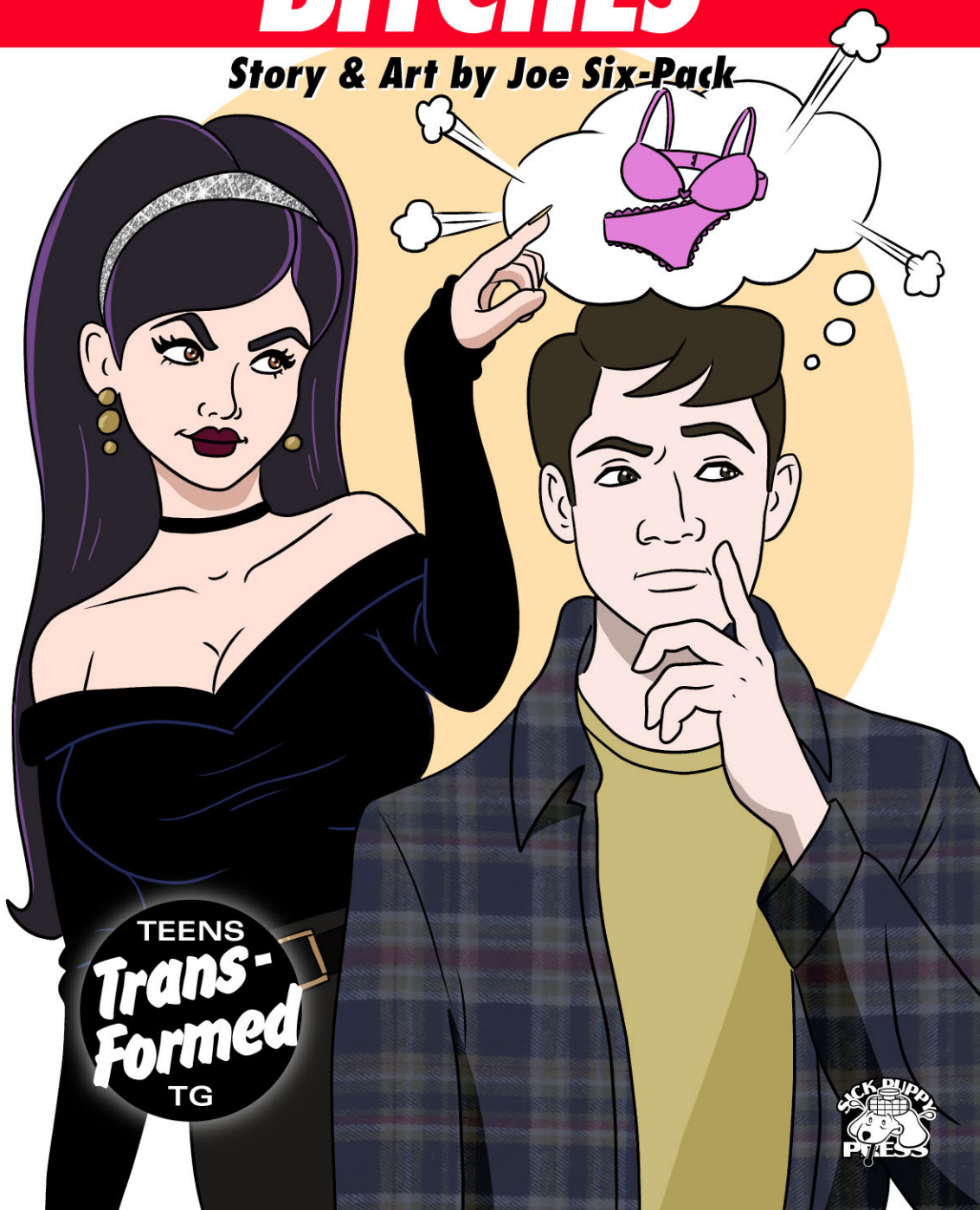


ADULTS ONLY

156 pages 36 illustrations

BETTER OFF BITCHES

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack



J O E S I X P A C K

BETTER OFF BITCHES

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack
A Teens Transformed story



2024 Edition

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BETTER OFF BITCHES

“Give me what you owe me, you dirty little cockroach,” Tanner said, holding out his empty hand. “The money. *Now*. And, maybe I’ll let you live.”

Tanner wanted to rip this idiot’s tongue out by the root, wrap it around his head and shoot him in the face.

This was not a new feeling for Tanner, as dealing with Mason often brought out this emotion in him. It would pass in moments, as it always did, but it would surely return again in the not-too-distant future. After all, they were nearly inseparable, as they were the best of friends.

