

1. No Thumb But Not Dumb

All Sikhs are named Singh, which means “lion.” Similarly, all bears are named Bear, which means “bear”. This particular bear’s name was Albert Theodore Einstein Bear. His name was a compromise. His mother Brenda, who had high hopes for his intellect despite her own rather meager powers of reasoning, wanted to name him Albert Einstein Bear. Frank, her most regular customer and therefore Ted’s presumed father, wanted to name him Theodore Roosevelt Bear, presumably reflecting a hope for brawn and ferocity rather than intellect. But Brenda had spent many a night sitting in a window in Amsterdam’s red light district, and during her long hours on the Oudezijds Achterburgwal she had developed an abiding dislike of all things Dutch, even names. She therefore vetoed Roosevelt, and Ted ended up as Albert Theodore Einstein Bear.

It was inevitable that this would in time become A. Ted E. Bear, for in fact Ted *was* a teddy bear. He was of average height (19 inches, or half a metre, as his mother would have put it) and weight (about a pound, or .07 of a stone), had only slightly matted golden brown fur, and wore a tidy red velvet bow tie. Like all teddy bears, he was the product of the sexual union of a human male and a female bear. Such a union might seem unlikely, but bear in mind (note excellent pun!!) that female bears in estrus, like male humans under almost any circumstances, are not very fussy about their sexual partners. And in any case Ted’s mother was a prostitute who was smart enough to know which species has most of the money.

Ted *was* much smarter than the average teddy bear, and also more entrepreneurial. His boss Kristin paid him next to nothing for his nightly job as a Sleep Object, and his prospects at employment outside her home were limited by his lack of a birth certificate

or other proof of legal residency status, and also by his lack of an opposable thumb. He understood at any early age that the legal status of species other than human is certainly not favorable. They cannot vote or own property, for example. But Ted was smart enough to figure out that *corporations* have no species identity. It is not clear whether corporations can legally make payments to members of another species, no matter how dignified, but they certainly can make payments to a trust set up for the benefit of anyone or anything, including a small bear. Thus Ted Bear, P.C. was duly chartered, with its stock held by The Trust for the Benefit of Ted Bear, to which its profits (if any) were also paid. Kristin's husband Piotr (to Ted, The Boss Consort), who was not very smart but at least was honest, served as the legal front man for the operation in exchange for a few beers now and then. Very few of Ted's products were a commercial success, but enough people were interested in his soft-porn websites (Teddies in Teddies, Bare Bears, etc.) to keep his business going, and the HeliumBra lifted his company (so to speak) into clear profitability.

The idea for the HeliumBra had originated, not surprisingly, with his Boss. Kristin was a truly magnificent woman. She was extremely intelligent, which Ted didn't really care about, but also she was tall and lithe and lovely with a nice smile, a firm ass and great boobs. (In fact, the quality of her boobs is probably the main reason why Ted agreed to continue his work as her Sleep Object despite meager pay.) Although she was well into her 50's, she kept her body in magnificent shape through a healthy diet and a disciplined daily routine of aerobic exercise, weight lifting and vigorous sex. As a result she kept Piotr in a constant confused state of wonder and sexual exhaustion. However, while her boobs had originated in Detroit, they had now reached Indianapolis and were

heading for Nashville, figuratively speaking, and one day she wondered out loud, “Why can’t they make a bra that doesn’t have an underwire but still provides good uplift?” She was not the first woman to wonder that, of course, but then she continued, mostly in jest: “Ted, why don’t you work on that?” And the rest is history.

Although Ted was mildly successful as a businessbear, in time he realized that in 21st century America it was a better long-term career to be a victim. He had no trouble in identifying what he was a victim of: *speciesism*. The term speciesism refers to the belief of one species (humans, in this case) that they are superior to other species, and that they can therefore legitimately do things to other species that they would or should not do to their own. Examples would include swatting a fly, having a pet dog, putting animals in a zoo, using a mouse as a subject in a drug trial, eating a steak, or paying a Sleep Object less than the minimum wage. Ted’s inability to get legal residency status, and thus to seek gainful employment, and then later to find jobs that did not require thumbs, was clearly due to speciesist policies, which he would try to change, and since these policies had obviously harmed him, he would deserve substantial compensation. Thus began the long legal battle that culminated in the Supreme Court’s decision (*Albert T.E. Bear vs. Delta Airlines*) that for the first time identified a species characteristic (the lack of an opposable thumb) as a handicap for which employers had a legal responsibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act to make a reasonable accommodation. In doing so, he also massively boosted the market for his No Thumb But Not Dumb line of thumb-free products, only one of which, the thumb-free TV remote, had previously gotten much play in the marketplace. (Young women bought it for their boyfriends, so that they could hope to watch a TV channel for more than five seconds at a time.) And his consultants

would make him a lot of money helping companies design thumb-free airplane cockpits, hammers, dental tools and baseball bats.

Of course, success seldom happens overnight. Ted had come a long way from those dark early months spent in a barrel of bears in London Gatwick Airport, waiting to rise to the surface so that he could be bought by some jet-lagged traveler and taken into the world. Then he had to spend several years as a Thing That Is Owned before Kristin, moved by his constant argumentation and her concerns about his unpaid social security taxes, officially acknowledged his status as an Independent Contractor. His first business enterprises outside the home were complete failures, and several times he was down to his last salmon filet and bottle of beer. But eventually, through his hard work, Kristin's support, and a lot of luck, he rose to his current position of wealth, power and political prominence. Of course, like most successful creatures of any species, he tended to focus on the "hard work" part of the equation, as opposed to the other two. Still, he did achieve levels never previously reached by a member of a non-human species. This book is his saga.