



Amore

Amor!

By Cooper and Anonymous Anonymous

“It’s like they’re taunting me,” Jimmy said as he and his best friend, Devin, walked down the hall at the High-Tech High School. A banner hung from the ceiling, all bright colors and big, bubble letters that read “Winter Formal!”

“Just go stag,” Devin said. “It’ll still be fun.”

“Stag sucks,” Jimmy said. “Standing around in the corner like a dork.”

“You are a dork.”

“Har har. Thanks. You’re such a good friend.”

“What’s a friend supposed to be if not honest?”

Jimmy elbowed Devin. They had been friends since elementary school, and he knew his buddy was just giving him a hard time, but this time it just wasn’t helping. Jimmy had resolved to find a date for the dance, especially since it was senior year, and he didn’t want to end his high-school years as forever dateless. “I asked a bunch of girls, but they already have dates— or at least that’s what they said. I just wish someone would go with me.”

“Well, let me know. I’ll do anything to help you out. You know that.”

Just as the young men were talking, Amor happened to be flying around, drawn to the school by all the wonderful energies of young love flittering around the hallways as boys and girls paired up for the big dance, many with visions of love and romance consuming their minds. Amor paused, looking at the two, and then giggled as a plan filled his mischievous little mind.

Devin, for his part, could take or leave the dance. He found most of the girls his age flighty and frivolous— even here at High Tech. Despite the fact that they were all super smart, they still turned out to have a lot of the same girly habits he’d always found so annoying, and he now planned and expected to find his dream woman at college— someone more interested in talking about physics than the latest episode of Riverdale.

After school, Devin had gone right to his room and studied all night. He had no time for anything else, despite the fact that even his demanding parents

sometimes found themselves worried that he was too serious and needed to have some fun. But Devin was not about fun. He wanted to be remembered as one of the great intellects of human history— an Einstein!

That night, he fell asleep reading *The Journal of Quantum Research*.

Amor fluttered to the window to Devin's room, saw him sleeping and opened the window, slipping in, his little wings flapping silently as he hovered above Devin's sleeping form. "You did say you would do anything," Amore whispered, and then dove down into Devin's brain. Devin had been dreaming about presenting a paper at a conference, and Amor made a gross, pukey face. "You definitely need to loosen up," Amor said, whispering a spell.

The world of Devin's dream seemed to melt, and he found himself doing a twirl, then plucking at the hem of his— dress? He looked down in shock to see he wore a floral print summer dress that came down to just above his knees. The plunging neckline revealed a soft, round chest.

"You look so cute!" Miranda said, looking him over. He knew Miranda. She wanted to be a doctor, was solid in math and biology, but wasted, in Devin's opinion, too much of her mental energy worrying about her hair.

Devin felt himself blushing, backing away, looking for somewhere to hide. "Um... Whaaaa?"

"Oh, you are so shy!" Miranda said, grabbing his arm and dragging him in front of a mirror. Devin's mouth dropped open as he looked at himself and saw a girl with pale skin and shimmering golden blonde hair.

"I'm a girl?" Devin squeaked.

Miranda laughed. "You just noticed?"

Devin's mouth dropped open and he shook his head, "no."

The image faded, and he found himself standing in front of Jimmy, looking up at his friend, who had somehow gotten tall. His head tilted back, books clutched to his chest, Devin said, "when did you get so tall?" His voice sounded— wrong, and he felt his heart leap as he realized he was still a girl, but before he could even think about that Jimmy leaned down and kissed him right on the mouth. Devin fell back against his locker, and when the kiss ended he gasped. "Why did you do that?"

"Cause you're cute," Jimmy said, reaching out and brushing Devin's hair from his face. "See you after school, cute."

Devin glanced down at himself, turned to his locker, wanting to hide— Jimmy had just kissed him! There was a small mirror inside his locker door, and he saw that pale, pretty face again, realized he was wearing lipstick, mascara...

What's happening to me? Devin wondered, his heart racing, only to find himself in a darkened gym, once more staring up into Jimmy's face. He was in Jimmy's arms, the two of them slow dancing to "How Deep Is Your Love."

"Something's wrong," Devin said, mostly to himself.

"What is it?" Jimmy said.

"I need to go," Devin said, trying to slip out of Jimmy's arms. But Jimmy kept his arm tight around Devin's slender waist.

"It's okay," Jimmy said. "You're my girl now."

"Ahhhh!" Devin sat up in his bed, immediately checking his body, relieved to find he was still a dude. "Just a nightmare," he mumbled, but then he heard a giggle, and he looked to see a tiny figure with a bow and arrow sprawled out on the foot of his bed.

"Hey, hey, hey," the creature said. "You ready to get bit by the love bug?"

"What? Who are you? I'm still dreaming."

The little creature popped to his feet and said, "You are not dreaming, though you are about to be dreamy."

"Are you supposed to be cupid?" Devin said.

"CUPID!" Amor shrieked. "Do I look fat to you?"

"No," Devin said, taken aback. "But, you know, the bow and..."

"Shush!" Amor said, casting a silence spell on Devin, who found he couldn't speak. "I am Amor—the fitter and more hip version of that dummy Cupid who gets all the attention and card royalties while I am so much better looking and...". He caught himself. "Never mind that. I am here to make— LOVE!" He flew up and mussed Devin's hair. "I'm going to turn you into a little cutie!"

Devin shook his head, gestured— what?

"Your friend wished for a date. You said you would do anything to help. So, I'm turning you into a cute girl so you can be his date."

Devin shook his head. NO! thinking, *I didn't mean that! I don't want to be a girl.*

Amor began fishing around himself, and even though he didn't have any pockets seemed to pull a bag out of an invisible pocket. "Girl dust!" He said, pulling the drawstring pouch open.

Devin rolled out of bed and ran for the door, thinking to get away, get help, something, but Amor flew right down in front of his and blew a cloud of sparkly pink powder right into Devin's face.

Devin coughed, wobbled, and then sank to the floor, asleep.

"Nightie night, sleeping beauty," Amor said, giggling.

Chapter Two

Devin felt cold, and opening his eyes, he found himself on the frigid hardwood floor of his bedroom. “What a weird dream,” he thought, getting up. His joints felt stiff, and his body ached. Though he’d decided it had all been a dream, he still looked around for signs of pink dust, but saw nothing, and a quick check showed his body hadn’t changed. “So weird,” he mumbled, sitting down on his bed, right beneath his Taylor Swift poster. He looked at Taylor, admiring how pretty she was, and then—

Wait. Taylor Swift? Hadn’t that been a Tom Brady poster?

He didn’t like Taylor Swift, did he?