“I’m not giving you anything,” Mason replied, still chewing on the granola bar he was eating for breakfast. “You should have asked your mom before you got on the school bus this morning.”

“I meant to!” Tanner countered angrily, as if his forgetfulness was Mason’s fault. “You owe me five bucks, just give me two for the machine. I’m starving!”

“Nah,” Mason said, spitting out some crumbs as he spoke. “I don’t think so.”

“Give him the money, Mason,” Alexander said, with an exasperated sigh. “I’m tired of hearing Tanner whine.” He was seated just a foot or two away, hastily finishing his homework.

“I’m not whining!” Tanner asserted with a scowl at Alexander. He said it in a noticeably lower voice, minimizing his whining tone.

Alexander just let his head fall backwards in despair. He knew there was no stopping Tanner when he started in with Mason. They were like mountain goats, clashing with their horns and getting inextricably tangled in the process. Alexander stared up at the ceiling of the school cafeteria, hearing the murmuring of drowsy teenagers in the background. It was the place for everyone to gather before school started, which would be in about fifteen minutes.

“I just want two stupid bucks!” Tanner growled. He dove his hand into one of Mason’s pockets.

“Get your fucking hand out of my pants!” Mason said, having to pause to swallow his food before he spoke. He was swatting at Tanner’s arm. “Rape!” He yelled, taking the nuclear option in trying to fend off his friend.

“Is Tanner raping Mason again?” Saul said as he took a seat at the table where Alexander, Mason and Tanner were seated. “Don’t do that man, it’s not cool.”

Seeing the last member of their little group arrive, the increasingly desperate Tanner turned to him. “Do you have two...”

“No,” Saul said.

Tanner grunted. "I forgot who I was asking."

Saul was nonplussed. "I'm saving up for my car."

"You've been saving since you were nine. You should be able to afford a Mercedes by now."

"I want the sport package." He turned to Mason. "Hey, you have an extra bar?"

"Sure," Mason said, handing over a spare granola bar to him.

"You had a spare?" Tanner said, his shocked voice becoming even whinier.

"Yeah."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Didn't ask."

Mason waited just a moment to see the waves of emotion wash over Tanner's face, going from dumbfounded, shock, anger, fury and then despair. Once he was satisfied, he tossed out two more bars for his remaining friends. Alexander snatched one up as Tanner was too stunned to react. Tanner finally swiped it, ripped open the wrapper with his teeth and gnawed into the bar, all the time keeping an eye fixed on Mason, to let him know he didn't think it was funny.

Well, it was funny, and Mason smirked back. He could swear he heard Tanner grumbling as he ate, which was quite a trick.

With some food in his stomach, Tanner now had to tend to more urgent matters, such as the complete lack of a History essay that was going to be due in around 106 minutes and 27 seconds, by his estimation. He needed to average 4.694 words per minute.

Tanner hadn't slacked off, it was just that his English essay was also due today, and he had spent the whole night working on it, putting way too much time to get it done. Add that to the fifty Calculus problems he had to do, and the History essay had to be pushed off until now.

His teachers always said the same thing, it was just an hour of homework every night. Was that so much to ask? When you took seven classes that asked for homework every night, yes it was. Not like anyone cared, though. It was high school. Indentured servitude. The silent struggle.

Tanner's plan was to get his laptop out and disguise it well enough so Mr. Hadler wouldn't notice him typing out a short essay on the Hittite Empire while being lectured about Biology. He hoped Damon Lynch, the school's biggest football player wasn't absent, as sitting behind his huge hulking body usually provided enough cover.

He'd pulled this trick before and gotten away with it, so he was hopeful he could do it again. The secret was to move just your fingers and keep your hands



still, also, a quick spritz of WD-40 was helpful to quiet the keyboard. He had a few minutes to spare, so he popped open his chromebook and got started.

“The Hittites were an Anatolian people who played an important role in establishing an empire centered on Hattusa in north-central Anatolia around 1600 BC,” read the wikipedia article.

“An Anatolian people,” Tanner typed, “the Hitties played a role that was vitally important to establishing an 15th-century empire in north-central Anatolia, centered around Hattusa.” Re-phrasing internet information was an art, and Tanner was the Da Vinci of his age. Unfortunately, Da Vinci was a sculptor, not a writer.

