mirror, fully clothed in my baby blue Chanel suit and my hair slicked back in an elegant bun. I wink at myself and head out the door.