Looking at the clock, he realized he was running late for school, so he hurried to get ready, taking a quick shower, then running a brush through his hair, fluffing out his messy bob. Once more, a sudden sense of weirdness came over him. Messy bob? He stared in the mirror. He remembered being excited when he’d gotten the bob, thinking he looked really cute, but no, right? He’d had a brush cut, because he thought wasting mental energy thinking about hair was— was what? Of course, he wanted cute hair, right?

“Devin?” His Mom called. “Breakfast.”

Devin went downstairs. Mom, Dad and his little sister were already eating, and he took his seat, where he found a green smoothie waiting for him, moisture beading on the outside of the glass. “What’s this?” He asked, sniffing the green concoction.

“Gross,” his sister, Kate, said.

“You’re the one who asked for it,” Mom said. “Spinach, Kale and wheat grass. Coconut milk.”

“Emphasis on nut,” Kate snarked.

Devin frowned. “I don’t really want this.”

“Eat your breakfast,” Dad grumbled.

“It’s good for your skin,” Mom said. “Remember? This was all your idea.”

“Skin?” Devin took a sip. It tasted terrible, but he forced himself to drink it, even as the uneasy feeling that somehow the meeting with Amor had not been dream.

Devin headed off to school, disturbed by the weirdness of the morning, the fact that everything seemed both wrong and normal. As soon as he got to school, he started to walk over to the lab building where he and Jimmy usually hung out, but when he was halfway there he heard someone shout, “Deb! Hey, Deb!”

He turned to see— “Miranda?” It was that girl, the one from his dream.

She grabbed his hand. “Your hair looks soooo cute!” Miranda gushed. “And your skin is so clear and bright!”

“What’s happening?” Devin hissed. “What did you do to me?”

“I told you,” Miranda said, her face morphing for a moment to that of Amor as she dragged Devin over to a circle of girls. “I’m turning you into a girl so you can be Jimmy’s date!”

Devin wanted to talk some more, to argue, but finding himself in a circle of girls, he felt suddenly shy and embarrassed. The girls all greeted him, just as if he always hung out with them, and he sheepishly stood there, listening as they chattered, flittering from topic to topic the way girls did. When the bell rang, Miranda once more grabbed his hand and dragged him off to class, ignoring his objections and attempts to convince her to stop what she was doing. They sat next to each other. “Come on,” Devin hissed. “This isn’t funny.”

“Oh, stop being such a baby,” Miranda said, digging in her backpack. She fished out a compact and a tube of lipstick, pushing them into Devin’s hands. “Check your makeup.”

Devin tossed the cosmetics onto his desk as if they were a venomous snake, terrified people would see him with makeup and make fun of him. “Come on,” Miranda said. “You love makeup.”

“I do NOT!” Devin said, but his eyes now locked on the compact, that tube of lipstick. On the side of the tube the letters Elf, in sparkly letters, and he could see the creamy, pink lipstick inside. His heart fluttered, and the pretty, turtle shell compact seemed to grow larger and larger, shimmering like the ring in Lord of the Rings.

Devin found himself reaching for the compact, his hand trembling. No. No, he told himself, terrified by a new passion, a need to check his face, to make sure he looked pretty. This is wrong, this is not me, and then his finger touched to cool, smooth lid of the compact, and he grabbed it, opened it and looked at his face, framed by that sexy bob, and he smiled, a sudden joyful warmth spreading through his whole body as he took the pad and dusted his face with powder. “I *was* a little shiny,” he murmured.

Miranda smiled.

The teacher, Mrs. Grumple, came into the room. She was old and severe, always with a pruney smile on her withered face. She started calling role. Devin now found himself with the lipstick in his hand. He wanted and needed to wear it, to make his lips plumper, prettier, more kissable, and he started to carefully

apply the lipstick, staring intently at himself in the mirror as the cotton candy lipstick made his lips wet and alluring.

“Debbie? Debbie?” Grumple called.

Miranda nudged Devin. “Debbie!” She whispered. “Mrs. Grumple is calling.”

“What? Oh?” Devin said, pausing, the lipstick in hand.

Mrs. Grumple shook her head. “Young lady, you are here to learn, not to make yourself a plaything for boys!”

The class laughed. Someone whispered, “She is such an airhead.”

“Young lady?” Devin said, blushing, embarrassed. “Boys?”

“Put the makeup away,” Grumple said. “Now.”

Once more there were titters. Devin wanted to sink into the floor, and he did slouch down into his chair as he stuffed the makeup into his backpack, at the same time feeling super relieved he’d gotten his lips done before he’d gotten caught. He just wished he’d had a sec to admire himself in the mirror, though.

Chapter Three

When class ended, Devin hurried out the door, wanting to crawl in a corner and die. He thought about calling his Mom, telling her he was sick, anything to avoid having all the kids in school see him with his powdered nose and wet, pink lipstick. He found a corner and dug out his phone, hooking his hair behind his ear. The phone rang. “Yes?” He heard his mother say.

“Mom,” Devin said, trying to make his voice sound hoarse, then fake coughing. “I feel really sick. Can you come pick me up?”

“Oh, poor thing,” Mom said. “You feel sick?”

“Yeah.” Devin felt hopeful, she sounded like she was falling for it.

“Are you having your period?” Mom asked.

“What?” Devin almost shrieked. “Period? I don’t-- what are you even talking about?”

“Debbie,” Mom said. “It’s nothing for a girl to be embarrassed about. I’ll bring you some tampons.”

“Mom? What--”

Just then, he heard laughter from around the corner where he was cowering, and Miranda poked her head around, phone in hand, laughing. “Got ya!”

“Miranda?”

“Are you having cramps, Debbie? Feeling bloated?” Miranda said, loudly, the voice coming out of her mouth sounding exactly like Devin’s Mom. A group of girls walking by heard and giggled.

“Debbie’s having her period,” Miranda said to them.

“Stop!” Devin said, grabbing her, his whole body burning with shame. He pulled into the alcove. “Everyone will be laughing at me.”

“Then don’t try and escape from your fate, Debs,” Miranda said. “Now, come on, there’s still time.”

“For what?”

“Mascara!”

Miranda now once more grabbed Devin and dragged him along. He froze as she tried to pull him into the bathroom with the shape of a girl on it. The triangular skirt beneath the round head. “I’ll get in trouble!”

“Come on, Debbie! Don’t be such a guy.” Miranda pulled the door open and shoved into the girl’s bathroom. In fact, Devin had always wondered what it was like in the girl’s bathroom-- not in a pervy way, but just out of curiosity. In fact, other than the lack of urinals, it looked pretty much like the guy’s bathroom, which he found a little disappointing. There was a girl at one of the sinks, fixing her hair. She glanced when they entered but seemed un-phased by Devin’s presence.

