



SP & VII 2

**Jumps  
&  
Spins**

by

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## 1

Fosters. Gabe O’Leary stared at the beer, little beads of moisture dripping on the sides of the golden oil can. So much industrial grade lager, just waiting to be downed, but he liked to savor the moment, feel his mouth salivate as his whole body started to glow with the anticipation of the bitter, carbonated dose of alcohol fueled glory about to pour down into his parched and eager gut. The rest of the guys in the locker room taped their sticks, pulled their hockey jerseys on over their pads.

Eminem thundered “Lose yourself in the moment you own it.”

*You own it.* That was the sign. The guys all looked to Gabe.

On cue, Gabe popped the can open and guzzled, the guys all cheering and pounding their sticks on the locker floor as Gabe downed the entire beer without taking a breath, then smashed the can on his head, crumpling it and tossing it aside. “Let’s go kick some ass!” He yelled, and the team jumped to their feet and headed out to the rink. Most of the team.

Jacques Chirac stood, glaring, and as Gabe started to walk past Jacques punched him on the shoulder and said, “You’re a disgrace.”

“Fuck you,” Gabe said, moving to step around Jacques, but the other guy blocked him.

The two guys stood chest to chest, glaring into each other’s eyes. “You’re a drunk slob. Get your shit together.”

“You’re a pussy and a pretty boy. Get the hell out of my way before I shove your stick up your ass.”

“Guys, guys,” the coach said, stepping between them. “Save it for the ice.”

Gabe shoved past Jacques, spitting on the floor.

“Coach,” Jacques said. “What the hell? Since when is it okay to drink before the game?”

“It isn’t. Not for anyone. But Gabe isn’t anyone. He’s a mutant from another planet.”

“Well, I’m going to put him in his place one day,” Jacques said.

“Just get out there and skate,” Coach said.

Outside the team skated around. Boston College, in their maroon and gold, was already out there, looking tense. Ready to fight. Things always got ugly between BC and Notre Dame, two of the top hockey programs in the country, and Catholic schools as well. Gabe knew the other team well. They’d played before. Gabe and Stubinski, the enforcer for the other team, met eyes and glared at each other.

Hockey started happening. Skates slashing across the ice. Bodies slammed into walls. BC got aggressive and started to really slam into their top scorer. The coach looked at Gabe. It was time for him to take care of the trouble. He was Notre Dame’s enforcer. It was what he did. Gabe skated out onto the ice and immediately slammed into one of BC’s guys

from behind, sending him crashing to the ice. Then he careened across the ice and slipped his stick under another's skates, causing him to flip and smash onto his face.

Gabe laughed. He loved it. The impact. The brutality of it. Hockey. Mother fracking hockey. Notre Dame was loaded and headed to the national championship, and Gabe would—

Suddenly he found himself slammed into from behind, and he crashed into the wall. It was a one in a million accident, but his knee had been bent at an odd angle, and when it smashed into the wall he heard a sickening popping sound and felt like someone had stabbed a thousand knives into his knee. He saw stars, howled in pain, and looked up to see Jacques looking down at him, smiling. "Tough break," Jacques said. "Slob."

"I'm going to shut you up," Gabe said, trying to get back onto his skates, but then he barked in pain as he tried to put some weight on his knee and fell back down on the ice.

"Need a little help?" Jacques said, offering a

hand up, but Gabe just slapped it away.

## 2

“Knee replacement?” Gabe said, sitting in his hospital bed. “But it’s just, what? Torn ligaments of somethin? Knee replacements are fer 90-year-old dudes.”

Doctor Sarah Gellerman pointed to the x-ray, a frown on her face. “There was a complication. Damage to the blood vessels that feed the tissue around the knee. Necropsy set in and a terminal episode on a massive scale impacted your —“

“English? Doc?”

“You don’t have the knee of a 90-year-old man. You have the knee of a dead man.”

“But what about hockey?”



“I don’t see that in your future. I’m sorry.”

Gabe waited until the doctor left, and then he turned and smashed his fist into the wall. No hockey? “No. No!” He shouted. “*This isn’t fair. This isn’t right!*”

He couldn’t even imagine life without hockey. He’d been a hockey player since he could remember, since he was a little kid, and now—just like that? Over?

“It doesn’t have to be over.” A voice with a faint, Russian accent called from the doorway.

Gabe looked over to see a tall, elegant woman with golden hair, pale skin and ice blue eyes looking at him, a little smirk on her face. She wore all black, except for a red scarf around her neck, and looking up and down her body Gabe thought, *MILF*.

The woman walked into Gabe’s room and sat on the corner of his bed, looking down at him, putting her hand gently on his bandaged knee. “I can make this boo boo better.” As she sat, Gabe found himself enveloped in a thick scent, like that hippie store his girlfriend dragged him to once.

“ You call a destroyed knee a boo boo?” Gabe said.

“Who are you?”

“Anna Viktoria,” she said, reaching up and toying with his hair. Gabe had hockey hair big time.

“Okay, but *who are you?*”

“I am what you might call a Jackie of All Trades. As it pertains to your situation, I am a holistic healer, and a coach for sports teams.”

“Holistic healer?”

“I can fix your knee. Get you back on the ice.”

Gabe found himself staring into her cool blue eyes, mesmerized. “How? The doctor said—“

“The doctor is a scientist and lives in the world of limits. I am healer and live in the world of possibilities.”

“So how much is this gonna cost me?”

Anna touched his cheek. “Oh, sweetie. Cost? You want to get back on the ice, right? What price would you be willing to pay?”

“Any price,” Gabe said.

“Good. Then, you join figure skating team.”

“Figure? What? That’s for girls.”

“I heal your knee. You join the figure skating team. I need another—skater.”

“But I can’t do that and play hockey. With the schedules...”

“You figure skate. You win a championship with my team, you then get your heart’s desire.”

“Hockey?”

“Your heart’s desire. Our season ends before the hockey team. So....”

“I could be back in time for the playoffs,” Gabe said to himself. “I could still win a national title!”

“If that is what you want,” Anna said. She cupped his chin and tilted his head back. Gabe almost thought she was about to kiss him. “So, do you agree? I heal you. You figure skate.”

It all sounded insane, but staring into those eyes, feeling her hand on his skin, he felt he could believe her, needed to believe her. But figure skating? His

bros would all laugh at him. He'd be a joke. Yet, if it were true, if she could heal him? He could play again, maybe get a professional contract. "I won't have to wear white skates, will I?" He said. "Or put on make-up or do any gay stuff?"

"Not unless you decide to."

"Yeah. Right." Gabe closed his eyes, then nodded, feeling her hand still on his chin. The room grew quiet, accept for the steady beating of the monitors. Gabe felt like his heart synched up with that beating, and he warred in his mind between the embarrassment of figure skating and the need to be whole and strong.

"Okay," he finally whispered. "Yeah. I'll do it."

Anna patted his cheek and the reached into her bag, pulling out a pair of white tights. "Put these on."

Gabe snickered. "You just said I don't have to do gay stuff."

Anna's tone and demeanor changed, becoming harsh. "It is not acceptable to make these kinds of homophobic comments," Anna said. "The skaters on my team are expected to conduct themselves with

grace at all times.”

“I don’t really mean it in a mean way or—“

“At all times.” She handed the tigt to Gabe. The material felt cool in his hands, and his skin tingled, but he shook his head, humiliated at the thought of wearing such a girly—thing. “This is how you heal,” Anna said, once more adopting her soothing, maternal tone. “Put these on, and your knee gets better.”

“Is this some kind of prank? Are there cameras or something? Did one of my teammates set this up?”

“No prank, sweetie,” Anna said, patting him on the arm. “Put these on, you heal.”

“How soon?”

“You will walk out of hospital on your own. By tomorrow, you will be strong enough to skate. I know this is hard for you, but trust me.”

“Okay.”

Anna helped Gabe sit up. She put her hand on his bandaged knee and murmured, the wrappings falling away. Gabe’s eyes went wide. Anna did seem to

have some powers. He slipped one toe into the soft white tights, and his skin tingled at the feel of the slick, cool fabric, then he pulled them up to his calf, the material clinging to his skin, giving him goosebumps. He slipped his other leg into the other leg hole, and then pulled the tight up to his knees.

He stood, his bad leg off the ground, and Anna helped him pull the tight up over his thighs, the elastic waist band snapping as he let it go to pull tight at his waist. The pain in his knee instantly vanished as did his shame at having this beautiful woman see him putting on girl's clothes. He placed the foot below his bad knee gingerly on the floor, applying a little and then his full body weight. "It feels great," he said, smiling, laughing.

"I told you."

The tights hugged his legs and shimmered as he looked down at his knee, and then he looked up at Anna, blurting out, "my legs look sexy." Instantly, he felt ashamed. "I mean, I don't think—well, but—"

"They do look great," Anna said. "You should wear tights more often."

“I don’t think so,” Gabe said. “But I sure am glad I put these on today.” He put on his pants then, and his boots. “I’ll text you the practice schedule,” Anna said. “And make sure to drink lots of water, and get a good night’s sleep.”

Gabe shook his head. And then shocked himself again as he threw his arms around Anna and giggled, “Thank you so much.”

“It’s my pleasure, sweetie,” Anna said. “You are going to make the perfect little skater. You’ll see.”

“Little?” Gabe said, glancing down at his crotch. “There’s nothing little about me.”

“Not yet,” Anna said, picking up her bag. “See you at practice!” She left Gabe standing there in the hospital room, his head spinning. He tested his knee, doing some squats, then jumping, hopping on one leg. It seemed fine. Good as new.

“Am I dreaming?” He asked out loud. If so, he hoped he never woke up. He decided to just leave rather than deal with all the paperwork, and as he swaggered out of the room, Doctor Gellerman saw him, her jaw dropping open. “Mr. O’Leary? You

shouldn't be walking? How?"

Gabe shrugged, hopped on his "bad knee" and then grinned. "Turned out all I needed was a pair of tights," and then he walked out, feeling like he was living the life of Reilly. *Jacques is going to shit himself when he finds out I am all healed*, Gabe thought. *I can't wait to see his face!*





## 3

The next morning, Gabe woke still wearing the white tights. He wasn't sure if he needed to keep wearing them for his knee to fully heal. It seemed like Anna had said something about full strength tomorrow. Getting up, he went to his full-length mirror and looked at his legs, thinking they really did look good with the tights hugging them, and he felt—secure. He ran his fingertips along the smooth, silky material. It felt soooo good. He decided he might as well keep them on. They felt good, and maybe they would keep healing him. Besides, they made him feel cute.

Cute? Since when did he care about that? He ran a

hand through his long, thick hockey hair, then over the stubble on his face. Hopefully, some of the girls on the team would be cute. Maybe he'd get laid.

Smelling his armpits, he decided he didn't need a shower, so he pulled his jeans on over his tights, threw on a sweatshirt and, spraying himself with some Old Spice body spray, he headed off to class. The day drifted by, and soon he found himself back in his room, checking his phone. Practice started in one hour. He wasn't even sure what to bring or wear. He only had hockey skates, not figure skates. Also, hockey practice ended right before the figure skating team got the ice, so he had to figure out some way to sneak in and out of practice without any of the guys seeing him. There was no way he wanted them to find out he was going out there and doing ballet dances on the ice like some kind of hom-- some kind of girl.

Finally, he put on a pair of baggy sweat pants and a hoodie, plus a pair of dark sunglasses. Pulling up his hoodie, he walked over to the rink, keeping his head down, sneaking in a side door and lingering in the hall until the hockey team left the ice, then going into the rink, the figure skating team now taking the ice,

skating around, warming up. Gabe sat down and started to put on his skates.

Anna was there, dressed in a black designer sweat suit with white piping, a knit wrap around her blonde hair. She spotted Gabe and blew her whistle. “Girls!” She called. “Come over and meet your new teammate.”

Gabe looked up, his stomach sinking as the girls plus two guys skated over. He did not want the attention, but looked up, grimacing.

“Girls, this is Gabe. He’ll be joining us to replace Cameron.”

“Hi, Gabe,” the girls chanted.

“Yeah,” he said, trying to play it cool. “I’m not really into this or anything, but I just wanted to help you little ladies out.”

At that comment, the smiles vanished from the team’s faces, and they skated off. Except for Landry Fields, who stood with her hands on her hips, glaring at him. Tall, with a dancer’s long, lithe limbs, she had regal features and an attitude to match. “What makes

you think you can just come in here and skate? This isn't just some easy hobby. It's a sport that takes years to master."

"Ya do little twirls and tricks. I get it."

"Jumps and spins," Landry snapped back. "Not tricks and twirls. And you will never be able to do them in those cave man skates."

"I don't have any other ones."