“Oh my God, seriously?” Said a jarringly arrogant voice from a few feet away. “*Pa-thetic.*”

All four boys looked up, stunned to see the sight of Jordyn Blakely, the queen bee of school, standing in front of them. She had a sneer on her face, her hands on her generous hips and her long, shapely legs spread out and poised dramatically. As usual for Jordyn, she had her thick black hair cascading over her shoulders landing on her oversized breasts. She had immaculate makeup on her clinically perfected face, large gold hoops swinging from her ears and malice in her heart.

Jordyn appeared to be under the assumption that she was some kind of goddess to be worshipped rather than a 17-year old girl with randomly-generated beneficial glandular anomalies. She pointed one of her black four-inch pumps away from the boys as she stood, the other pointed right at them, glinting in the light like a weapon.

“Losers,” she said, adding redundancy to her list of negative personality traits. The boys looked at each other, wondering what they had done to attract Jordyn’s ire. They had no idea.

“Clustered this in the corner like fucking rats,” Jordyn said. “Don’t you four freaks know how miserable you look? I swear to God, you make it so easy.”

She then turned and left, her head tilted in the air, as she sauntered away, her lusciously thick hips swiveling in her tight black miniskirt.

“Any idea what that was all about?” Mason asked.

Tanner spoke first. “No idea.”

“Ever since Kristin was expelled, she’s been acting weird,” Saul observed. Kristin was the last of her clique, which at full strength was three or four girls strong. Kristen had been caught having sex with one of the gym teachers, and both of them had vanished from the school without a trace.

“I think she’s been watching us, too,” Mason said.

“I noticed that,” Tanner agreed. “I’m not crazy, right?”

“No, she was watching me go to my locker the other day,” Mason said. “Walked right up to me and then turned around and left.”

Saul nodded his shaved head in agreement. “Me too! she did the same thing to me.”

“She’s losing whatever speck of grey matter she had,” Alexander said. “Not like brains are her best quality, though.”

“I think she’s gotten meaner, too,” Mason added. “Too bad. If she wasn’t such a bitch, she’d be a great girlfriend.”

“Like you’d even have a chance,” Alexander said.

“Hey, I’d be a great boyfriend for Jordyn,” Mason said, sitting up straighter, which emphasized his strapping chest. Strapping in comparison to his friends, that is. They were all skinny and gawky, and in contrast, he was the muscle of the group. Amongst the regular population of Dearborn High, however, he was simply a normal-sized kid.

“She’d laugh and kick you in the balls even before you could speak the second word to her,” Alexander asserted. “Jordyn’s got a line of jocks waiting for her after she chews up and spits out her latest boyfriend. You’d be at the back of it.”

“Long line,” Tanner quipped. “Bring a book.”

“The basketball team alone is gonna take her an afternoon at least,” Saul said, only half in jest.

“Oh, I need your character sheets by the end of the day,” Tanner said.

“But I’m not done with mine!” Alexander objected.

“End. Of. Day.” Tanner repeated. “Or find another DM.”

“Fine,” Saul said, frustratedly. “I’m still working on my drawing.”

“You’ve been working on it for two weeks.”

“I’m not a very good artist!”



Tanner interrupted. “Anyway, my place at six for Friday D&D.”

“You’re so slow we’ll be there through Saturday,” Alexander snarked.

“And Sunday...” Saul added.

Tanner snorted a laugh. “I’ve got some real shit in store for whiny bitches like you guys.”

They all snickered before returning to what they were doing. Mason went to his phone and continued playing the puzzle game he had been hooked on recently. Alexander picked up his book and got back to the world of Giedi Prime. Saul resumed tapping on his scientific calculator, still tweaking the formula he was using to draw the Boba Fett helmet with the graphing function.

Tanner poised his hands over his keyboard, ready to type up another paragraph for his essay, but his eyes seemed to resist the effort. Instead, he was watching Jordyn walk away, noticing that she was looking almost lonely.



Tanner didn’t have to wait for long so see Jordyn next. In fact, the next day after his third period class, she was standing in front of his locker. It was hard to avoid her.

“About time,” Jordyn said, impatiently. “Loser.”

“Uh, yeah, I sure am,” Tanner replied, cluelessly. “Could you move? You’re blocking my locker.” Usually he would have been too nervous to even talk to her, but since he only had a minute or two before the bell rang, his need to keep his perfect class attendance record caused him to be uncharacteristically bold.

“No,” Jordyn replied.

“Oh, okay,” Tanner said, returning to his normal introverted, submissive self.

“What the fuck is that?” Jordyn said, pointing with her long-nailed finger at the books Tanner was cradling.

He was almost ready to say “a book,” but restrained himself. “A calculus textbook.”

“It’s like a million pages thick! They expect you to read that?”