Miranda shoved a mascara wand into Devin’s hand, pushed him to the sink. “Hurry,” she said. “The bell will ring soon.”

“I don’t want to,” Devin said.

“Of course you do, and since I am tired of arguing with you, let me give you an incentive.” She tossed some more girl dust in Devin’s face.

He sneezed, and as he sneezed he felt his chest-- plump. Looking down, he saw little mounds pushing out the top of his shirt. Tiny breasts like a tween girl, but more than enough to make him ache with shame. “Miranda?” He said, crossing his arms over his small little bumps. He sneezed again, and he felt them swell against his arms. “Stop!” His hissed.

The other girl was looking a little curiously now, puzzled.

“Mascara,” Miranda said.

Devin sighed. He opened the mascara, and the knowledge of how to do his lashes came to him. He had blonde eyelashes, so as he swept the wand across them, they became dark, wet and visible, longer, curlier and thicker. He batted his eyes, amazed-- it really made so much difference.

“Your friend was right,” the stranger said. “Your eyes really pop now.”

“I keep telling her,” Miranda said.

The girl left. Devin, who was loving the sight of himself with those incredible lashes, grabbed her shoulders. “Okay. I did it. Now take back these boobs!”

“Um, girls have boobs, Debbie.”

“I’m not a girl!”

“Yes, you are. Your body just doesn’t know it yet.”

The bell rang.

“Let’s go.”

With each step, Devin could feel his breasts jiggle. Just a little bounce, but it unnerved him. He’d always been skinny, with a flat, bony chest- not a lot of muscle, but hard. Now, he suddenly had soft and bouncy, and what’s more the whole school could see his-- girl chest. He thought he was going to dissolve in shame, but other than a couple of guys who let their eyes dance across his new assets, no one really seemed to notice.

When they got to class, Devin leaned over and hissed, “No more girl stuff. Stop it.”

“Your lipstick is a little smudged,” Miranda said.

Devin gasped and grabbed his compact, checking his face, then realized what he was doing and glared at her as he used his pinky finger to wipe a little smudge away from the corner of his mouth. “You made me like this.”

“I know.”

Devin found it hard to focus in class. He kept wondering what people were posting on social media, and he so wanted to check all the celebrity accounts he loved to follow. His favorite makeup blogger was also do for an update, and he was aching to watch her new video, as she had promised to reveal all the hot trends for 2021! He knew, of course, that he should be obsessing about these things, but he also found he had no choice. No matter how much he tried to concentrate on calculus, his mind just kept drifting to a cute outfit he’d seen on Pinterest, or a million questions about who Ariana Grande was dating now, and whether he was right for her.

Class ended, and Devin hadn’t heard a single word. When he stood and felt his chest bobble, he was reminded that he had breasts now, and brushed his hair away from his face, wondering if he was creating a scandal by going braless. I’m a guy, he thought. Guys don’t wear bras. Besides, braless was kind of a trend, but did he want to be that kind of girl?

“It’s not about what kind of girl you want to be,” Miranda said, reading his mind.

“I don’t want to be a girl at all,” Devin lied.

Miranda ignored the lie. “You need to focus on becoming the kind of girl Jimmy likes.”

“I am NOT going to be Jimmy’s girlfriend.”

“We’ll see.”

“No, we won’t.”

“You’re going to melt in his arms, Debbie, just like in a romance novel!”

“You know what?” Devin said. “I am done with you! Buh-byeeee!” He spun and stormed off, hips swaying with feminine fury.

“Our first fight,” Miranda said, snickering.

Devin struggled through the rest of the day. In between every class it was a race against time to check his phone, check his makeup, fix his hair, all while trying to ignore the way his chest now shifted and moved every time he did. After the last class of the day, he went to his locker and started putting his things away, his mind bubbling with TikTok and Twitter, YouTube and the fact that Johnny and Kate had gotten back together-- again-- and no one thought it would last.

He felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to see Jimmy standing there, a weird, strained smile on his face. "Jimmy!" Devin said, impulsively giving his friend a hug without even thinking about it, but as he pressed his body against Jimmy's he felt his soft chest against Jimmy's and once more hyper aware of his new shape, he pulled away. Jimmy's face had turned all red, and his eyes were wide. "Um... uh..."

"I don't know why I did that," Devin said, nervously twisting a lock of hair around his finger.

"It's- I uh..."

"What?" Devin said. He was glad to see his friend, to talk. They'd passed in the hall a few times, and Devin had tried to get Jimmy's attention, but his buddy had just walked by as if he hadn't even seen him. "Did I do something?"

"No," Jimmy said. "Why would you think that?"

"I thought you were avoiding me," Devin said.

"I just-- well, the thing is, I wanted to ask you something."

"Yes?" Devin said, confused. Why was Jimmy so nervous? Acting so weird? Then, just for a moment, Jimmy's eyes flickered down to Devin's breasts, and he felt his whole body tingle as he instinctively wrapped his arms over them, suddenly embarrassed and shy and feeling-- he didn't even know what as he looked back in Jimmy's eyes.

"I wanted to know if--- if---"

Devin noticed that some other guys from Science Club were watching from down the hall, whispering. He shook his head. "Just say it."

Jimmy suddenly burst out, "Do you want to work on the environmental project with--" he looked back-- "me and the guys?"

"Oh," Devin said. "Sure. I thought I was?"

"Okay, cool," Jimmy said, retreating to the group of guys, who walked away, hitting him and grumbling.

"What was that?" Devin said, checking his makeup in his locker mirror. The whole thing had been so weird, and yet for some reason he felt all tingly, and the tip of his nose had turned pink. And why had Jimmy's friends started hitting him? Didn't they want him-- oh, that was probably it, Devin decided. Everyone thought he was a girl now, and those Science Club nerds were scared of girls. It was another price of all his changes.

One thing is for sure, he decided. He did not understand boys anymore. Not at all. They were completely dumb.

After school, Devin skipped Chess Club and went straight home. Chess just suddenly seemed dumb, like something some creepy old guy who hung out in the park would do like in some boring movie. Instead, he planned to do some research, see if there was some way to understand what was happening to him through Science. His room had changed some more. White carpet. Pink curtains. A dressing table where his desk had been. The comforter on his bed was covered with ponies. "I am into horses now?" Devin wondered, even as he spotted a photo of a smiling blonde girl in riding clothes, sitting atop a pretty stallion. His heart leapt. Yup, he realized, he adored horses.

He sat down at his laptop computer, fully intending to research, but then he remembered that Chase West was supposed to drop that new makeup video, and he maybe resisted for about one second before clicking on it, and the learning forward, fascinated.