Peter Nice, skating along nearby so he could eavesdrop, came sliding over. "I have a pair you can borrow."

"Oh, yeah?" Gabe said, looking at Peter's feet, seeing they were about the same size. "See, princess? Problem solved."

"You still don't know how to use them. I doubt you even know what a toe pick is, do you?"

"I'll have you know I pick my toes every night," Gabe said, and then he shoved his finger into his nostril. "And my nose, too!"

"Gross!" Landry shrieked. "You won't last a week,

you disgusting pig!”

Peter covered his mouth, watching Landry skate away. “You better be careful,” he cautioned. “She’s the queen bee around here.”

“Maybe it’s time someone knocked her off her perch, then?”

“Bees don’t... oh, never mind. Let me get those skates for you.”

“Cool. And can you also tell me what a toe pick is?”

“Sure,” Peter said, thinking, *he may be cute but he sure is dumb.*

Once they’d warmed up, the team began to move through basic drills, upon which time Gabe became very acquainted with the feel of falling and crashing to the ice on his butt. The first couple of times, the girls laughed, and he climbed back to his feet, mortified. By the tenth time they just skated clear of him.

“Gabe!” Anna called as he once more got up, rubbing his bruised and aching backside. “Over here.”

Gabe skated over, eyes down. “I’m not used to

doing these jumps,” he said. “In hockey we just pretty much stay on the ice.”

“I know. You’re doing great, but I don’t want you to get hurt, so put this on.” She held up what looked like a padded girdle, with big pads on the hips and butt cheeks.

“The fuck?”

“Language!” Anna said. “Grace at all times.”

Gabe sighed. “Okay. Okay. But, you want me to wear that?”

“Better than another injury.”

“Fine.” He sat, pulled the padding up and over his hips and butt, feeling ridiculous. He could sense the other skaters watching him, and caught amused looks on their faces, though they tried to hide them. All but Landry, who grinned with wolfish delight. Once Gabe skated back onto the ice, feeling awkward, like the padded girdle made him wiggle a little as he skated, Landry skated over and circled him. “How cute! A crash girdle! I wore one of those-- when I was a six-year-old little girl!”

Gabe was so humiliated he couldn't even think of a come-back. He just skated away, trying to perform a toe loop jump, and he rose into the air, feeling his heart rise with pride and excitement, but then when he came down his ankle wiggled and he went crashing to the ice once more--- but it didn't hurt so much. He looked over at Anna and smiled. "That is better!" He shouted.

"That is better," Landy mocked, in a high-pitched whine, performing three effortless toe loops in a row and then skating away from Gabe, showing him her ass.

Gabe just watched her, furious, then pushed himself back to his feet, sliding into motion, getting ready to try again. By the time practice ended, he skated off the ice, battered, bruised and demoralized. "Anna," he said, wincing as he sat on the bench to take off his skates.

"Coach V," she answered.

Gabe rolled his eyes. "Coach V. I mean, I don't think this is going to work out. I can't—"

"You can't quit. Don't even think it."



“But these tricks and twirls. I don’t know how to do any of this stuff.”

“Jumps and spins, and you will learn.”

“How?”

“Hard work.”

Gabe just sighed, watching Landry, who was still gliding around on the ice, effortlessly doing leaps and spins. “I’m not sure I’ll ever get good at this.”

“Remember, we win the championship, and you get your heart’s desire. So, maybe you need to go to any lengths. I’ll give you homework to do.”

“Right. Okay.” *I need to do this*, Gabe thought, standing up and shimmying out of his girdle. He started to hand it back to Anna, but she just shook her head. “Keep it. You’ll need it for a while.”

Anna looked up and saw something she didn’t like in Landry’s form, and she hurried off to give her some pointers. As Gabe sat down to take off his skates, some of the girls came over: Sloan, Riley, Jackie and Prentiss.

“Pretty rough day,” Sloan said, sitting down next to him and patting him on the leg.

“I’ll say.”

“Just stick with it,” Riley offered. “It will get better.”

“Practice, practice, practice.” Prentiss said. “My mom always said, ‘every fall gets you closer to perfection.’”

“Then, I am moving toward perfection like a mother fucker.”

“Coach V doesn’t like language like that,” Jackie said. “You should try to talk more---“ she was about to say ladylike, but looking at the gloomy faced jock, she decided instead to say, “gracefully.”

Gabe cringed. This whole thing was just one dumb chick thing. “For goodness sake,” he said. “Coach V really does have so many silly rules. Anyway, why are you being so nice to me?”

“We need another skater to win the national title,” Sloan said. “And it looks like you’re all we’ve got.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence.”

“You’re raw, but you can skate,” Sloan said. “But, well—“

“What?”

“I don’t want you to get upset.”

“No. Tell me. If I’m going to do this, I want to do my best.”

“Well,” Riley said, tilting her head to the side. “You’re body style... it’s a little more, um, thick than most skaters.”

“I’m a dude, so?”

“So, look at Peter. Long and lean. Slender.”

“It makes for a more graceful profile, a more elegant and stylish mover.”

“You would look soooo good if you slendered down.”

“Give me your phone,” Riley said.

“I don’t know,” Gabe said, handing her his phone. “I mean, I like being buff and strong.”

“You’ll put on lean muscle. You’ll still be strong.”

Prentiss said, putting her hand on his leg. “Skaters have to be strong.”

“There,” Riley said, handing his phone back. “I just put my number in there, and I’ll send you a diet plan that will get you looking as slender as can be!”

“Welcome to the team,” the girls said, getting up to head to the locker room. “See you tomorrow.”

“See ya,” Gabe said. “Bye!” That was all nice, he decided. Those girls seemed really sweet. He wondered if any of them would want to make out some time. Before he even left, his phone buzzed, and he looked to see Riley had sent him the link for The Tara Lipinski Diet.

As *if*, he thought, shoving the phone in his pocket, putting on his shades and pulling up his hoodie, slinking back to his dorm room, determined to keep his new sport a secret as long as possible.

Back in his room, he grabbed a bagel and took a bite, stripping out of his sweaty clothes. Chewing on the sweet, doughy bagel, he looked in the mirror, eyes going wide, a sick grimace of disgust on his face. The girls were right! He looked like a gorilla with those

thick, gross bulging shoulders and arms. There was no way he could match Landry's sleek, dainty skating with his body so--- lumpy!

He spit the bagel out, grabbed his phone and looked at the Lipinski diet again, picturing Landry's small, round shoulders, her slender, little arms. He wanted that. He needed that.

*Bro. No*, he thought, looking at himself. *Dudes are supposed to be buff*. Ripped. On his wall he had a bunch of Playboy Centerfolds, and he looked at the pictures now, his eyes drawn not to their breasts, but to the pretty arms, the little shoulders. Looking at his own thick, bulging biceps he felt gross, and now when he looked up once more at those girls and their feminine little arms, he seethed with jealousy, acid burning in his belly.

*No, bro, no*, he thought, but he couldn't stop himself. Going to his dresser, he pulled it open to find the top drawer full of -tights? He didn't remember buying them, but thank goodness he had. He loved the way they felt on his legs, almost massaging his skin, and he really just felt so much more confident when he wore them. He looked over all the pairs in

different pretty colors, pulling out a pair of bright, tangerine and slipping them on, once more giggling with pleasure, and then pulling on baggy jeans and a hoodie, heading to the grocery store, ready to stock up on egg whites, grapefruit, spinach, Brussel sprouts, plus just all the things Tara Lipinski said he would need to get skinny and small! He'd never felt so excited. It was just what he needed!

As he walked through the sliding glass doors to the grocery store, the breeze hit him with a woosh! He felt really glad his baddy hoodie helped hide his gross body, but he still worried that girls were looking at him and snickering, and every time he saw a slender girl he crinkled his nose, seething with envy.

*Oh well*, he thought. *The first step to getting better is admitting you have a problem.* He went to the fruit aisle and grabbed a grapefruit, feeling proud and empowered. He would have to thank Riley for helping him see the light and getting him on such an awesome diet! He had gotten one of those little baskets and slung it over his arm, cheerfully going around the store, picking up the items he needed. Then, as he came around the corner lost in thought, he slammed

right into someone, and looked up into the eyes of—  
“Jacques?”

“Gabe,” Jacques said. “What the fuck?”

“Oh! Pardon me?” Gabe heard himself say, cringing at how weak it sounded.

Jacques looked at him funny, thinking, *Pardon me?* Then, he looked down at Gabe’s knee. “You’re walking. I thought your knee was destroyed.”

“Turned out to be just a strain,” Gabe said, delivering the lie he’d been rehearsing. “#Blessed!  
*What did I just say? #lame!*”

“So, why aren’t you back on the team?”

“Well, I need more time to--- um--- rehab. Not ready to skate yet.”

“Well, don’t hurry back,” Jacques said with a smirk. “No one misses you.”

Enraged, Gabe intended to tell Jacques to fuck off, but instead when he opened his mouth he heard himself say, “That was very hurtful.”

Jacques snorted. “No shit.” Then, his eyes fell to

Gabe's basket. "What's with all the rabbit food? That looks like the shit my little sister eats."

*Little sister?* Once more Gabe thought to curse the other boy out, but instead he huffed and said, "You're being rude. Good day!" And then he spun on his heel and stormed off, his nose in the air.

"Homo," Jacques mumbled, watching Gabe strut down the dairy isle. Gabe looked back over his shoulder, and as their eyes met, they both thought, in unison, *He's such a jerk!!*





## 4

Back in his room, Gabe felt giddy as he prepared his dinner: 1 egg and 3 egg whites (free range, cage free!) with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup tomatoes,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onions,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup peppers and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup chopped spinach. Arranging it on a plate, he snapped a picture with his phone and texted it to the rest of the team with the caption: #glory.

Soon, his phone buzzed back with streams of emojis from his team mates cheering him on. He smiled, finishing the last of the food, and feeling—empty. Was that really all he was supposed to eat? He double checked the diet. Yup. For a moment he thought—to heck with it, but then he glanced at the picture of Miss March on his wall, his eyes once more falling on those perfect, petite arms of hers, and he

clenched his fist. Instead of eating more, he went to dorm fridge and took out the cans of Foster's beer, putting them in a bag and then taking them down to the end of the hall and throwing them in the garbage bin. *Want the pretty life, pay the pretty price*, he thought, turning and walking away.

Tired, hungry, his body aching from all the spills on the ice, Gabe wanted to sleep, but Coach V had sent him a bunch of videos to watch, so he drank three glasses of water, sat down with his laptop and began to watch Michelle Kwon, Tara Lipinski, Evgenia Tarasov, Meaghan Duhamel and others performing Salchows, Lutz's axles and flips. *I wonder why Coach V sent me all girls?* He wondered, but then again watching those hot little skaters move around in their short little skating outfits was pretty cool. He loved seeing them move in those sexy little outfits, and the way the skirts sometimes flipped up, showing off their panties. *Thank God I'm a dude*, he thought, thinking how embarrassing it would be to have dress in something all sparkly and revealing like that.

He drifted off to sleep watching a montage of Michelle Kwon performing ballet jumps, and his

dreams were filled with thoughts of himself leaping and spinning effortlessly on the ice.



## 5

“Up and at ‘em!” Gabe heard someone yell, then start pounding on the door. He snapped awake, picking his head up off his laptop. On the screen, Michelle Kwon was frozen in mid-jump. The time read 5:11 am.

“What the what?” As Gabe stood, his stiff muscle shot through with pain, but he put his hand to his back and walked stiffly to the door to his room, hunched over and grimacing.

He opened the door. Riley stood there, bright eyes, fresh skinned, her hair tied back in a ponytail wearing a Victoria’s Secret track suit. “Come on! We have to get to the gym for team conditioning!”

“Team conditioning? It’s five in the morning, and my

whole body is just one big, gosh darned bruise!”

“You know a skater by her bruises,” Riley said, patting him on the cheek. “Now let’s go! You don’t want to be late.”

Gabe slit his eyes at Riley. “You are wayy to cheerful for 5 am.”

He pulled on his sweats, his shoes, all the while Riley stretched, chatting hyper-actively. They made their way across campus in the dark, finding their way to the gym and heading into one of the training rooms. The rest of the team was there, Landry in front of the room. “You ready to get your ass kicked like never before?” She said when Gabe came blearily into the room.

“Please,” Gabe said. “I train with the hockey team, and that’s a *real* sport, okay?”

The girls all stopped talking and glared at him. Hands went to hips, and they looked at Landry, her face a mask of pure rage. “Excuse me?” Landry said. “Did you just imply that figure skating is not a real sport?”

“Come on. You’re not really athletes. It’s just dancing on ice.”