“I already read it this summer, actually,” Tanner said with a hint of pride. “To be better prepared for this year.”

“Oh God, no wonder you’re such a freak.”

“Did we do something?” Tanner asked. “Why are you picking on us all the sudden?”

“As if I even need a reason. I’m so sure.” She started to examine her fingernails.

Tanner stood where he was, still holding his books.

Jordyn took a breath and looked in the other direction, clearly bored.

Tanner looked in the opposite direction and started to swing his shoulders gently.

Jordyn put her hands on her hips.

“Is there something you wanted to talk to me about?” Tanner finally asked, confused by the awkward silence.

“Hardly!” She replied, indignantly. Then she seemed to quickly reconsider. “Okay, I do have, like, one question.”

“Well, okay?” He said. There was more silence. It occurred to Tanner that this was actually a demonstration of reluctance and anxiety on Jordyn’s part. She was just so bad at demonstrating emotion that he wasn’t able to detect it.

Tanner corrected himself. She was actually very good at showing emotion, just so long as it was anger, pettiness, cattiness, glibness, disgust and apathy. She excelled at those emotions.

“Uh, what’s the question?” Tanner had to say to prompt Jordyn.

“Ugh! Fine! I’ll ask it!” Jordyn said, rolling her eyes. She took a few short steps forward to get up close to Tanner, and spoke in a quiet voice. “How do you get friends?”

“What?” Tanner responded, jolted by what he had just heard.

“What, is that greasy hair of your blocking your ears?” She said, arrogantly. Then she lowered her voice again. “Friends. I asked you how you get friends.”

“Huh? Buh.. Wuh...” Tanner had never in his years of contemplating the possibilities of Einstein’s 16 dimensions did he ever think he’d be in any permutation of reality where Jordyn Blakely was going to ask him about friendship. “Why ask me?”

“Because,” Jordyn said, rolling her eyes once again. “Oh God, I can’t believe I have to say this!” She took a deep breath which cause her attention-grabbing set of double-d breasts to rise and fall in the most distracting way. “You have the tightest set of friends in this school. They’re way better than anyone else’s friends.”

“Alexander? Saul? Mason? *My* friends?”

“Yes!” Jordyn growled. “Tell me what you did. Buy them clothes? Treat them to a tropical vacay? How much should I expect to spend?”

“Is that why you’ve been watching us?”

“I have not been watching you!” Jordyn said. “Get over yourself!”

Jordyn was getting angrier, and Tanner could sense it. "Look, I have no idea how you get friends, it's kind of like the chicken and the egg problem."

"Now we're talking. How many eggs do I need? What type of chickens?"

"No, that's not what I meant."

"Ugh! Just tell me, already! How do you get friends? I ran out and I need more. I don't have all day! Spill!"

"I have no idea!" Tanner had to admit. That was true enough. It was just something that had happened over time.

"What was I thinking? You're such a pathetic loser. You make me puke."

"Hey, Tanner, you're gonna be late for class!" Alexander said, coming up behind him. They both took Computer Science together, which was up next. "Oh," the young man said, halting himself when he saw who else was there.

"Rude!" Jordyn said. "I'm talking!" She stomped her high-heeled pumps in anger. "Now look at me."

"Why?" Tanner asked.

"Stop asking stupid questions!" She commanded. "Look into my eyes, okay?"

"Wait a minute," Alexander said, looking around where he was seated. He was in the Computer Science class.

"Huh?" Tanner said, looking around, just as bewildered. "We're... *Here* now?"

"We were just out in the hallway, right?"

"Yes? I think so? Where's Jordyn?"

"Gentlemen!" Said the teacher, loudly and authoritatively. "Conversations can wait until after we're done here. This is learning time. Not talk time."

The matter was so urgent, Alexander and Tanner just kept on going. "You didn't black out, right?" Alexander asked Tanner.

"No, it was like a jump cut in a movie or something." He felt his pulse on his wrist. "We're still alive, elevated heartbeat." He felt his chest. "Rapid breathing."

"It's just the shock. I don't..."

"Gentlemen!" The teacher said in an even louder voice. "Unless you want to add to your demerits for being late to class with new ones for student insubordination, I suggest you cease talking!"

Which is what they did.

By the time they were able to finally speak freely, neither really had much to add. Alexander proposed the idea that it was a radon gas discharge. Tanner was sure it was some kind of electromagnetic pulse.

“An EMP would have disrupted the lights,” Alexander said as they walked down the hall. “And my phone would have been degaussed. No evidence of either. Your point is moot.”