A knock, and his little sister came bounding in. "I'm bored," she announced, dramatically tossing herself onto Devin's bed.

"So?" Devin said, instantly annoyed.

"Whatcha watchin'?"

"Chase West."

"Oooooooh! I love her!"

Devin smiled, and said, "pull up a chair, but I am only watching this one."

They watched that one, but neither wanted to stop, so then another, this one all about nails. "Let's do each other's nails!" Kate said.

"Um.... well...." That seemed quite girly to Devin, who'd spent his younger sister's entire life teasing her about her affection for dresses and princesses and all things girly. "I don't know..."

"Come on come on come on..." Kate said, grabbing his arm and dragging him toward his bed. "Come on come on..."

Devin noticed that people felt very comfortable grabbing him and dragging him places now, but he allowed himself to be pulled to the bed, lying next to his sister. "Nails?" Kate said, smiling her brightest smile.

No way, Devin thought. Never. I am a guy! But then he giggled, and the words just came out, "Omigod, yes!"

Soon, Devin found himself with a leg outstretched, his sister's foot in his lap. They chatted boys, school, parents-- ugh! They giggled and laughed and Devin, for a moment, forgot he even had been a boy, just totally girling out, glad he and his sister were friends, and that he had her to talk to. When she left, he sat on the edge of his bed, looking at the sparkly pink polish on his toes, turning them

so they would catch the light, and he suddenly jumped to his feet-- this was all wrong. He was a guy! He went to his dressing table and started looking for nail polish remover. He would fix this, and then no more makeup, no more fussing about his hair and no more-- well, he couldn't really get rid of his boobs, but he could hide them!

He barely even heard the doorbell ring downstairs.

He sat down, determined to clean the emasculating pink polish from his toes, but just as he reached down, his hand froze, trembled, once more his mind raged, at war with itself. His toes looked so cute, and his sister had been so nice to do them, how could he even think about ruining them? But, he was a guy, and this was all--

His door burst open and Miranda hurled herself into the room, "Hey, there, pretty girl!" She shouted.

Devin turned to her. "You have to stop this," he said. "I started to bond with my sister!"

"Enough with the stop this, stop this nonsense!" Miranda said. "Now, grab your gear. We're going to yoga!"

"I don't have any yoga gear," Devin said, horrified at the idea of being in a room full of dumb girls stretching around.

"Um, check the bottom drawer," Miranda said, pausing to check her hair in his mirror.

"I am NOT going to yoga," Devin said, crossing his arms under his breasts, putting his nose in the air.

"If you do, I'll turn you back into a boy."

"Really?"

"Of course."

Devin jumped up and went to the dresser. Pulling the drawer open he saw it was full of yoga pants, tank tops and-- sports bras, all in soft, pretty colors. "I have to wear this?" He said, pulling a pair of leggings with kittens on them.

Miranda nodded. "Hurry. We don't want to be late."

Devin groaned, but took the leggings, a tank and a sports bra and went into his closet, not wanting Miranda to see him changing clothes. He noticed his closet now contained skirts and dresses as well as jeans. The leggings were soft and stretchy. He pulled them on, the material gliding up his smooth legs, and then hugging them, his hips and butt. It felt good to have the leggings kind of hugging and tickling his legs, and he thought, "I guess that's not so bad."

Then he contemplated the bra-- a little scrap of white material with pink piping. He guessed he was supposed to pull it over his head, so careful not to get his hair caught, he pulled it over his head, slipping his arms into the arm holes, and then pulling it out and down over his boobs. Like the leggings, the bra hugged his new puppies, and looking down he saw the soft swell of cleavage. Wearing a bra, the

yoga pants, automatically made him more feminine, but he fought against his embarrassment, pulled on the tank top and went back out into his room. He'd meant to be short, rude, but instead he found himself putting a hand on his hip, smiling brightly and saying, "What'ya think?"

Miranda clapped. "So cute! You're really pretty!"

Ugh! No! Devin thought, but he felt himself brighten at the compliments, and he did a little twirl, giggling with pride. He did not want to do yoga, but he went along, Miranda driving. She had all kinds of club music playing-- stupid and vulgar, the old Devin thought-- but Miranda noticed how his foot kept tapping to the music, and his head bobbing. She loved watching him change.

The yoga studio was located in a strip mall next to a Baskin Robbins. The windows were covered, as was the door, and the sign read: Peace and Serenity. "I'm supposed to get all zenned out here?" Devin said, shaking his head.

"You're going to love it."

"Never."

Miranda pulled the door open. "Ladies first."

"Har har." Devin walked in, and his mouth dropped open. If he'd been a character in an anime cartoon hearts would have popped out of his eyes. The lighting was soft-- there were candles everywhere, and the brick walls had all kinds of signs in cursive-- "breath," "no rain no flowers," "don't hate meditate..." There were some girls already there, dressed pretty much the same as Devin, and they were all pretty and smiley and he so wanted to be friends with them...

"What do you think?" Miranda said.

Devin, to his horror, made heart hands. "LUV!" He said. "Omigod! I want to live here!" He couldn't help it! The feminine energy of this room was just too much! Soon, he found himself doing cobras, down dogs... loving how stretchy and flexible his body was, almost fainting with pride when he did his first splits. He and Miranda kept exchanging glances, Miranda smirking, sticking out her tongue. Devin was lost in a haze of pleasure, feeling so good, like he'd found his tribe at long last. After there were hugs, and the teacher told him he was a natural and he promised he would for sure come back again because, as he said, giggling, playing with his hair, "It's amazeballs!"

Chapter Four

That night, Devin sat in his nightie, his hair up, clearing his makeup off, getting ready for bed. He hadn't studied at all, and it was now kinda sorta bothering him? He had been all about grades, proving he was smarter than anyone else, but today? He'd bonded with his sister, and met so many incredible women, and done

yoga and he'd been-- happy? Joyful? It was so much different from his life before as a kind of arrogant, angry *boy*.

But, this wasn't his choice. It had been done to him. This wasn't him-- the makeup and yoga, and what about school? Would he just be some airhead now? Could he allow that to happen? He crawled into bed, pulling the comforter over his head and curling up around a pillow. He didn't know. He wasn't sure about anything anymore.

In the morning, he didn't even realize he'd gotten shorter until he found himself looking up-- slightly-- at his little sister. Kate was now an inch taller than him, and he felt a little unnerved as he considered she might be able to beat him up if she wanted to. His body had changed-- he now had round, wide hips, and his legs had gotten longer, taking on rounded, feminine shape. His face, too, had gotten more feminine, with pouty lips and big, innocent eyes. He'd had no choice but to do his makeup this morning-- foundation, eyeliner, lipstick and blush, and had impulsively slipped a half dozen bracelets onto his slender wrists. Suffice to say, there had been a struggle, with him murmuring nonstop that he was a boy, that he had a guy, that he could stop wearing makeup anytime he wanted... but he really needed earrings to finish his look, right?