“Just? Dancing? Um, okay, let’s just see how well you get through our workout little mister falls on ice.”

Gabe rubbed his stubbled chin, ready unload on her, but once more his mouth betrayed him, and he threw a hand on his hip and said, “Bring it on, princess!”

The skaters giggled, the workout began. Landry turned on her music—Taylor Swift-- and called out “squats!” The team all started squatting, and Landy came over and started shouting at Gabe, “butt back! Butt back!” Gabe tilted his butt back, feeling- girly, and his glutes and quads started to burn. “Ow.”

“That’s right!” Landry said with a smile.

Following squats, sweat beaded on Gabe’s forehead, and they went right into lunges, his already burning legs screaming in pain, and then a bunch of core exercises, each time Landry calling out “Bird dogs” or “Dead Bugs” or “Windshield wipers!” Gabe had not worked out like this before, and soon he groaned in pain, gasped for breath and struggled to



keep up, his stomach aching, his butt burning. “Okay!” Landry called out. “That’s it.”

“Thank goodness,” Gabe said.

“That’s it for the *warm up*,” Landry said. The team all laughed as Gabe’s eyes bulged out of his head. “Warm up?”

“That’s right,” Landry said. “Princess.”

The real workout began—more squats, more lunges, curtsy lunges, walking lunges, crunches, crunches and more crunches, the girls all powering through while Gabe gasped and moaned and struggled, his whole body bathed in sweat, Landry teasing and mocking him the whole time. Her scorn only drove him to push through the pain, and even the shame as they went to the bar and did various ballet moves, up and down on their toes until Gabe thought his calves would just explode.

The workout ended. They cooled down. Gabe lay on the floor, staring at the ceiling in exhaustion. Landry’s face appeared above him. “Still think we’re not real athletes?”

“Yes,” Gabe said, but when he tried to get to his feet his calves knotted into painful Charlie horses, and he collapsed on the ground, crying out in pain, grabbing his legs.

Landry laughed down at him and sauntered away.

Riley appeared next, smiling down at him, but with concern in her eyes. “You should really get some cuter workout clothes,” she said.

“Seriously?” Gabe asked, massaging his throbbing calf. “You’re worried about my outfit right now?”

Sloan appeared next, her smiling face right next to Riley’s. “She’s right. Those baggy clothes? Just not happening.”

Jackie popped into the picture next. “Something bright and pretty!”

“The better you look the better you feel!” Prentiss chimed in.

“I’ll help you pick something out,” Riley said.

“I don’t think a cute outfit is my priority right now, ladies,” Gabe said. “I am in pain. Serious pain.”

“This is happening,” Riley said. “Tonight, after practice. We’ve decided.”

Gabe just closed his eyes, rubbing his calf. “I just can’t even with you all right now,” he said. “I just can’t!”

The team headed out to get their days started. Gabe finally got to his feet and looked in the mirror, surprised to see how baggy his clothes looked on him. *I must have sweated off 20 pounds, he thought. These clothes do look terrible. Maybe he would go with Riley to get some new ones. It was a good excuse to spend some time with her, and he did think she was cute. Maybe she’ll try to kiss me?*

Back in his room, Gabe ate a cup of bran flakes with almond milk and half a cantaloupe. Once more, the food only made him more hungry, and his tummy rumbled, begging him to at least eat the whole cantaloupe, but he covered it in saran wrap and put it into the fridge, once more glancing at the pretty girls on his wall for inspiration.

As he sat lacing up his skates wondering how he would ever make it through practice with his aching

body, Coach V came over, looked at him and said, “No.”

He looked up. “Coach V?”

“These clothes are too baggy. They are a danger.”

“Pardon?” Gabe’s sweatshirt now hung on him like a tent, and his sweat pants looked like parachute pants, plus they hung down on top of his skates.

“You need to change.”

“I don’t have anything else. Maybe Peter?”

“Let me see who’s about your size,” Coach V said, looking around the ice. “Riley?” She called.

*Riley?* Gabe wondered, looking at her as she skated over. Slender. Skinny. There was no way.

“Yup?” Riley said.

“Do you have something Gabe can borrow? His baggy clothes are too unsafe.”

“Sure!” Riley said. “I’m going to help him shop for some new things after practice anyway.” She grabbed Gabe’s hand and tugged him to his feet. “Come on!”

Gabe followed her, pulling his hand free as she started to drag him into the girl's locker room. "I can't go in there," he said.

"It's fine," Riley said. "Everyone is out on the ice."

Gabe stared at the little image of the girl with the triangle skirt. It made him uneasy, the thought of going in there, where they dressed. Their world. He shook his head from side to side, but Riley grabbed his hand and dragged him into the room, saying "Stop being such a baby!"

Inside, she went into her locker. Gabe's mouth dropped open as she pulled out an Adidas track suit, pink with white sleeves, pink racing stripes running down the sleeves. "No way," he said. "Never!"

Riley held the terrifying pink outfit out to Gabe, tapping her foot like an impatient mom. "It's either this or a leotard."

"No," Gabe said, leaning away, putting his arms behind his back so he couldn't even touch the girl's clothes. "What if someone sees me wearing that? I'd never live it down."

“Stare contest,” Riley said. “When you blink first, you stop being a child and get dressed.”

“You mean if I blink first,” Gabe said.

“I mean when,” Riley said, sitting down across from him.

They stared into each other’s eyes, and Gabe settled in, confident he would win. He was known for his--- blink. “Wait, no!” He said.

“Haha. You lost.” Riley handed him the pretty pink and white outfit and said, “It’s pants and a top for goodness sake.”

“It’s pink,” Gabe answered, accepting the clothes, holding them away from his body with his fingertips. “And for girls. I can’t believe you’re making me do this.”

Riley stuck her lower lip out and mocked sucking her thumb. “Poor baby.”

Moments later, he was stripping out of his clothes, first his shirt and then his pants—he froze as he started to pull them down, seeing the waist band of his electric yellow tights. “I’m going to do this in private,”

he said.

“What are you hiding?” Riley said, grinning. “Are you wearing panties?”

“No!” Gabe shrieked.

“So, what is it, then?”

“Nothing. I’ll be right back.”

He gathered the tracksuit into his arms and hurried to one of the shower stalls, stepping inside and pulling the curtain shut. Riley waited a few moments and then pulled out her phone and crept back, yanking the curtain back to find Gabe there in his yellow tights, just about to put the Adidas top on. She snapped a picture. He screamed and tried to cover himself, crossing his legs and cowering. “Oh my God!”

Riley covered her mouth, her eyes dancing with amusement. “Oh, Gabby! I think you look adorable!”

“Go. A. Way!” Gabe cried out, mortified. “And delete that picture!”

“Why don’t you just practice in your tights and girdle?”

“Get out of here!”

Riley finally relented, pulling the curtain shut, shaking her head. Boys. So insecure and self-conscious! “I’ll see you on the tights. I mean ice!” Riley called, leaving the locker room.

Gabe found himself breathing hard, hyperventilating, and he had to take a moment to calm himself down. He slipped his arms into the track suit, then stepped into the pants. Wow. He was surprised. Riley’s clothes actually fit. He looked at his arms. They looked--- pretty? How? He pulled back the curtain and went to one of the mirrors, stunned to see a skinny boy with narrow shoulders, slender arms and long, skinny legs fitting perfectly into Riley’s workout clothes. *It isn’t possible*, he thought. *I just started the diet.*

Gabe held his arms out, feeling a thrill but also a sense of loss and shame. His arms were tiny, lithe, slender and pretty like a girl’s. They were everything. Just what he’d wanted. And yet, he knew he shouldn’t want this. He was a dude, and he’d spent thousands of hours pumping iron in order to—



“Gabby!” He heard Coach V shout. “Get your pretty little butt out here! Practice is starting!”

“Oh!” Gabe hurried out, blushing at the thought of the girls seeing him in his pink and white outfit.

“Much better,” Coach V said, looking him over. “Now you look like a skater.”

“Wow!” Prentice said, skating over as he laced up. “You look ahhh-mazing!”

“Hot!” Sloan called across the ice.

Gabe found himself grinning, blushing now with pride instead of shame, but then Landry skated up to him, cutting her skates into the ice and showing him with ice chips.

“Who’s the princess now?” Landry said, smirking.

“Shut up!” Gabe sneered.

“Girls, let’s not get catty! On the ice. Now!”

Gabe found himself hitting more of his jumps, falling less. He kept picturing Michelle Kwon in his mind, moving like her, and though he still found himself plopping onto his fanny a few too many times, he

grinned with pride when he made his jumps, landing gracefully, arms and legs out, smiling brightly.

“You’re doing great!” Riley said.

“I don’t think I’ll need to wear my girdle anymore!” Gabe said, thrilled.

“Yeah, but maybe you should start wearing a skirt” Landry said.

“Boys don’t wear skirts!” Gabe said, crinkling his nose and tilting his head from side to side.

“They don’t wear pink, either,” Landry sneered back at him.

Gabe’s mouth dropped open. He’d forgotten he was even wearing the pink tracksuit. The words stung, and he felt self-conscious again. He was supposed to be a dude. A bro. But here he was wearing a girdle, dancing around on the ice pretending he was Michelle Kwon? What was happening to him?

Just then, Riley skated up and touched him gently on the shoulder. “You look great,” she said.

Gabe calmed and smiled, doing a Lutz and then,

swallowing hard and building up his courage, gliding right into a mazurka, scissoring his legs in the air, landing and smiling, his slender little arms out to his sides. He gave Landry a look, but she just skated away like she hadn't noticed.

After practice, he and the girls sat together, chit chatting about this and that. Gabe found himself watching Landry, who, as usual, stayed on the ice to do extra work. Her skin was pink, and radiant, and he sighed, "How does she get her skin to look so good?"

The girls glanced at her. "She does have great skin," Sloan admitted.

"What are you doing for your skin now?" Jackie asked, looking at Gabe.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, what's your skin care regimen?"

"I don't have one," Gabe said. "I just-- nothing it."

The girls all stared at him in horror. "You're a tragedy," Prentiss finally hissed. "Were you raised by wolves?"

“No, I just, I mean, what’s wrong with my skin?”

“Didn’t your mom ever talk to you about skin?”  
Jackie said. “You poor thing.”

“It’s going to be okay. We’ll take care of this little problem at the mall,” Riley said. “Jackie, can you text me the things our girl needs?”

“Girl?” Gabe said, but no one seemed to hear him.

“Yes. And ‘needs’ is the right word.”

“You also need to start shaving,” Riley said, touching his bristly chin. “This look is not right for a figure skater.”

“Guys,” Gabe said. “Come on. You’re making me self-conscious! Am I really that gross?”

Riley took his hand. “Oh, Gabby, it’s not that. But, we’re your posse now. We all help each other!”

Prentiss rubbed his shoulder. “We just want to help you be your best self.”

Jackie put her hand on his knee. “You need great skin to compete. The judges will notice. You do want to win, don’t you?”

“Um, yeah?” Gabe said.

Sloan squeezed in, running her finger nails through his hair, tracing them along his scalp. “You’re going to feel so good,” she said. “And the better you feel, the better you skate.”

“Well?” Riley said. “Are you ready to rise up?”

“I guess so?” Gabe said, feeling confused, like everything was so wrong and yet so right. The girls were so nice, and he did want to win. He’d always wanted to win. And he owed it to his team mates to be his best self, didn’t he? He looked into the eyes of the girls, admired their smooth soft faces. They were his team mates, and if they said he needed smooth, radiant skin, then he would get smooth, radiant skin. A smile spread across his face, and then he whispered, “I don’t guess so. I know so.”

“That’s what I like to hear,” Riley said. “I’m so proud of you.”

Off to the side, Coach V watched, nodding. Her eyes glittered with amusement.



## 6

“I knew you were going to try this,” Gabe said. “But I think this whole thing with the girl’s clothes has gone on far enough.”

They had gone to the mall and stood at the edge of the women’s fitness section at *Lord and Taylor*. Riley raised an eyebrow. “You won’t find anything that fits in the men’s section. You’re too petite.”

Gabe looked down at his slender arms. “What about the boy’s section?”

“Come on,” Riley said. “Or I’ll send that picture of you in your tights to your buddies on the hockey team.”

“What?” Gabe shrieked, his heart leaping in terror.

“Oh, my God! You wouldn’t!”

“No, I wouldn’t” Riley said. “But, please, just trust me.”

She stepped off the tiled path and onto the carpeted area, mannequins dressed in sports bras and leggings, track suits and tank tops arrayed behind her. Gabe’s eyes danced over the women’s clothes. Truly, they were not that different from men’s clothes, but for the—cute little touches. Leggings with semi-transparent, lace inserts. Tank tops with slender straps that crossed on the back, or sexy, webby looking areas on the sides. Patterns. Stripes. Polka dots. And the *colors*. Peaches and tangerines, rose and sunflower. He could feel his heart fluttering, his mouth almost salivating at the thought of dressing in those clothes, wearing them to practice. But he couldn’t let Riley know how desperately he wanted to dress in women’s clothes. She would lose all respect for him as a man, and he thought she was pretty, and he was really hoping she might want to kiss and cuddle sometime. As for sex, well, he wanted to get to know her better first, but if she got aggressive and pressured him, he knew he would put out for her.



“Can I help you?” A salesgirl said, having been drawn over by the sound of Gabe’s shrieking. She was cute, with big boobs, and Gabe gave her a quick once over, hoping Riley wouldn’t notice.

Riley didn’t. She was grinning like the Cheshire Cat. “Yes. My friend here wants some clothes to train in. He recently lost a lot of weight and needs to find some things from the women’s department to train in.”

Gabe’s mouth fell open, and he sputtered, trying to think of something to say. The girl’s whole demeanor changed. “Oh!” She said. “I am sure I can help you find some things. Come on. Don’t be shy. I’m Monica by the way.”

Riley took his hand and led him into the ladies’ section, each of them following Monica. “He needs everything. Why don’t we start with some tops?”

“So, what sport do you play?” Monica asked.

“I...um, well, it’s for, well, the thing is...” Gabe felt emasculated enough. He didn’t want this cute girl to know he was a...

“Figure skating,” Riley said, “and he really is a

spunky little skater, too!”

“I bet he is,” Monica said, giving Riley a glance. Riley watched Gabe turn ten shades more red. “So, you’ll need things to stay warm. Very important so you don’t injure yourself. But also, things that wick. Over here, we have some really cute little things for you to try on.”

Gabe had given up trying to talk or argue and just kept blushing deeper and deeper as Monica piled clothes into his arms. Soon, he stood in the dressing room in a pair of black leggings with a white turtleneck top, a pink eternity scarf and pink leg warmers. He looked cute. He had to admit it. And as he turned from side to side and looked at his legs he had to admit they looked really good—long and lean, but rounded. More like girl’s legs, but sooooo good. It was a shame he couldn’t wear his tights in public. His legs would make all the girls so jealous!

“Come on out and let us see,” Riley said.

Gabe adjusted his scarf and his head wrap, took a deep breath, his heart pounding so hard he could hear it in his ears. “Don’t laugh at me!” He said.

“I’m a professional,” Monica said.

Riley opened the door just a little bit. Gabe cowered away in the corner. “I’m sure you look great. Now, come on out here.”

Gabe bit his lip, stepped to the door and threw it open.

Both girls dissolved into giggles. “You promised you wouldn’t laugh!” Gabe said, horrified, retreating into the dressing room. He tried to shut the door, but Riley and Monica pushed their way in, soothing him, apologizing. “We laughed because you look soooo good,” Riley said.

“Really cute,” Monica said.

They turned and made him look at himself in the mirror. He put a hand to his stubbled cheek. “I look like a dude dressed like a girl.”

“Only because of your stubble and bad skin, but we’re going to fix that. Look at your body, though. Those legs!”

Gabe couldn’t help but grin. “I did think my legs looked pretty good.”

“More than pretty good. Gorgeous.”

The word gave him chills. *Gorgeous*. He liked feeling *gorgeous*. Soon, he was in and out of the dressing room in different outfits, mostly getting nods, a few nos, but each time he felt like a star, getting all the attention from the girls, feeling pretty and cute and *gorgeous*. He didn't even notice the other customers glancing over, covering their mouths, trying to hide their laughter. In the end, Riley piled a bunch of the soft pretty clothes into his hands and said, “we need to get going so you don't miss your appointment.”

“Appointment?” Gabe said, following the two girls over to the register.

“You're getting waxed, remember?”

“Waxed? I never agreed to that.”

“Of course, you did,” Riley said. “Now, don't chicken out on me.” Then she turned to Monica. “He's so scatter-brained.” The two laughed.

“Hold on,” Gabe said as Monica began to run the items through the scanner and the price mounted. “I don't have money for all this.”

"It's on Coach V," Riley said, pulling a Platinum Card out of her pocket. "She said you can consider it a bonus for a job well done."

"Okay, I guess," Gabe said. "Thanks."

"Oh." Riley patted him on the cheek. "I like buying my girlfriend pretty things."

Gabe started to collect the bags of clothes, but Riley waved him off. "I got it," she said. "You relax. I know you're still sore from the training."

Gabe rubbed his arms. It was true. His little arms did ache something awful, but still, it all seemed so wrong. He knew he should be carrying the bags, and why was he letting her talk down to him like he was her girl or something? But he couldn't stop himself from liking it. When they got to the waxing salon, Riley said, "You go on in. I'm going to put these in the car and pick up some more things for you."

"You're leaving me here alone?" Gabe said, looking nervously at the entrance.

"Do you want me to come along with and hold your hand?" Riley asked, no hint of sarcasm or malice in

her voice. It was an honest, caring offer, but Gabe wilted at the sound of it. He couldn't have her think he was that sensitive and girly, though the offer did sound nice.

"No. No. I got this," Gabe said, trying to sound tough. "Chicks do this all the time, so you know? Yeah." Gabe swaggered toward the door. "I so got this."

Riley watched him, amused. "Have fun, sweetie!"

"I will!"

Shortly thereafter, shoppers paused, looking around, alarmed by the screams they heard echoing out of the European Massage Parlor. "What's going on in there?" A young husband asked his wife. "It sounds like someone getting stabbed to death."

His wife just smirked. "Just some guy getting waxed for the first time."

"He must be a wimp," the guy said.

"Nope," his wife said. "Just a typical boy." Then, she got a wicked gleam in her eye. "Hold my purse while I look in here for some shoes real quick." Her

husband groaned and looked around in terror as his wife handed him her purse. “Just be glad I’m not asking you to get waxed!”

The man sat down on a bench, her purse in his lap, cringing at Gabe’s screams and wondering why he’d ever gotten married.

By the time Gabe staggered out of the waxing salon, his eyes bloodshot and glazed with the aftershocks of the pain he’d suffered, Riley came walking up with bags in her hands. “You look so good,” she said, admiring his clean, smooth chin and face, pink and raw from the waxing. He also now had slender, arching eyebrows.

“Thanks,” Gabe said. “I feel like I was just tortured by the CIA.”

Riley giggled. “Not as easy as you thought it would be?”

Gabe looked at the bags dangling from her fingers. “I thought you were going to put those in the car?”

“I put the other bags in the car. These are new bags.” She held them up, so he could see the labels:

Victoria's Secret, Forever 21, Mademoiselle. Macys.

"Oh no," he said. "Not for me?"

"Yes, for you," Riley said. "Some of its your skin care products, and the rest is just—oh, things. Maybe you can carry these for awhile. I am getting tired."

Gabe ruefully took the bags from her and walked along, feeling self-conscious and curious. What could Riley have bought for him from Victoria's Secret?

He thought the two of them were done, heading to the west entrance where they'd come in, so they could get to the car and go home, but when they passed that wing and he started to turn, Riley said, "This way. You have one more appointment."

Gabe sighed. "Now what?"

"We have got to do something about that hair!"





## 7

Gabe rubbed the coconut lotion along his arms and worked it into his elbows, all the while looking at himself in the vanity mirror Riley had bought him for his desk. His face was covered in a mud mask, and he'd pinned his now glittering blonde bangs back with hair pins. He'd never considered getting his hair dyed, though he knew some guys did, but even if he had he didn't think he would have gone with this bright blonde color, the dark highlights. I should have been more assertive, he thought, squirting some more of the lotion into his hands and rubbing it onto his now smooth, silky legs. But, for some reason, when they'd gotten to the hair salon, Riley had she would take care of it, telling the stylist what to do outside his hearing, and by the time she'd spun him around to see his new

blonde hair style, the bangs sweeping down to right above his eyes brows, the whole thing with a rounded look, like a girl's bob, it was too late.

Now, he was stuck with it, but he figured he'd get used to it. This was all just for a little while, anyway, until he could get back to playing hockey, being a bro, living the life of Riley. The life of Riley. Funny. He kind of was living the life of Riley, he thought, pulling on his Victoria's Secret pajama top and then the bottoms. They were white silk, and Riley had insisted they were made with special material that was very gentle on the skin and would help him get that healthy glow like –ugh--- Landry. His tummy rumbled. It seemed like it was all part of being a championship skater, and that was what he'd set out to become, so that was what he would do.

If he had to be a little girlie for a time, so be it. Once they won the championship, he would get his heart's desire, and it would all have been worth it! He turned on his computer and watched skating videos for an hour, then when he was finally ready, he climbed between his new silk sheets, pulled his white comforter up to his chin, and drifted off to sleep,

smiling, dreaming of skating and dancing and pretty things.

The next day when Riley showed up at his door, he threw it open before she even knocked and said, “What took you so long?” He was jogging in place, or maybe prancing was more like it, letting his legs kick back to he was kicking himself in his own butt with each movement.

Riley looked at him in his peach colored women’s track suit, with his blonde bouncing, and his skin! “Those treatments worked wonders! You’re glowing!” She said.

Gabe blushed and giggled. He’d seen himself that morning and squealed as how smooth and soft and radiant his skin looked. “I couldn’t have done it without your help!”

“Let’s go!” Riley said. “I can’t wait to show you off!”

Show me off? Wait, like I’m her boyfriend? The thought made his stomach do flips, and he beamed with confidence as they ran over to the gym and right into Jacques Chirac.

Jacques was on a press machine, bare chested, his hard body glistening with muscle. Gabe saw him and blanched, trying to hide beside Riley as they jogged to their training room, but Jacques suddenly looked over and called out, "Gabe?"

Gabe pretended he didn't hear, but Riley stopped. "I think that guy just called your name."

Gabe cowered behind Riley. "I know. I don't want to..."

But Jacques had gotten up and was walking over. "He's cute," Riley said.

"I don't care," Gabe hissed.

"What the hell?" Jacques said. "I almost didn't recognize you."

"Hi," Gabe said, looking up from Jacques's rippling abs, to his bulging chest and then into Jacques' green eyes. *Go ahead*, he thought. *Make fun of me.*

But Jacques reached out and gently brushed Gabe's bangs back from his eyes. "You look great as a blonde."

“I do?” Gabe said, getting that tingly, fluttery feeling.

“Gorgeous,” Jacques said. He let his fingers trail down Gabe’s smooth cheek.

“I—um—you, er? *Gorgeous?*”

“I think that means ‘thank you’ in Klingon,” Riley said, stepping forward. “I’m Riley, by the way.”

“Jacques,” he answered. When she reached out her hand, he took it in both of his and squeezed. He looked back at Gabe, who had blushed a deep pink now and was looking away, chagrined. “How do you guys know each other?”

Gabe’s mouth fell open and he shook his head in panic, but Riley blurted out, “We’re on the figure skating team together.”

“Figure skating?” Jacques burst out laughing. “You’re figure skating now?”

“Why is that so funny?” Gabe huffed, the spell broken, his hate toward Jacques returning.

“Why *isn’t* it funny? I mean, it’s just not even

anything. Just girly dancing on ice. Holy shit. I can't wait to tell all the guys what a pussy you've turned into."

Gabe slit his eyes. "You are so coarse and vulgar!"

Jacques snorted and laughed some more. "And you're just a scrawny little runt! And you talk like a girl. *Coarse and vulgar! Oh my!*"

"Ewwwww! You make me so mad!" Gabe made a little fist and then stomped one little foot. "I could just.... Ugh!"

"We've got to train," Riley said. "Come on, Gabby."

"Yeah, go do some tricks and twirls. I've got to train for a real sport."

"What?" Gabe, who was half way to the door to the training room, spun around. "For your information, we do jumps and spins! And, I could take you one on one in hockey any day!"

"Don't flatter yourself, princess."

"Scared?" Gabe said, marching up to Jacques. "Worried I'll embarrass you?"

“Please. Worried you’ll embarrass yourself!”

A small crowd had started to gather. Gabe called out, “I challenge you, Mister Big Shot. Are you too scared?”

Jacques realized he was being watched, so he shrugged. “Okay. Fine. I accept your little challenge. If I win, you have to admit on You Tube that figure skating is a not a real sport.”

“And if I win,” Gabe said. “You have to attempt a flying sit spin before your next game in front of everyone!”

“Fine!”

“Double fine!”

Then, they stared into each other’s eyes and in unison hissed, “I HATE YOU!”