When he said "good morning" Devin was shocked to hear a tweety, tiny pretty voice. He'd been so proud when his voice had changed, and now he had a higher pitched voice than his little sister? Ugh. How could this happen to him?

Miranda, meanwhile, had gotten to school early and found Jimmy, asking him aside for a private word. The poor boy. He'd blushed the moment Miranda had said, "hi." Amor found it endearing, but she needed to help him get up the nerve to ask Debbie out. Mortals were so timid! "So, Jimmy," Amor said. "I wanted to talk to you about the dance."

"R-r-really?" Jimmy said. He was instantly terrified that Miranda was going to ask HIM-- and the thought of dancing with a girl made him super nervous.

"Yes," Miranda said. "Just so you know, Debbie really wants you to ask her to the dance."

"Debbie?" He said, his voice breaking. "Really? But she's-- hot."

"She likes you, Jimmy," Amor said. "You really should ask her out?"

"Oh, I don't think so. What if she says no? I mean..."

Frustrated, Amor grabbed the collar of Jimmy's shirt and yanked his down so they were nose to nose. "ENOUGH! You like her. She likes you. ASK HER OUT!"

"Okay... okay..." Jimmy said, terrified.

"Good boy. I'll arrange everything. Lunch hour. In the cafeteria."

"In front of everyone?" Jimmy's voice cracked.

“JIMMY! I SWEAR TO JUPITER!!!!”

“Okay. Okay.”

Amor sighed, patted Jimmy on the cheek. Smiled. “Good. Good. You’re going to thank me for this one day.”

Jimmy just nodded, head bobbing up and down.

“I have to go. Don’t forget!”

“No, ma’am.”

Amor skipped away. Ah, love!

Devin spent the morning blissfully unaware of Miranda’s plans for him, and blissfully unaware of anything else. He found himself zoning out in class, twisting his bracelets around his wrists, admiring his glossy, perfectly shaped fingernails, and in between classes it was all talking with the girls, chatting about this and that and whatever, Miranda at his side. He totally failed a pop quiz in History class, and was just, like, whatever? History was SO boring! Almost as bad as Math!

Finally, he and Miranda were heading to lunch, walking under that same banner advertising the big dance. “Have any boys asked you to the dance, Debs?”

“Gross. No. As if I would go to the dance with a BOY.”

“But what if one did ask you?” Miranda said. “It would be so fun!”

“No way,” Devin said, tossing his hair defiantly. He’d decided to wear it down today, his long, golden hair now flowing halfway down his back, swishing as he walked. “You can make me into a girl, evidently,” he said. “But you can’t make me like boys.”

They walked into the lunchroom. Kids were scattered around at the long tables, the noise of their talking and joking filling the space. Doomed looking teachers on lunch duty hung around the perimeter. The air smelled like grease and mystery meat. Devin saw his girls at a table at the back of the room, and he and Miranda headed over, but just when he reached the middle of the lunchroom floor, Jimmy suddenly stepped in front of him.

“Jimmy?” Devin said, suddenly feeling ashamed of his makeup, the girl’s jeans he was wearing, the tight sweater that showed off his new figure. “Hi?”

Jimmy took a deep breath. Miranda had now taken up position behind him, and she whispered something in Jimmy’s ear. Impossibly, horribly, the whole lunchroom grew quiet, and Devin realized everyone was staring at the two of them. He started to panic, as he suspected what was about to happen.

Jimmy summoned all his courage, and in a loud voice said, “Debbie, I think you are the prettiest girl in school, and I want to take you to the dance.”

Devin put his hands to his cheeks, shocked, humiliated. Everyone was looking, waiting. He was terrified, and he wanted to turn and run from the room, but Jimmy

was his best friend. He knew if he said no or ran away Jimmy would be destroyed. He looked up at Jimmy-- he was so tall!-- and forced a smile. "Okay?"

Jimmy sighed with relief, and impulsively threw his arms around Devin, crushing him and lifting him off his feet. Devin hugged him back, and his whole body started to tingle and grow warm. For one terrible moment, he thought Jimmy was going to kiss him, and Jimmy leaned down, thinking about it, but then he pulled back. "I'll pick you up at 7."

"Okay. Great?" Devin said, wishing once more that he could just melt into the floor. The kids all around the room, realizing the show was over, went back to their conversations.

"I'm so excited for you!" Miranda said as she and Devin headed to the table where their squad was waiting, all smiles.

"You set this up, didn't you?" Devin hissed, hoping his makeup was hiding how deeply he could feel he was blushing. He glanced back and saw that the guys were high-fiving Jimmy, and he felt good that he'd at least been able to make Jimmy feel like a hero. Even if it did require Devin to play "the girl."

Even as Devin was thinking about how he might be able to squirm out of the date with Jimmy, they arrived at the table, and his girlfriends were all excited for him. "He's so cute... you're so lucky..." And they all began excitedly talking about what they were going to wear, taking pictures together, how romantic it was that Jimmy asked Devin in front of EVERYONE!

"He's so totally crushing on you!" Miranda said. "You're a lucky girl."

Devin, realizing the other girls were watching, giggled and laughed, and talked about how excited he was, how cute Jimmy would look in a suit. At some point, he forgot he was acting and was just a flighty girl excited she had a date for the big dance. It was really important for a girl and her social status.

Chapter Five

"We are going to find you the most perfect dress!" Miranda said as she dragged Devin into the Greenhallow Mall. "I can't wait."

"I have dresses," Devin said, moping.

"Of course you do, but this is the Winter Formal! You have to look hot."

"I don't want to look hot," Devin objected. "I don't want to go to the dance! Please. I'm a guy."

"We'll see."

Miranda led him to a store that had a lot of formal dresses, and as soon as Devin saw all the pretty gowns on the mannequins, hanging on the racks, his eyes went wide, and his heart fluttered. "Omigod," he said. "They're so pretty."

A salesgirl came up. "Can I help you find something?"

“My friend is going to a formal dance, and she is a little shy, but deep down inside she wants to be the hottest girl in the room.”

“No, I don’t,” Devin whispered, plucking at the thin, silk material of a black gown. It was cool, and smooth and he shivered thinking about how it would feel against the soft skin of his smooth body. His mouth was dry; he felt thirsty. He wanted and needed to see how he would look in these dresses.

“Let’s get your measurements, and then I will get you some perfect choices for your skin-- which is amazing, by the way.”