*Omigod*, Riley thought, standing back and watching along with the rest of the team, who’d come out to watch the whole thing. *They are totally crushing on each other! That’s so sweet!*





## 8

Gabe hinged over, stretched one leg waaaaaay out, his arms extended at his sides, his hands bent and fingers in perfect ballet finger position. He started to spin, on his toes, and felt a sense of calm descend over him as he moved with the grace and fluidity of a--  
- CRASH!

His tiny little foot had hit his desk lamp, sending it crashing to the floor, the lit bulb exploded with a *pop!* “Oh!” Gabe said, putting his hands to his cheeks. “Goodness.” He did a frustrated little knee bend, going over to get his broom and dust pan. He hated for anything to be out of place in his neat, pretty, perfectly organized room. His first match was coming tomorrow, and he was sooooo nervous!

His phone buzzed, and he hopped over, plopping onto his bed, smiling as he looked to see a message from his bestie, Landry. *U haz ID?* Then some emojis that translated to mean she was having an awesome day and hoped he was, too.

*Duh.* He texted back, adding his own string of emojis.

*Fake ID?* She specified.

Gabe bit his lip. Rolling off his bed, he bunny hopped over to his dresser drawer, hunting through his tights drawer until he found the little piece of plastic, the corners frayed and brown. He turned it over, looked at the picture and screamed. “Gross!” Staring back at him was a boy with greasy hair in an --ugh—mullet, stubble all over his face, and bloated, red, beer puffy skin, dull, yellow eyes. He looked in the mirror at his bright, pink skin, golden bobbed hair, bright, wide eyes. *No one will believe this is me,* he thought looking at his old self. *Thank God.*

But then he held up the ID to the mirror, comparing the two faces. Only one of them looked like a boy. He felt something hard and acidic in his stomach. He

didn't want to look like a girl. He wasn't a girl! He started to hyperventilate, staring at that face, his old face. But then his phone buzzed again, and he hurried over, fighting back tears. *Thumbs up FID*, he texted back with a frowny face emoji. "Doesn't look like me." Then, on impulse, a teary face.

*Meet me at Meyer Hall 300*, Riley texted back. *Now*.

"Hmmmnnnn," Gabe said, getting up to check himself out in his mirror. He wore a pair of track pants over his black tights. They hugged and showed off his long, tone legs as well as his plump, peach shaped skater's butt. All the girls had really good butts from their skating workouts, and he just had to deal with the fact that he had one now, too. With his recent shock at confronting how much he had changed, the sexy, very womanly shape of his backside made him feel scared about what he was becoming, but there wasn't much he could do about it until they won the figure skater championship.

He wore a women's small Fighting Irish sweatshirt that hugged his slender body, and teasing his hair, he slipped his green and gold eternity scarf over his head, then a head wrap. Lacing his white women's Nikes—

his feet were too dainty for men's shoes, he hurried off, curious about what Riley had planned.

He got to Meyer Hall, a dorm across campus, and walked in, heading up to the third floor. As he walked down the hall, guys kept smiling at him, and he smiled back, oblivious to the way they turned, craning their necks to look at his wiggling butt in his tight track pants. He knocked on 300 and heard Riley say, "That must be her."

The door opened, and Riley ushered him into the dorm room. A sketchy looking up in a tank top, his arms smothered in tattoos, sucked on a vape pipe, blowing out the smoke and looking Gabe up and down, saying, "S'up?"

"Um, hi?" Gabe said, crossing his arms and hunching over, standing as close to Riley as he could. The walls were smothered with pictures of naked women, and Gabe crinkled his nose. "What's going on?" He whispered into Riley's ear.

"Fake ID," Riley said.

Gabe for the first time saw the guy's photography gear, the backdrop.

“Bring your hot little self over here to the screen,” the guy said.

Gabe grabbed Riley’s arm. “I don’t know...”

“Come on!” Riley said, pushing him to the screen, where he stood, feeling nervous. He forced a smile, trying to be nice. The guy glared at him, then walked up walked up and pulled the head wrap off his head.

Gabe wanted to say something, do something, but he just looked at Riley with a what the hell look, then, scared of the tattoo man and wanting not to make him mad, he put his brightest smile on his face and said, “Okay? Whatever.”

The guy stared at Gabe with a blank face. Gabe’s smile just got bigger, and then he found himself giggling. He didn’t know why, and he couldn’t stop, though he felt like an idiot. Finally, the guy just said, “You can’t wear headwraps in an ID picture.”

“Oh!” Gabe said. “Of course.” Then, he giggled and smiled some more.

“Say cheese or whatever,” the guy said.

Gabe smiled, turning his head just slightly to the

right to show off his best side. The camera flashed. “Just a few minutes,” he said, going to his computer.

“How do I look?” Gabe said, biting his pinky. “Can I see? Should we do another one?”

“I’m sure you look very pretty,” Riley said, touching him on the shoulder.

“It’s not that, it’s just—“

Riley raised an eyebrow.

Gabe sighed. “Okay. It is that.”

“Picture looks good,” the guy grumbled.

“See?” Riley said.

Gabe thought about telling her how he’d felt when he looked at his fake ID. How scared he’d felt to see herself, himself, looking so much like a girl. But, he couldn’t do it in front of this creep. “So, what’s the big emergency, anyway?”

“Before our first meet, we always go party at Club Fever. Team tradition.”

“Party? Um, I don’t think I should drink? Soooo

many cal's," Gabe said, thinking about how even a single glass of white wine would ruin his diet.

"Drink? Landry would slap it right out of your hand, honey. But, you have to be 21 to get into the club."

"And now you are," Sketchy Guy said, pulling an ID out of his printer, waving it and blowing on it. He held it out to Gabe, who took it. Riley crowded in, and they both cooed at his smiling, pretty picture. "You look so cute!" Riley said.

Gabe nodded. He did look cute, and that was...his eyes drifted to the information, and he turned to look at Riley in shock. Name: Gabrielle Kathleen Fawn. Sex: Female.

"Riley!" he said, gently hitting her. "Gabrielle?"

Riley laughed. "Surprise!"

Sketchy Guy took a long toke from his vape pipe, then blew a smoky blue cloud into the air, holding the vape pipe out to Gabe. "You want?"

Gabe shook his head, recoiling.

"I want to see you suck on this," Sketchy Guy said,



giving Gabe another once over. “With those fat sexy lips.”

Gabe and Riley both shrieked and ran toward the door. “How about giving me your number!” The guy yelled, staring at Gabe’s ass. “You hot little...”

Gabe and Riley slammed through the door and ran down the hall, looking back, holding each other’s arms. “Omigod!” Gabe said.

“So gross!” Riley agreed.

“Did you see the way he looked at me?” Gabe shook his head. “Ugh!”

“He was kind of cute, though,” Riley said as they got in the elevator, glancing nervously down the hall to make sure he hadn’t followed them. All they saw was a cloud of vape smoke coming out of his dorm room.

“Cute?” Gabe said. “More like Puke!”

The elevator door closed, and the two started laughing. Then, Gabe caught his breath and said, “What’s the idea making me a girl? On my ID, I mean?”

“Haha!” Riley said. “I just thought it would be funny.”

“But how am I supposed to go out with you guys now?”

“I guess you’ll just have to come out as Gabrielle,” Riley said, putting her hand to Gabe’s soft cheek.

“No way!” Gabe said, tossing his hair. “Oh! My head wrap!”

“Oh, let’s go back and get it. Then, you can suck on his pipe!”

“Aaahhhh!” Gabe shrieked, and as the elevator doors opened, the two ran out, laughing, running past the check in desk, where the stunned security guard looked up from the book he’d been reading, amused, and then they ran out into the sun, arm in arm, laughing and recounting the tale of the Creepy Vape Man.

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“You have to do it,” Prentice said, looking at Gabe’s ID, nodding her head.

“Omigod, you’d make such a cute girl,” Sloan said. “I have the perfect outfit for you, too.”

“But what if someone recognizes me?”

“When I get done with your make-up,” Jackie said. “You won’t even recognize yourself.”

“No way! I can’t even! I can’t!” Gabe said, blushing, his legs crossed as he fought against the arousal he felt at the thought of dressing up and going out.

“You see?” Riley said. “It’ll be so fun!” She hooked his hair behind his ear, giving his earlobe a little tug in the process. Gabe felt himself get all tingly.

“I’d be too ashamed,” Gabe whispered, looking down.

“What’s this little pow wow about?” Landry spat, skating up to them.

“Don’t...” Gabe said, terrified, but Riley squeezed his hand and looked right at Landry. “Gabe doesn’t think he could pass as a woman.”

“He couldn’t,” Landry said. “Not with that flat chest.”

But he could pass as a 9-year-old girl.” She laughed and skated away.

Gabe’s mouth dropped open as he crossed his arms over his chest. “That mean girl!”

Riley patted Gabe on the knee. “That settles it, I guess. I don’t know, maybe you just won’t be able to come with us when---“

“What?” Gabe said, slitting his eyes as he stared at Landry with pure hate. “Oh. No.” He grabbed Riley’s hand, then Jackie’s, and said, “Girls. Make me a woman.”

“Yes,” Riley said. “There’s my brave girl.”



## 9

“I changed my mind,” Gabe said, staring in horror at Sloane, who stood in front of him holding out a pale pink, lacy bra.

“No way, Gabrielle,” Jackie said, unpacking her make-up kit and arranging it on the desk in Gabe’s dorm room.

“But, I don’t have boobs!” Jack sat on his bed wearing nothing but a pair of the Victoria’s Secret “boy shorts” Riley had bought for him. Pink, of course, with white tubing. He had his knees together, his slender arms crossed over his bony chest. His determination to prove *Landry* wrong now had melted the more he thought about it, and now the reality of it all filled him with terror.

“I have your boobs right here!” Prentice said, pulling a pair of jiggling breast forms from her bag.

The girls started closing in with make-up brushes, press on nails, the bra and breast forms. Gabe shook his head side to side, pulling away, crying out, “Help!”

What seemed like hours later, he stood in front of his mirror wearing a pair of black tights, a flouncy ballet skirt and a sleeveless black sequined blouse that hugged his firm little fake boobs. He had a hand on his hip and was admiring his everything. His long legs perched in a pair of cute little ankle boots looked so sweet. He no longer looked cute or pretty. He looked gorgeous, with thick, long, wet lashes, smoky eyeshadow of grey and deep purple, and wet, red lips that just begged to be kissed. Diamond studs glittered in his newly pierced ears. He put a hand to his ear, tilting his head, admiring the way the earrings sparkled in his little seashell ears. “I can’t believe it,” he said, wincing at the sound of his voice coming from that stunning woman’s face.

“You need to start talking more like a girl,” Riley said, handing him a little clutch with a silver, chain strap that echoed the silver buckles on his cute little

boots. "Your voice needs more buzz."

"Talk like a girl?" Gabe said, surprised to hear a high-pitched, buzzy young woman's voice come from his mouth. "Do I really need a purse?"

"Perfect! Your sound perfect!" Riley clapped her hands.

"So cute." Jackie said.

"You should always talk like a girl," Sloane said, checking her own make-up.

"Dress like one, too. God, if I had legs like those I would never cover them up."

"You do have legs like this, and you don't ever cover them!" Gabe said.

"True!"

"Omigod. Look at the time! We have to go!" They all grabbed their handbags, hurrying to their cars and making their way to the club. They parked and hurried to the entrance, their heels clicking as they chatted and giggled.

Gabe felt his boobs bouncing with each step, the



bra straps digging into his shoulders. As he minced along, struggling to keep up with the girls, moving along uncertainly in his new heels, he dug into his clutch and pulled out his fake ID. His heart started racing, and he started to hyper-ventilate, feeling a panic attack coming on. What if someone recognizes me? What if a boy wants to dance with me? His head buzzed with nervous fears.

Riley led the group past the long line of people waiting to get into the club, and as they approached the gigantic muscle-bound bouncer, his bald gleaming, unhooked the velvet rope, nodding them in. Gabe looked up at the guy, awed by how big and strong he looked, and chirped, “Don’t you want to see my ID?”

“Get your fine ass in there,” the man said in a voice so deep it gave Gabe chills.

Gabe giggled and smiled, hurrying to catch up with his friends. The music thumped, the lights flashed, bodies packed the floor. He’d been here so many times but as a dude, himself, his old self. Now, he clutched his purse, looking around nervously as he realized-- omg—it seemed like the whole hockey team was here! Well, hopefully Jacques wasn’t-- He

froze. “Uh oh.” There he was, talking to some pretty little *brunette*, of course. *The jerk!*

“What is it?” Riley said.

Gabe pointed a slender finger across the room, his red nails and tennis bracelet glittering. “Um, that, him, that *guy* is here?”

Riley just grabbed his hand and dragged him deeper into the club, where they found Landry and the rest of the team gathered around a private table in the corner. Gabe started to sit, remembering to keep his knees together, chest out as the girls had taught him. Landry, who’d been chatting with Peter, looked at Riley and said, “who’s your friend.”

“What? You don’t recognize our new teammate Gabrielle?”

“Gabrielle?” Landry said, her face filled with shock as she recognized him. “Gabe?”

Gabe sat there, his hands in his lap, raising one eyebrow, trying to look cool and calm, but inside he felt like there were, like, a million butterflies slam dancing in his tummy.

Landry regarded him, and then she raised her hands and started a slow clap. “Stunning. *Gorgeous.*”

At the word *gorgeous* a smile spread across Gabe’s face, like a butterfly’s wings. He felt a warmth and pride spread through him. Landry approved. She thought he was pretty. It just—it meant so much.

Peter admired Gabe as well, shaking his head. “You look like a movie star! You never should have been a boy.”

Just then, the first few bars of Taylor Swift’s “Look What you made me do” chimed out, and all the girls raised their arms and cheered leaping to their feet and heading for the dance floor. “This is our song!” Riley shouted into Gabe’s ear. He found himself dancing with Riley, Sloane, even Landry. Song after song. He got used to his high heels, and soon he was dancing with anyone and everyone, and then someone came up behind him and started to grind, and giggling, euphoric, without even thinking Gabe leaned forward and started to twerk just like he’d seen so many girls do. The guy, whoever it was, grabbed Gabe’s hips and pulled, and Gabe glanced back over his shoulder, smiling back at-- his eyes went wide. It was Jacques!

He stood up and scurried away, looking for his girls, spotting Riley dancing with one of the guys from the football team. *They would make a cute couple!* He felt someone grab his arm, and he tried to pull it away, but the man's calloused grip was too strong, and Jacques tottered on his heels and then fell right into Jacques' arms.

"You're the hottest bitch in this place," Jacques said, leaning down and shouting into Gabe's ear.

Gabe trembled in Jacques' arms, looking up into his face. Jacques smelled so good—whatever cologne he wore sure made Gabe feel giddy! Gabe was terrified, scared that Jacques would realize it was him, that he would tell everyone. Normally, Gabe would not like a boy to call him a bitch, but for some reason when he heard the word from Jacques it just made him feel... tingly. Gabe couldn't find any words. He nervously licked his lips. Put his hands on Jacques' chest, thinking to push him away, but instead he just lingered there, his fingertips tingled with pleasure, his toes curling in his boots.

Jacques saw Gabe lick his lips, felt the hands on his chest, and he decided to take what he wanted,

putting a hand behind Gabe's head and pulling him in for a kiss, their lips meeting, their bodies pressing together, Gabe's leg kicking into the air as he pressed himself against Jacques. They kissed for a long time, finding each other's tongues, Jacques' hand sliding down Gabe's back and then cupping his ass, giving it a squeeze.

When the kiss ended Gabe collapsed against Jacques with a sigh, shocked that he'd just kissed a boy, and this boy in particular, but buzzing, confused, feeling so safe in his arms.

The song ended and the DJ started talking, making some announcement. Lights swirled around the dance floor. Jacques stared down into Gabe's eyes, cupped his cheek and said, "What's your name?"

"Oh," Gabe said, tensing. "Jacques. It's me. Gabe. I thought you—"

"Gabe! What the-- You freak!" Jacques pushed him, and he fell on his butt. "You sick pervert!" Jacques stormed away, vanishing into the crowd. Gabe stared after him, the world growing blurry as his eyes filled with tears, and he covered his face in

shame. He was sure they were all staring at him now, laughing. The crowd on the dance floor, almost all students at Notre Dame, and all his team mates from both teams looked at him. They'd all seen him dressed as a girl, dancing with boys, kissing boys.

My life is over, he thought, getting to his feet and running from the club as fast as he could, his heels clicking as he ran crying into the night.



**10**

The girls found Gabe and talked him down, got him home safe. He cleaned off his make-up, got into his pajamas, crawled into bed and cried himself to sleep. When his alarm buzzed at 5am the next morning, he felt better. Not good, but better. This was the day of his first meet as a figure skater, and the team was taking a van to Ann Arbor. For a second, he thought about not going. Just sleeping in, forgetting about this whole stupid deal with Coach V. But no. He'd worked too hard. Sacrificed too much. And he owed it to his team mates. They were counting on him.

He sat up and stretched, surprised to feel the weight of the breast forms as they pulled on his clavicle, swaying and bouncing. He could have sworn he'd taken them off along with the bra. Glancing over



at his dressing table, he saw them there along with the bra, and shook his head. How? He unbuttoned his pajama top and stared down at his breasts. His real breasts. Soft and round, with pink nipples hardening in the cool morning air. He also noticed for the first time that his golden blonde hair had gotten longer, and it now spilled down over his shoulders and curled at the top of his new breasts.

“It’s not possible,” he said, hearing that same young, woman’s voice coming out of his mouth even as he reached up with his tiny, soft little hands and cupped his breasts, feeling his hands against his hard nipples, the sensation sending a jolt through his body. “What the hell?” He got out of bed and went to the mirror, his breasts bouncing, and then pulled open his pajama top, staring in horror. As much as the changes to his face and the rest of his body had horrified him, they were still body parts that guys had—faces, legs, butts.

*But boys do not have breasts. Not like these!* “No, bro, no!” He said, but then looking at his phone, he realized he didn’t have much time. He needed to get to the van in time, so they could get to the meet. The

team always wore their black team uniforms to the competitions, so he knew what he was wearing. And that, he realized, was now going to have to include a bra now. There was no way he wanted these puppies bouncing all over the place all day. He touched the bra on his desk, but it was still damp with sweat from his dancing escapades, so he looked in what he now remembered was his bra drawer, and pulling out a sports bra, he slipped it over his head, pulling it down over his boobs and then adjusting the straps on his shoulders, feeling his breasts settle into the stretchy fabric, the strap across his back tighten.

He looked in the mirror, slightly turned on by the sight of his own firm, young breasts in a bra, the straps across his round little shoulders. *Okay. No. This is so wrong*, he thought, turning away, pulling on the rest of his outfit, then throwing his duffle bag over his shoulder and hurrying out the door, thinking he could do his make-up in the van when they got closer to Ann Arbor. He didn't like to go out without at least a little eyeliner, some foundation. He never knew when he might meet some cute guy, and it was really all just part of being a girl anyway.

Which thought was completely weird and followed by another—since when do I wear make-up all the time? Worry about meeting cute guys? Think of myself as a girl? *Who am I?* He wondered. *What the hell is happening to me?*

As soon as Gabe came running up, his posse gathered around to make sure he was okay after last night. Surprisingly, he realized he was pretty okay, and he told them so. As embarrassed as he'd been, what had hurt more was that Jacques had rejected him, but he found those feelings too confusing and weird to even think about sharing. "I mean, it was embarrassing and all, and I probably won't show my face in that club again until, like, forever, but I'm so totally about the meet, I can't let myself get distracted."

He was also soooo concerned about his budding breasts, as well as the fact that no one else seemed to notice anything strange about him suddenly having boobs, or long hair, or still sounding like a girl even when he tried to talk like a boy! He would have to confront Coach V. This is not what they had agreed on, but in the meantime, he just wanted to curl up on one of the bench seats in the van and sleep!

Which he and all the girls did, slipping off to sleep, draped over and curling into each other as the van raced along the highway, heading toward Ann Arbor and the first big meet.

Gabe felt someone pushing his shoulder, and he opened his bleary eyes to see Riley smiling into his face, light pouring in from the open can door behind her. “Potty break!” She said.

Gabe climbed out of the van and looked around. They were in the parking lot of some rest stop crowded with cars, kids and old folks. The air smelled like deep fried everything, and Gabe’s stomach grumbled. “That smells so good,” he sighed, grabbing his foot and extending his leg up over his head, stretching.

“And it would go right here,” Riley said, poking him in the belly.

“Girls,” Coach V called. “Everyone tinkle. I don’t want to have to stop again.”

“I get tired of her calling me a girl sometimes,” Gabe said as the team moved toward the rest stop.

“Well, make sure to sit when you pee,” Sloane said.

“And don’t forget to wipe yourself!” Jackie chimed in, grabbing Sloane and giggling.

“Har, har,” Gabe said, frowning.

“She calls everyone girl,” Peter said as they headed toward the rest room. “To her, it’s a sign of respect.”

“To me, it’s a sign I’m invisible. Like she doesn’t even see the real me”.

Peter looked at the slender little boy beside him, with his B cup breasts and long blonde hair, held back with a head wrap. “If the glass slipper fits, princess. I mean, really?”

Gabe just playfully punched Peter, went into the bathroom and headed for a urinal, freezing, staring at the bathroom stall. It was gross the way guys peed, with their -- and the splash ... and yuck. Maybe he should... he headed toward the stall, stopped. *I am not a girl!* He thought. *I’m not!* But for some reason, he felt like he needed to just do it more-- gracefully. *Be a man,* he thought, tugging on his bra strap. Go to the urinal and... but no, instead he reached for the

stall handle, went in and pulled down his pants and then his Victoria's Secret boy shorts, and then he sat down, knees together, and felt right, like he'd been doing it this way his whole life. Like he was supposed. Because he was--- *NO, Bro, NO!*

*I'm so totally a bro*, he told himself as he wadded up a piece of toilet paper and wiped himself. *Once this is all over, I'll go right back to drinking Fosters-- gross—and having stubble—yuck—and, playing hockey.*

Hockey. Yes. That was something to cling to. He remembered skating onto the ice, slapping the puck, the thrill of watching it blast through the legs of the goalie. Crashing into another guy, the taste of blood in his mouth. Yuck. Okay. Not that part. But Hockey. He had to get back to playing hockey.

They got into some traffic, so they had to get ready in the van, all the girls helping each other do their hair, and Jackie pushed next to Gabe at one point and said, "Let me do your make up."

"Thanks." Of course, he would wear make-up. He was performing after all. Besides, he wanted to look cute.

She did his lips and eyes, letting him look at himself now and then to approve of her work. But then, she brought out the glitter and Gabe balked. "Wait. Glitter? I mean, boys don't wear glitter. Right?"

"Pardon me?" Peter said, dusting his own face with glitter.

"Oh. Well, I don't know for me?"

"You need glitter," Sloane said.

"Yeah. Glitter it up, sweetie," Prentice added. "Don't worry. People will still be able to see that perfect skin."

"It's not about my skin," Gabe whined, though he now realized he was worried about covering up his gorgeous, glowing skin. A little. Still, the girls all wanted him to, so he relented.

They got to the complex, and they all climbed out of the van, nervous, excited, obsessed with the ice, grabbing their bags and hurrying into the complex. As they got out of the van, Coach V handed each of the girls a clothing bag with her name taped on the crinkly plastic. Gabe's read, "Cameron."

"Cameron?" He said, getting that invisible feeling

once again.

“Oh. Sorry. I forgot to change it. You’re replacing...”

“Cameron. I know.” He rolled his eyes and stormed into the ice complex, going into the locker room, hanging it on a locker door and unzipping it to see a sparkling, sequined red and gold dress with a fluffy tulle skirt that looked like a tutu. “Whaaaaaa?” He yelled, getting that terrified feeling in his stomach. “No, bro,” he said, backing away, shaking his head side to side. “Soooo no.”

The girls all started giggling, looking at the terror on Gabe’s pretty face at the sight of the cute little outfit. “Omigod, you’re going to look so sexy!” Jackie said. “What’s the problem?”

“I thought I was replacing Cameron? What the ever-loving fiddlesticks?!”

“You **are** replacing Cameron,” Riley said.

“Well, then where is his costume?”

“Cammie was a petite little blonde girl, and she wore that dress. You look just like her.” Coach V



regarded Gabe, a little smile on her face.

“You really do,” Peter said. “Like her twin sister.”

“I, we need to talk,” Gabe said. “I am NOT wearing that-- dress!” He looked at it again, all the sparkles flashing, making him squint. He looked at the little skirt. God! How embarrassing it would be.

And how awesome. But, um, well, he shouldn’t want to wear a dress, especially not a little dress like that with sparkles all over it!

“Young lady, we need to be on the ice in 15 minutes. Get dressed, go skate, and if you want to throw a hissy fit you can do it after.” With that, Coach V walked away.

Gabe stood there, fuming, but Riley put her hand on his hip and said, “Come on. We need you.”

Gabe looked at the dress. “You never tell anyone in South Bend about this!” He said.

“Of course not,” Riley said. “Cross my heart. We won’t tell anyone.”