“She does have amazing skin, right?” Miranda said.

“Thanks,” Devin said, feeling warmer, letting the girl take his hand and lead him to a little platform he stood on while the girl took his measurements. His eyes sparkled as they roamed across the rows of pretty gowns, and though some little part of him was still mumbling no... no... he was desperate with the need to see how it felt to wear such pretty clothes, to see how he would look. It was all a blur-- Miranda helped him into dress after dress-- the fabric was just as smooth and cool and thrilling as he expected, and the sensation incredible-- the gown celebrated his smooth little shoulders, his bust and tiny waist, clung to his hips and then flowed down and around his legs.... He tried on short dresses, floor length dresses, spaghetti straps and princess sleeves.. The whole time he felt like he had a fever, was totally lost in the thrill of the gowns, walking, posing, giggling and laughing... shopping was such fun!

And then he walked out in a powder blue, strapless dress with a tiered, floor length skirt, a sparkly belt pulled tight around his little waist.. And he sighed. This was the one. He just knew and saw the same look in Miranda’s eyes and the salesgirl. Devin did not have to fake his smile and he turned to the side, plucked at the skirt, stretched one leg out to the side. “Oh, my,” Devin said, feeling an intense love for that gown unlike anything he’d ever felt toward an article of clothing in his life. “I have to have it.”

Miranda kissed him on the cheek. “When you know, you know.”

“You’re gorgeous,” the salesgirl said. She loved helping a girl find the perfect dress, and she was so happy for Devin, seeing how pretty he looked-- and how happy.

Miranda took over. “Make the adjustments,” Miranda said. “We’ll pick it up tomorrow afternoon.”

“Tomorrow?” The girl said. It usually took a few days.

Miranda fished a credit card out of her purse. Of course, as a deity, she had unlimited credit. “Whatever it costs.”

Devin barely heard the conversation. He was posing, admiring, imagining how amazing he would feel walking into the dance in this gown.... It was delicious! It pained him to slip out of the gown. He wanted to wear it home, to sleep in it! But

he did, getting back into his regular girl clothes. “That was so... oh.. I don’t even know!” He gushed.

“You’ll also need heels,” Miranda said. “But first, smoothies!”

“I love smoothies!” Devin cheered, though he’d hated them just the day before. They went to the food court and got their smoothies, sat down across from each other. Devin sipped his smoothie, and he and Miranda started talking about the dance. Devin was excited, and without even realizing it he was making small movements with his hands, waving them prettily the way girls do. Miranda was loving it, just drinking it in, but then Devin happened to spot a group of guys he knew from school. They were gathered around a couple tables they had put together, laptops open, headsets on, and Devin suddenly felt a deep sense of loss. He used to hang out with those guys, playing video games just like they were doing now. That wasn’t his world anymore, and he suddenly felt sad, and regret, and he shook his head as tears pooled in his eyes.

“What’s wrong?” Miranda said, covering his little hand.

“I don’t want to do this,” he said. “I don’t want to be a girl. I don’t want to-- lose myself.”

“Honey, you aren’t losing yourself. You’re becoming a better you.”

“It doesn’t feel that way. I’m supposed to be-- one of them.” He pointed a little finger at the guys, his bracelets sparkling.

“I’ll make you a deal,” Miranda said. “We’ll go to the shoe store. Try on some heels. If you can leave without a pair, I’ll turn you back into a boy.”

“Really?” Devin said.

“Yeah. Of course.”

Devin wiped a tear from his cheek. “Okay.”

“Let’s go.”

“Wait,” Devin said. “I need to fix my mascara.”

Miranda smirked.

“Oh, shut up,” Devin said, fully aware of how much his actions contrasted with his words.

Once Devin had fixed his makeup and regained his composure, Miranda led him to the shoe store. As they left the food court, Devin glanced at the guys, seeing on their screens they were playing Call of Duty, shooting guns, firing grenades. I’ll be back there soon, he thought. He was very confident he would be able to leave the shoe store without any heels. Despite the way he’d started drooling over dresses only moments before, he focused all his will, determined that no matter what happened, he would prevail.

They walked into the shoe store. Devin gasped, putting his hands to his cheeks. “Oh, no...” he whispered. The shoes were all so pretty, so feminine... immediately losing control, he started to rush along the racks of shoes, heart

racing. There were so many styles, but he was drawn to the stilettos with a kind of desperate need. He found himself touching them, caressing them, dazzled-- "open toes... pumps... straps... oh... oh... oh..." he gasped.

"I see someone is shoe crazy," a handsome young salesman with a give o'clock shadow said.

Looking up at the handsome man, Devin felt something in him flutter, his cheeks blushing. He was so... yummy!

"She's such a girly girl," Miranda said, laughing.

"My name's Gigot," the boy said, smiling. "Are these for a special occasion?"

Devin was clutching a strappy stiletto to his chest and found himself at a total loss for words. "Um... well..."

"She has a big date for a formal dance," Miranda said. "How about a classic open-toe pump?"

"Is that what you want, miss?" Gigot said.

"Um. I guess?" Devin said.

"Let me check your shoe size," Gigot said. "Take off your shoes and take a seat."

Devin sat, and Gigot measured his foot. "Your feet are so dainty, delicate," Gigot said.

Devin giggled.

"Something white," Miranda said. "Virginal."

"Miranda!" Devin gasped, hitting her.

Gigot just flashed his million-dollar smile and went to the back room.

"I'm not going to buy anything," Devin said as they waited, staring in wonder at the shoes. His eyes landed on a pair of knee length stiletto boots, and once more he swooned. "I'm just looking."

"Of course," Miranda said. "Because you're a guy, right?"

"Yes," Devin said. "That is correct. I am strong, and have a will like iron!"

"We'll see."

Gigot came back. He knelt and took Devin's calf in his strong hands. Devin was melting, looking down into those dark eyes! Then, Devin pushed the tissue paper aside, drew the white pump from the box and carefully slipped it onto Devin's foot. He smiled, seeing how his pretty pink toenails peaked out from the open toe. Then, Gigot slipped the other heel on, and he took Devin's elbow and helped him stand.

Devin had never worn heels, but the spell had done its work, and he instinctively knew how to walk even in these stiletto pumps, and he took a few dainty steps. It felt like he was walking on his toes, and he felt vulnerable and feminine, especially with Gigot standing next to him, and he was surprised how sweet and lovely it made him feel to be vulnerable. He walked across the floor,

stood in front of a mirror, loving the way the shoes made his legs look, his rear. The shoes were so pretty, and they made him feel-- like a cloud of giggles.

“So?” Gigot said.