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Heavy bass. Thumping drums. Katy Perry singing, *I kissed a girl, and I liked it*. Gabe stood in the spotlight, one slender arm raised above his head, the other on his hip, shaking his butt to the beat. He had a big smile plastered on his face, which sparkled with glitter, and to the audience he looked like the happiest girl in the world, just thrilled to be out on the ice. Inside he felt terrified and humiliated, heart racing, a sick feeling in his tummy like he was about to puke, terrified he looked like a fool, that he was pretty, that he wasn't pretty.

*Focus, Gabby. Focus.* He started to skate, gliding into his routine, nailing his first leap, his first spin. His little skirt flipped up, revealing his panties, but he didn't care anymore. His confidence rising, he did his double salchow, wobbling a little on the landing, but he recovered, moving fluidly into his next maneuver, not letting the smile drop from his face. Before he knew it, the routine was over and he was once again at center ice, his arms raised above his head, legs crossed at the ankles, his pretty dress sparkling in the spotlight as the crowd cheered.

"I did it!" He squealed as he came off the ice and

into the arms of his teammates, all hugging him, patting him on the back, congratulating him.

“How do you feel?” Riley said.

“Omigod! I feel like—heaven! Like I am in heaven!!!!” I love skating!” Gabe shouted, hugging Riley tight, giggling and crying. “Why am I crying?” He asked.

“Girls cry when they’re happy,” Sloane said. “It’s okay.”

The scores came back. Gabe crinkled his nose. They were all in the low threes. “What? I nailed every move. I only wobbled the once. What the fairy godmother is going on here?”

“It was your first time,” Riley said. “You did great.”

“And it was enough for the team to win,” Coach V said. “You did your job, Gabrielle. You should feel good.”

“Yeah. Feel good.”

“No,” Gabe said, standing up. “It’s not good enough! Coach me. Tell me how to get better!”

Coach V nodded. “Good. Good. You are ready. To be good skater takes technique. To be great skater, passion. Passion on the ice. The audience must feel, they must be moved by your performance. You skate well, but like a robot. To truly perform, you must leave your heart on the ice.”

“Then that’s what I’ll do,” Gabe said, eyes burning with passion.

The next morning when he woke, he went to the bathroom and realized sitting to pee was no longer an option. He was now a girl. In the place where it counted the most. He knew it was coming, somehow, and yet it seemed impossible to believe. Still. He had a V now. Just like them.

Well, he just had to deal. There was just a few more weeks, and then Coach V had promised him he would get his heart’s desire. He would go back to being a boy. Playing hockey. Broing it up big time.

The season became a blur. Practice. Training. Gabe stayed late, practiced spins in his room, knocking over books and hockey sticks and stuffed animals. He watched Michelle Kwon for hours. He

could see it radiating out of her, the passion Coach V talked about, but even though his performances got technically better every meet, the scores stayed in the low threes. He knew why. He couldn't release his emotions, couldn't let the world see him, and he kept himself hidden on the ice, and he cried himself to sleep at night, frustrated and angry that he couldn't be the figure skater he wanted to be.

He felt like maybe he needed something new. Something special. He found it on You Tube. The Triple Tiara. It was a move so hard, only one girl in the history of the sport had ever successfully performed it in competition. And she had then retired, saying she could never top what had been her most perfect performance. *So romantic*, Gabe had thought. Two other girls had tried the move only to suffer severe injuries.

Gabe had started going back to the rink at night alone, leaping and falling, leaping and falling, tumbling across the ice, his body aching, but getting up time and again, working and working, determined to nail the Triple Tiara, to prove he was not just a figure skater, but one of the best.



## 11

The big hockey face-off with Jacques came. Gabe thought about bailing, but his posse wouldn't let him, and so one early Saturday morning he found himself in tights and a ballet skirt, leg warmers and a white sweater that hugged his breasts, tapping his stick on the ice, glaring at Jacques, who wore baggy sweats, an Irish hockey jersey. His bros were there, sitting in a group next to Gabe's girls.

"Ready to get hammered, princess?" Jacques said.

"Was that a sexual innuendo?" Gabby wondered, but he just slit his eyes and said, "Ready to get beat by a girl?"

The competition began. Jacques scored quickly, just bullying past Gabe, shoving him aside and

slapping him on the ass after scoring, smirking. Gabe shook a little fist at him and squealed, while the bros all cheered and Gabe's friends hissed. Gabe recovered, using a perfect spin move to get around Jacques and score. The next time Jacques had the puck, Gabe used his small size and quickness to steal it, scoring again. The girls cheered. The boys laughed. Gabe skated backwards, sashaying his hips sassily side to side, grinning. "Uh, oh!" He taunted. "The guys are all laughing at you!"

"Yeah, well that won't last." Jacques smirked, took the puck and made a nice little passing maneuver, getting around Gabe and scoring. As he skated back to his side of the ice, he hip chucked Gabe, knocking him onto his butt.

"Jerk!" Gabe squealed, but Jacques just shrugged.

"Sorry, babe! It was totally an accident!" He skated over and offered Gabe his hand. Gabe looked up at him, and he so wanted to grab his hand, let the man help him up, maybe give him a hug? But then he remembered, and he slapped Jacques' hand away, pushing himself up, getting back onto his skates.



The two skated in a circle, glaring at each other. “You are so going down!” Gabe said.

“Anytime you’re ready,” Jacques said, putting his fingers next to his lips and wagging his tongue.

Something inside Gabe clenched with pleasure, sending a sweet warmth through his body, but he rolled his eyes and said, “You are a vulgarian.”

“Well, you are a--- vulvarian!”

“Just skate, you pig!”

The first one to score a third goal would win, and they both attacked the puck with new ferocity, their sticks slamming together, ice shards flying. Jacques almost scored once, but Gabe did a split, stretching out to block the puck, getting up with a smirk, eyebrows raised. “Nice,” Jacques admitted.

“Thanks.”

The next pass, Gabe tried to do his spin pass again, but Jacques was ready. As Gabe leapt and spun, Jacques skated in and caught him around the waist, spinning the two of them and using his own stick to slap the puck toward Gabe’s goal, keeping them

spinning and then dipping Gabe, who was squirming, trying to get free, but found himself being dipped backwards, watching the puck slide through his goal as all the bros stated shouting and yelling. “Get your meat hooks off me!” Gabe squealed, furious.

Jacques lifted Gabe back up and placed him on his skates but held him tight. Gabe tried to push away, making little frustrated whimpering sounds, then gave up. His arms were soooo weak. He stared up at Jacques’ face, feeling all fuzzy and gooey, but also remembering the night at the club. His eyes widened with fear. “I want to change out bet,” Jacques said. “Instead of making the video—“

“You can’t change the bet. It’s not--”

“You have to let me buy you dinner,” Jacques shouted, cutting Gabe off.

“The rules of the - wait. What? A date? With me?” Gabe felt himself melting, blushing, his body tingling from his scalp right down to his toes.

“Yeah.” Jacques put his hand on Gabe’s cheek, and it felt so good. “With you.”

Gabe was so confused, and scared, and yet, he whispered, “I lost the bet. So, I guess I have to do it. Ugh!”

The comment brought a sad look to Jacques’ eyes, and he shrugged. “So, that’s it then. Fine. But just because I don’t want the video. This is just the first thing that occurred to me or whatever.”

“I guess,” Gabe said. “So, whatever and stuff like that.” The moment seemed broken, and as all Jacques’ friends poured out of the stands and swamped him, he let go of Gabe, who skated away, over to his friends, who were all cheering and laughing, supporting him even though he lost. “What was that all about?” Riley asked when they had a minute.

“He changed the bet,” Gabe said. “Now, my punishment is I have to go out with him. Can you believe it? I just don’t understand boys sometimes!”

“Who does?” Riley said, then punched him. “You should totally sleep with him, though.”

“He’s gross,” Gabe said. “Yuck.”

“I think he’s hot.”

“You sleep with him then.”

“Nah. I think you need to do it.”

“Not. Happening.” Gabe said. “So not happening.”

But that night as Gabe sat on his bed painting his nails, he couldn’t stop thinking about Jacques, and those lips, and wondering what it would be like to kiss him.



## 12

Gabe slipped into his best, sheer tights, smiling at the sleek, cool material slid up his freshly shaven legs. Then, he wiggled into the tiniest little black dress, the spaghetti straps setting over his small shoulders, the hem coming down above mid-thigh. He gave himself butterfly lashes, smoky eyes, wet, red lips. He wore a padded lift bra that gave him an extra cup and sooooo much shadowy cleavage. Then, he slipped into his pumps, stood in front of the mirror and smiled like a tigress about to pounce on her prey. In his clutch, he had a small bottle that, when he emptied it into Jacques' drink, was guaranteed to cause him to shit himself uncontrollably. *Call me a pervert and a freak?* Gabe thought. *Now, you're going pay!*

Gabe walked out in front of his dorm, his long

blonde hair tossed by a cool breeze. Outside, Jacques waited in a red corvette, and Gabe bit his lip, feeling that same sweet clutching inside him, that warmth. When Jacques got out and hurried around the car, opening the door for him, putting his hand on the small of Gabe's back and ushering him into the car, Gabe almost died, glancing up at Jacques with feminine admiration.

Jacques put the car in gear and pulled into traffic, zipping in and out of traffic. Gabe was impressed with how well Jacques drove. He was so confident. Gabe gazed at his profile, admiring his strong chin, and then he smelled Jacques cologne again, that same sent, and it sent chills through his body, making him squeeze his knees together.

But then Gabe remembered that night again, the one at the club, of Jacques showing him down, mocking him in front of everyone. He thought about the little vial in his purse.

Jacques free hand dropped to Gabe's knee, and stayed there. He looked over at Gabe, and Gabe smiled prettily, then covered Jacques' hand with his own. "You look so handsome," Gabe cooed.

“I do? I mean, thanks. You look handsome, too. I mean, pretty. I am usually more cool than this, I swear.”

*Is he nervous? How sweet. I don't understand any of this, Gabe thought. But, it has to be some kind of trick. It has to be, because Jacques is a jerk and he hates me. Doesn't he?*

The got to the restaurant. Jacques held out Gabe's chair for him, and they sat down across from each other. Jacques sat there, staring at Gabe, right into his eyes, with this weird smile on his face. Gabe giggled. Smiled back. Jacques just kept staring. He looked like he wanted to say something, but he kept starting and stopping. Rolling his eyes.

“Um, are you okay?” Gabe said, eyebrows raised.

“The thing, well, I've been and whatever, you know?”

Gabe shook his head and shrugged, sending a tremble through his breasts that made Jacques blush and look away. *Omigod, Gabe thought, is he a virgin or something?*



“Okay. You know what? I need to—wash my hands—I’ll be right back.” Jacques got up, hurrying off to the men’s room.

Gabe smiled, opening his clutch, grabbing the little vile and dumping the contents into Jacques’ drink, dropping the empty vial under the table just as Jacques suddenly reappeared.

“That was quick,” Gabe said.

Jacques sat, leaned forward, his eyes burning with intensity. He grabbed Gabe’s soft little hands and squeezed. “I’m just going to jump right in and say this. I love you. You are the most incredible woman I have ever met, and I love you, Gabrielle. I just had to say that.”

Gabe stared back, stunned, shaking his head slightly from side to side. “Um... I... well... uh...” His whole body felt light, like he was made of air.

Jacques’ face fell, and he started to pull away. “Oh no. I knew I shouldn’t have. This is so embarrassing.”

When he started to let go of Gabe’s hands, Gabe tightened his grip, yanking Jacques forward, shaking

the table. “No. I mean, yes. I mean, I can’t believe this, but I-- I love you, too. I don’t know you, but I feel like I’ve always known you. I’m not making sense. I just—”

“I totally understand you. I know exactly what you mean,” Jacques said. He leaned forward, Gabe leaned forward, and their lips met as they kissed across the table, neither one caring if there was another person in the world.

“Let’s get out of here,” Jacques said.

Gabe nodded. “I want to go right to desert.” His mouth had gone dry, and he felt super thirsty, his whole body felt hot, and picked up his drink and took a sip. As he brought the glass to his lips and felt the cool, crisp lemon water filling his mouth, Jacques lifted his mug of beer and brought it to his lips, smiling over the rim, and Gabe smiled back until he remembered the vial, the fluid, and he sputtered the water from his mouth, spitting it all over the table screaming, “don’t” as he slapped the mug of beer from Jacques’ hand.

“What the hell?” Jacques said.

Gabe smiled sheepishly, shrugging. “Um. Well, don’t get mad or anything, but I sorta tried to poison you?” Then he giggled. “I’m such an airhead! Right? Funny?”

“You’re paying for dinner,” Jacques said. “And I’m ordering lobster.”