“I love them,” Devin said, struggling against his urge to give the young man a hug. But then he remembered his vow, his will, his determination to be a boy again. “But, well, I just came to look.” He glanced at Miranda, who watched, a sly smile on her face.

“That is not acceptable,” Gigot said.

“Pardon?”

“You look so exquisite in those shoes,” he said. “They were made for you. I refuse to allow such a terrible mistake to be made on my watch. You *must* buy these shoes.”

“Oh,” Devin said, staring into Gigot’s eyes. He seemed so nice, and his words, the intensity in his eyes, clouded Devin’s brain. He couldn’t make this boy feel bad. He wanted and needed to please him. “Are you sure?” He looked at himself perched on the pretty shoe, the golden feels sparkling.

“I am, mademoiselle,” Gigot said.

“You speak French?” Devin squeaked, his heart fluttering. He felt light-headed, weak in the knees.

“Oui.”

Devin was lost in those eyes, that deep voice, the lovely sound French. “I’ll take them,” he sighed, unable to resist, unable to remember that he ever wanted to resist. “I need them.”

“Of course you do,” Gigot said.

Devin sat and slipped out of his new pumps, shaken, confused. Part of him wanted to run from the store, back to his male identity. It wasn’t too late. But another, stronger part said, “Can I also try on a pair of those boots?”

Devin ended up getting four pairs of shoes, walking from the store with shopping bags dangling from his little arms. “I can’t believe I-- I just couldn’t say no to pretty shoes.”

“That’s because you’re a girl,” Miranda said. “Tomorrow is going to be sooooo much fun! I’ll come over to your house and we’ll get ready together!”

“Okay,” Devin said, looking longingly at each and every woman’s store they passed, aching for the cute outfits he saw in the windows. “Am I going to love shopping now, like, forever?”

“Oh, yeah,” Miranda said. “You’re going to have to find a rich husband.”

“As if!” Devin said, horrified at the thought.

Chapter Six

Devin tossed and turned all night. He couldn't believe he was going to the dance-- with a boy, and his best friend Jimmy, no less. He was consumed with fear that when he walked in, everyone would laugh at him. He was a guy, and he had always been sarcastic about stupid things like dances-- now he would be wearing a dress?

The dress. Oh, that dress! It was sooooo pretty, and he felt-- giggly-- when he wore it. Miranda. This was all his fault. The dance was Saturday morning, so he had all morning to kill as he waited for Miranda to show up with his dress. He spent it watching fashion videos, unable to muster any interest at all in his schoolwork. It seemed like maybe his dreams of Ivy League schools and a career as a research scientist were melting away, replaced by an obsession with fashion, makeup and hair.

When Miranda finally came bounding into Devin's room, carrying the dress on a hanger, Devin was ready. He and Miranda got all giggly, giving each other makeovers, styling each other's hair. Kate hung out. She was so excited for her big sister, and watched the two older girls, fascinated and eager to learn. Miranda braided Devin's long, golden hair, then wound the braid around the top of his head, weaving a silver chain with little flowers on it into his hair. Devin sat demurely, watching, practicing his smile, sucking his cheeks in slightly to enhance his dimples.

"I have another little surprise for you," Miranda said, searching through her bag, then pulling out a pair of chandelier earrings that flashed and sparkled, slipping them into Devin's earlobes. He turned his head side to side, touching the earrings. "They're so pretty!" Kate said.

"Thanks," Devin said, smitten with them, with how pretty they looked, the way they brushed against his cheeks when he moved his head. Though he'd been wearing makeup, he'd never had his face done for an event like this, and Miranda had gone all out with smokey eyeshadow, carefully plucked and penciled eyebrows, and three different colors of lipstick making his lips so kissable it almost drove Devin insane.

Finally, he found himself in his dress and those to die for heels, smiling, posing.

"Oh, my God!" Kate said, clapping. "You're the prettiest girl in the world!"

Devin dropped his eyes, swiping a strand of loose hair away from his eyes with a perfect, pink nail. "Oh, stop!"

"You are!" Miranda said. "Gorgeous."

She and Kate started taking pictures, demanding Devin stand here, like this, like that. He felt like a model, glancing back over his shoulder, clutching his hands to his chest, looking to the side...

The doorbell rang. Devin hurried to his bedroom window and looked out. Jimmy's car was NOT waiting at the curb. Instead, there was a black limousine.

"He got a limo?" Kate said, jumping up and down and clapping.

"Go," Miranda said. "Make your entrance. We'll come down after."

Devin felt like he might faint, he was so nervous. He took a deep breath and headed out, pausing at the top of the stairs, looking down to see Jimmy standing there with his Mom and Dad. "Oh, honey," Mom said, her breath taken away.

Jimmy's mouth dropped open as he looked up and saw-- an angel. He'd known Debbie for years, but he'd never seen her all dressed up like this, and he was stunned at how beautiful she looked, how sophisticated, suddenly seeming like a woman and not just a girl from school.

Devin made his way daintily down the stairs, and when he got to the bottom he looked up into Jimmy's eyes, and he could see Jimmy was devastated, stunned. Feeling how he was affecting Jimmy made Devin feel-- special. "You are so beautiful," Jimmy said, his voice hoarse.

"Thanks," Devin giggled, then he tugged on Jimmy's tie and said, "you look very handsome."

Dad had his phone out, and he was crouching like a cinematography in a movie. "Corsage! Corsage!"

Jimmy reached out with trembling hands, punning the corsage to the top of Devin's sleeveless dress, unable to do it without accidentally touching to top of Devin's breast. When his fingers brushed against Devin's soft chest, their eyes met, and both of them felt a spark.

"It's so romantic," Kate whispered from the top of the stairs.

"I know," Amor whispered, pleased at how well this was all going. Just the way he'd planned it.

Jimmy took Devin's hand and led him toward the door. Jimmy seemed more confident now, and Devin found himself feeling proud to be holding Jimmy's hand, walking at his side. He was really growing up, becoming more of a man, and Devin really liked that.

"Back by eleven!" Dad said. "Treat my daughter with respect."

"Daddy!" Devin protested.

"I will, sir," Jimmy said.

When they got to the car, the limo driver held the door for Devin, but Jimmy held his hand and helped him slide into and then sit in the back. It was kind of tricky for Devin in his dress and heels, and once more he felt a thrill at feeling so small and dependent, at how manly and strong Jimmy was acting. The two chatted all the way to school, sharing memories of their childhoods together. Devin was

surprised that they remembered the same things, only he was a girl now hanging out with Jimmy playing video games, Little League baseball together.

“You were such a tomboy,” Jimmy said. “And now you’re such an amazing woman.”

Devin flushed, though it couldn’t be seen under his makeup. Somehow, it made him feel good to have Jimmy compliment him on his blossoming womanhood. When they got to the dance, Jimmy once more took Devin’s hand and helped him to stand. *I could get used to this*, Devin thought, loving the feeling of being cared for, pampered, protected.

Jimmy slipped an arm around Devin’s little waist, and once more the bold move sent a little thrill through Devin. He wrapped his arms around Jimmy’s arm, clinging to him, wanting everyone to know they were together. They found their friends, and there were a lot of pictures, of course. Devin and the girls gushed over each other’s dresses, their shoes, makeup. Devin secretly sized up the others and felt satisfied that he was the prettiest girl there- not that his friends weren’t pretty. Of course, he was friends with all the pretty girls. But, he just had that certain something, he felt. Devin was pleased. It would have been so terrible if he had not been the prettiest. He had to laugh at himself, how nervous and afraid he’d been. Why would anyone laugh at him?

Meanwhile, he caught some of the girls checking out Jimmy. He really had cleaned up well, looking quite manly in his tuxedo. Devin loved that other girls wanted his date!

Music played. Some of the girls went out on the dance floor and danced with each other, since their boyfriends were not into dancing, but Jimmy grabbed Devin’s hand and the two of them started to move, smiling, staring into each other’s eyes.

“You like to dance?” Devin said.

“No. Not at all,” Jimmy said. “But if I don’t dance with you, someone else will.”

“Would you be jealous?” Devin said.

“Of course,” Jimmy said. “I want you all for myself.”

Once more, Devin swooned. “Jimmy,” he whispered.

The song ended, and Jimmy put a hand to the small of Devin’s back and guided him off the floor. But then-- a slow song started. “How Deep is Your Love.” Just like in Devin’s dream!

Jimmy pivoted Devin back toward the center of the dance floor. “Our first slow dance,” Jimmy said. Miranda, standing off to the side, gave Devin a thumbs up. Devin felt scared, but when Jimmy put his hands on Devin’s hips, he just naturally draped his arms over Jimmy’s shoulders. Devin felt his soft chest pressing against Jimmy’s hard body, and even though he was terrified and part of

him wanted to run away from all the confusing feelings running through his brain and body, he lingered in Jimmy's arms, smiling up at him.

"You smell so good," Jimmy said.

Devin just smiled, brighter. They were moving together so smoothly, effortlessly, it was like they'd been dancing together forever, and Devin felt so close to Jimmy now, like the two of them were connecting on such a deep, spiritual plane. It was like their two souls were blending, becoming one.

"I like this," Devin said. "It feels right."

"I feel the same way," Jimmy said. He tilted his head. There was a look in his eyes. It sent a bolt of lightning through Devin's body, curling his toes, and he tilted his head to the side, closed his eyes, and then Jimmy leaned down and kissed him. It was a sweet, loving and caring kiss, but one that also burned with passion, and Devin felt it in every inch of his body. Even his fingertips tingled, and his right leg kicked up as he felt himself drifting into a state of pure, heavenly bliss.

The kiss ended. Devin felt weak in the knees, and leaned against Jimmy, who wrapped a strong arm around Devin's waist and carried him along as the song ended and the two left the dance floor. Devin's friends were all watching, jealous, wishing they could have been kissed like that. But, they were good friends, and when Jimmy excused himself they rushed to Devin, gushing and asking him all about the kiss, and how good was it, and oh, he was such a lucky girl!

As the dance was winding down, Miranda found Devin, took his hand and dragged him to the little girls' room. They were the only ones there. Devin went right to the mirror and fussed with his hair. "So," Miranda said. "You fulfilled your promise. You did whatever you could to make sure Jimmy had a date to the dance."

"Not like I had much choice," Devin said. The top of his dress had slid down, sharing a little more of his puppies than he wanted, so he grabbed it and pulled up, wiggling.

"So, do you want to change back? I'll be happy to do it. You don't have to stay a girl."

Devin turned. "Wait. I thought after the shoes?"

"Nah. I mean, that was to lock you into the dance. But, I won't make you stay a girl."

Devin looked at himself in the mirror, at the gorgeous dress, that perfect face, his radiant skin. He thought about the kiss-- omigod, that kiss! He'd never felt happier in his whole life than he'd felt in that moment. And yet, what about college? Being a scientist?

"What's it going to be? This is a one-time offer. You have to choose-- boy or girl?"

Devin bit his lip, and he gave Amor his answer.

Epilogue

“Prepare to die!” Jimmy said, controller in hand, as he sent his avatar to perform a flying kick into Devin’s character’s face.

Devin was ready for it, though, and blocked the kick, stunning Jimmy, whose avatar wobbled, stars flying around his head. Devin activated his kill power, and his character ripped Jimmy’s heart from his chest and then ate it.

“Rude!” Jimmy said.

“Haha,” Devin said. “You just got beat by a girl.”

“You cheat,” Jimmy said.

“How?”

“I can’t concentrate when you’re wearing that little skirt, and you know it!” He lunged at Devin, climbing on top of him, kissing him.

Devin lay on his back, gladly accepting the kiss. He loved it when Jimmy got aggressive, took control. The two kissed for a time, cuddled. Then, they lay on their sides, staring into each other’s eyes. Jimmy brushed his fingers along Devin’s jawline. “I love you,” he said.

“I love you, too,” Devin said. They told each other they loved each other all the time. It seemed silly and grossed out some of their friends, but Devin needed assurances; he would feel so worried sometimes that he was losing Jimmy. Jimmy knew it and was happy to tell and show Devin every day that he was the only girl in the world for him.

“Okay. We better study,” Jimmy said.

“You’re no fun,” Devin huffed.

“If you’re going to come to Brown with me, you need to keep your grades up.”

“I know,” Devin said. He found school boring now, and just wanted to become an influencer, but there was no way he was letting Jimmy go off to college without him, surrounded by all those coeds who would want to steal him away. Luckily, Jimmy demanded Devin study, and Devin had found that he liked and needed to please his man. That plus the fear another girl would steal her man allowed Debbie to overcome her contempt for school and keep her grades up.

The things we do for love, Debbie thought, as she got her Calculus book out. It was so boring, but she was smart enough to master it, still. She just didn’t care. But, she knew that her reward for a good study session was more making out, so there was always that.

Outside the window, Amor now back in his usual form, watched, hearts bubbling from his head. “Another success story,” he thought, feeling all warm and happy, seeing how the two had grown so close together, how Jimmy was taking

care of the silly little airhead Debbie had become. “In your face, cupid,” Amor said, shooting a random arrow into the sky. “I’m the love god, and you are nothing!”

And then, he flew off, looking for another chance to create LOVE.