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Gabe nuzzled into Jacques, fitting his small, soft body into the long, hard angles of Jacques’ athletic frame. Jacques buried his head in Gabe’s hair, inhaling deeply, then turned Gabe’s face so they could look into each other’s eyes. They’d gone up to the roof of Jacques’ building. Above them a big, full yellow moon hovered in the sky. “You’re insufferable,” Jacques said.

“I didn’t know you knew such big words,” Gabe answered.

“Said the blonde.”

“Tch.” Gabe frowned. “That’s just a stereotype.”

“You know what isn’t a stereotype?”

“Tell me.”

“That blondes have more fun.” With that, he covered Gabe’s mouth with his own, and pushed his hot, slick tongue into Gabe’s mouth. Gabe met it with his own, running his fingers through Jacques’ hair, then down to his powerful shoulders. Jacques pawed Gabe’s breast, and then found the inside of his thighs, squeezing, sliding up higher and higher until it rested against the space between his legs.

Feeling the other man’s hand so close to his sex, Gabe forgot all about ever having been a man, a boy. He felt himself getting wet, and so hot, and his nipples stiffened, growing hard, aching to get free of the stiff cups of his bra. As if sensing Gabe’s need, Jacques slipped the straps of his dress off his shoulders, and then the two of them pushed it down, over his breasts, then his hips and to his ankles. They kissed with desperate hunger, Jacques finding the clasp and undoing it with practiced ease, and then the bra came off and Gabe felt a thrill as his breasts popped free, and then a new and terrifying thrill as Gabe began to kiss his breasts, each touch of the man’s lips burning like a brand.

“Omigod! Omigod!” Gabe panted, digging his nails into Jacques’ back, and then lifting his leg, pressing his thigh against Jacques’ ribs. Jacques started sucking on one of Gabe’s nipples, and Gabe cried out in ecstasy, purring, “Yes. Yes! Oh, God yes.” Then, Jacques hand found its way back down to Gabe’s belly, and then between his legs, and Gabe’s pleasure mixed once more with terror as the man’s fingers slipped between Gabe’s nether lips, and then Jacques found Gabe’s magic button, and Gabe’s whole body convulsed, and he screamed in pleasure again, arching his back, every inch of his skin sparking and trembling with pleasure, and he felt something opening in him, and he was consumed with an irresistible urge to be filled, and he heard himself making a mewling, desperate sound and he reached down, finding Jacques’ hardened sex, grabbing it and squeezing.

Jacques grunted, a deep, hungry sound, like an animal, and that sound sent shivers through Gabe, who moaned softly in answer, and then guided Jacques into him, both of them crying out as Jacques penetrated Gabe, and then started to thrust in and out, in and out, and Gabe buried his hands in his hair, closing his eyes, biting his lip, completely overcome

with passion, and Jacques squeezed Gabe's breasts, and thrust faster and harder, and harder until he finally exploded, and Gabe screamed, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

It ended. Jacques pulled out and rolled off. Gabe lay on his back, panting, his smooth, hairless body slick with their combined sweat. He stared up at the moon, the stars, some of his blonde hair in his face, a cool breeze blew across his bare body and once more sent him spasming with pleasure. He bit his lip, stunned, thinking back over what had just happened, reliving touches, the kisses, the curling of his toes.

Jacques rolled onto his side, and Gabe did as well, spooning behind that amazing man, his man, and pressing his soft breasts into Jacques' back, slipping his arms over Jacques' ribs. "I love you so much," Gabe whispered.

"I love you, too," Jacques said in a gruff, manly, post sex voice that thrilled every bit of the girl Gabe had become. He fell asleep like that, holding onto Jacques. When he woke, clouds had covered the moon, and it was dark and cold. Jacques had pulled a blanket over them and switched their spooning positions. Feeling Gabe's arms over him, the man's

body pressed against his, Gabe suddenly felt trapped.

What was I thinking? He wondered.

It was the day of the championship. Once he and his teammates won, he wouldn't be Gabrielle anymore. He'd be a man again. A hockey player. This had all been so unfair to Jacques, Gabe realized. To let him fall in love with me only to vanish. He'd be heartbroken. Gabe slipped form out of Jacques' arms, careful not to wake him, and then slinked away, pulling on his dress, slipping into his heels. Looking down at Jacques, he held back the tears and the sobs building up in him. He would end it. It was the only way. Gabe made his way back to his dorm room, sat on his bed staring at his phone, and then finally tapped out the text he dreaded but knew he had to send.

*I truly love you, but we can never be together. I am leaving South Bend after today. You will never see me again. Please believe me when I tell you that you are the most amazing man I have ever met, and I will never stop loving you.*

Gabe tapped send with a long, crimson fingernail, and then he buried his face in his hands, his body

wracked with sobs.





## 13

“It all comes down to you,” Coach V said. “You need to score at least a 5.8, or else we lose.” A perfect score was a 6. Very rare, and Gabe had never gotten better than a 4.

“And if we lose, I’m stuck as Gabrielle for the rest of my life.”

“You don’t get your heart’s desire,” Coach V said. “Unless we win a championship. That was the deal.”

“Then, I guess I’m going to have to skate like my life depends on it.” He wore the sparkly gold and red dress with the tutu again, and his glittered skin flashed with every movement.

“Good luck, sweetie. I really do hope you win it for

us.”

“I know you do,” Gabby said, because he really did think Coach V wanted to win. The two hugged, Gabe feeling tiny in the older woman’s arms, and then she gave him a pat on the butt as he headed out the door of her office and to the waiting area. His whole team was there, and as he approached, they smiled and cheered and showered him with hugs. Gabe had never felt so loved. Even Landry hugged him, then put her hands on his shoulders and looked him right in the eyes. “Eye of the tiger,” she said. “Go out there and be a champion.”

Gabe nodded. “I will.”

Riley surprised him by kissing him right on the mouth. “For luck,” she said.

Gabe took a deep breath and got ready to head out onto the ice. “Our next and final skater,” the announcer said, her voice echoing throughout the darkened stadium, “Is Gabrielle Kathleen Fawn, University of Notre Dame.”

Gabe started toward the ice, but he felt a powerful, calloused hand grab his arm, then yank him back. He

found himself pulled into a man's strong arms, pressed against a man's hard body, and he looked up into Jacques' eyes, gasping. "Jacques! What are you doing here?"

"I came to show you how much I love you," Jacques. "I want you to know that no matter what you do, no matter what happens, I will always be there for you. Always."

"It can't work between us," Gabe cried. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, but I'm not the girl you think I am."

"I will never stop loving you," Jacques said. "And I don't care if you love me back. I don't care if you run off and marry some other guy. I don't care if you run off and marry some other girl. You are the one I love, and it is without condition, Gabrielle Fawn. Without condition."

"Miss Fawn?" One of the event organizers interrupted. "You're on."

"Goodbye," Gabe said, feeling something break in him, something shatter. "I'm sorry I ever made you love me."

“I’m not,” Jacques said, pulling Gabe in for another hug, and then kissing him on the top of his head. “Now go out there and make the whole world love you. I believe in you, Gabrielle, and I will be waiting for you no matter what happens.” And with that, he put his hands on Gabe’s shoulders and gave him a gentle push out onto the ice.

Gabe skated out, glancing back over his shoulder at Jacques and his teammates. His whole body trembled with emotion. Anger. Love. Regret. Passion. Fear. Everything all at once, and when he raised his slender arms and the spotlight came on, the crowd hushed, seeing the way his wet eyes burned with every feeling.

Idina Menzel began to sing:

*The snow glows white on the mountain tonight  
Not a footprint to be seen  
A kingdom of isolation  
And it looks like I'm the queen*

Gabe began to skate, and his love and pain informed every movement of his body. The crowd leaned forward, mesmerized. He leapt away from his love, slashed at the ice with his anger, spun with the

confusion of a thousand conflicting needs and fears, and eyes in the stands grew wide, and mouths dropped open, and the tension built as the routine got harder and more dramatic because everyone there knew they were witness to something special, to someone approaching perfection, and yet one mistake, one fall, and it would all be so much less.

*The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside  
 Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I've tried  
 Don't let them in, don't let them see  
 Be the good girl you always have to be  
 Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know  
 Well, now they know*

Then, all the skaters and those in the know gasped as Gabe began the initial moves of the Triple Tiara. “Oh no,” Landry said. “She wouldn’t.”

“Don’t,” Sloane whispered. “You don’t need to. Just finish okay and we win.”

*Let it go, let it go  
 Can't hold it back anymore  
 Let it go, let it go*

Riley's hands went to her mouth as Gabe skated faster and faster and at a lower and lower angle to the ice, his fingertips trailing along the ice, making ice shards rise into the air like fog, and then he began to spin, almost parallel to the ground, his skates sparking against the ice, and then with all his strength he kicked and rose into the air, performing a deca- flying sit spin, seeming to spin and spin, all the sparkling sequins on his dress flashing, at first he rose in the air. Spinning and rising, impossibly rising, and then gently descending, the crowd rising, roaring, howling as he seemed to almost float back down to the ice and into a perfect scratch spin, just like Dorothy Hamill made famous in the Olympics.

*Let the storm rage oooonnnnnnnnnn!*

The girls on the team all screamed as he rose out of the scratch spin and finished his routine, his arms raised in the air, tears pouring down his cheeks, but not dimming the megawatt luminescence of his beaming smile.

***The cold never bothered me anyway.***

All around Gabe camera flashed, and the audience

stood, a standing ovation, and the judges, swept up in the moment, laughing and crying, didn't delay, and behind Gabe who stayed there, frozen, waiting for the applause to stop, the scores started to appear on the giant flat screen: first, a 6, then another and another and another. Gabe's teammates skated out onto the rink, drenched in joyful tears, and they knocked him over, smothering him with hugs and kisses, and Gabe was stunned, confused, and he kept asking, "What happened? Did we win?"

"Yes," Riley shouted. "We won! We won! You did it!"

And then everyone froze. The arena grew silent. Gabe found himself standing, though he didn't remember getting up, and looking down he realized he was a boy again, wearing baggy jeans and a sweatshirt, and he *smelled*. He crinkled his nose and thought, *gross*.

"So, it's time, Miss Fawn," Coach V said. "All you need to do is wish it, and your heart's desire will be yours."

"Well," Gabe said, embarrassed at the deep sound



of his voice. “Um, this is it. To be a dude again. Play hockey with ma bros. Yo it up for the, you know, dude stuff and all that.”

“Is it truly your heart’s desire?” Coach V said. “Think carefully. Once you make this wish, you will have to live with it forever.”

Gabe looked beyond Coach V to the holding area where Jacques waited, looking out, his face full of excitement, pride, love and—fear. Yes. Fear, too.

Fear. It was such a silly thing. So foolish to let it keep me—us—from our dreams. That’s what Gabe thought, and he thought about the hockey team, his bros, and he thought about the figure skating team, his girls, and he thought about Jacques. “Why can’t he have a more normal name?” Gabe said.

“Is that your wish?” Coach V said, laughing.

“NO! No.” Gabe closed his eyes. *Okay. I’m ready,* he thought. *I’m terrified, but I am ready. Omigod,* he thought. *I am going to miss him.* He made his wish and felt as if someone had cut out a piece of his heart, and in that moment, Gabe felt so empty, so lonely, so deeply and impossibly sad he didn’t know if he would

ever smile again, and yet he knew what he'd wished was right.

He found himself in a dark, empty space, without a body, just a spirit, and then images and memories began to flow all around him, faster and faster and faster, the sounds blurring together until they came to sound like the howling winds of a maelstrom, and he cried out, Goodbye! Goodbye! I am so sorry, but goodbye forever...



## 14

“... Goodbye, Gabriel.” A heart monitor mainlined. A young man took his last breath, and his world went dark.

And then with a sudden sucking sound and a pop he was back on the ice, being smothered by his teammates, laughing and crying, and he was a young woman, and his name was Gabrielle. His friends helped him up, and as he got to his feet, looking up at the scoreboard that had been behind him, seeing his perfect score flashing, another hush fell on the crowd. Gabe turned to see all the girls from the figure skating team parting and Jacques walking across the ice. Gabe looked over at Coach V, covering his fluttering heart with his hands. She nodded.

Jacques dropped to one knee and held a ring box toward Gabe, opening it to reveal a flashing diamond ring. “Gabrielle Fawn,” Jacques said, staring into Gabe’s eyes, his own voice glowing with love. “Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?”

“Yes,” Gabe said, the tears pouring down his cheeks again. It was his true heart’s desire, and he’d wished for it, and now it had come true. “Oh, god yes!”

Jacques stood and gathered Gabe into his arms, and they held each other and kissed right there on the ice in front of everyone, and yet they felt like they were the only two people in the universe.

The End