They both paused as they got close to Tanner’s locker, looking both ways to make sure there was no sign of Jordyn. The coast was clear.

“Radon gas is poison, not damaging to the mind,” Tanner countered. “What you propose is that radon gas suddenly gathered some kind of soporific properties, targeted only the two of us, gave the exact same symptoms and then dispersed immediately. And then it wore off completely.”

“We *think* it wore off.”

“Your theory falls to pieces without proof. Not to mention, the geology of the area...”

“I gotta get to my Spanish class,” Alexander said, cutting off debate. “I got lots of theories. I’ll text them to you.”

“Great.”

As Alexander broke into a brisk walk to get to his locker, he reached for his phone. When he put his hand into his pocket, he felt a piece of paper.

“We should talk,” was what it said. It was signed “J,” with a heart drawn next to it. Jordyn wanted to talk? To *him*?

Scared, he stuffed it back in his pocket and resolved to tell no one.

Sitting in his next class, Alexander didn’t pay attention to a word of it. His mind was racing. What would Jordyn want to talk to him about? Did she want to finish yelling at him from earlier? Or did she have some kind of explanation for the memory lapse he and Tanner had just experienced?

He was jogging his legs like jackhammers, chewing through the end of his pencil and looking like he had just stolen a million dollars in jewels and was trying to smuggle them through security. The stress was going to kill him before he could even figure it out, he figured.

Honestly, Jordyn scared the crap out of him., and he wasn’t alone, either. She pretty much ruled by fear.

She was easily the most beautiful girl in school, by a factor of ten, but it was a menacing kind of beauty. There was a malevolence in her eyes and sinister bent to every word she spoke. Jordyn used her overflowing sexuality to wrap people around her finger, whether that be a teacher, an administrator, a bully or her rivals. She could get whatever she wanted at any time. The best course of action was to avoid crossing her path.

Now, Alexander, for some reason, found himself in her crosshairs.

He was so preoccupied that when the final bell rang for the end of the school day, he barely even remembered the passage of time. He had to check his

digital watch three times before he realized he had to go home because the school was shutting down.

“Is that you?” His father yelled from the living room when Alexander got home. “It’s Wednesday, so you better not have a fuckin’ headache again!”

“No, it’s me Dad,” Alexander said, entering into the room.

His father barely turned his head away from the TV. “Forget what I said. You never heard it.” He was scratching his exposed hairy belly. “Have you seen your mother?”

“I just got here.”

“Don’t talk back.” He gave his only son a quick glance. “Well, go find her!”

“Yeah, okay,” Alexander said, heading for the stairs, ignoring what his father had just said, and eager to leave his old man to his own misery as soon as possible. Locking himself in his room every minute he was home was his usual routine, and one he had long grown used to.

As he tossed his implausibly heavy backpack on his bed and watched it take one mighty bounce, he turned his desktop PC on. The guys would be online soon, and he was eager to try and blast his fears about Jordyn from his mind with some distractions.

It had been a very strange day, and he had no idea how to even describe it, let alone cope. He was only fifteen, after all.

About two hours later, a gentle knock came at his door. “brb” he typed in the chat he was having with Mason, Tanner and Saul. They were debating some Star Wars minutia and getting a bit heated about it, as one would expect.

He opened his door to see his frazzled mother, who had a warm smile for her son, and an even warmer tray of food for him, his dinner for the night. He always ate in his room, as to best avoid an argument with his father.

“Careful, the soup will spill,” she said to Alexander.

“I got it, I got it,” her son replied, eager to devour it.

His mother, in a robe and a pair of well-worn and slightly soiled slippers lingered for a moment before leaving. She looked frazzled and haggard tonight, but then again, she always did. “Oh, before I forget, a girl from your school came by today,” she said trying to push one of her unkempt curls of hair aside.

“A girl?” Alexander asked, before nearly dropping the tray. He had already worked it out. He didn’t know any girls at school. There was only one person who it could possibly be. “Who?” He asked, anyway, just to confirm his fears.

“Lovely girl. Very mature for her age.” She searched her memory. “I don’t recall her name. She wasn’t here for long.”

“What did she want?” Alexander asked, looking for a chair to support himself with.

“Want? I don’t recall...” Alexander’s mother crossed her arms to indicate a second stage of searching her memory. “She said we needed to talk, whatever that meant. Talked to your father and I. She was very direct, I do remember that.” She then gave up and waved it off. “I’m sure I’ll remember. Probably selling cookies for the girl scouts or something.” She then backed away and left the room. “Remember to put the dishes in the dishwasher after you’re done.”

Despite his promise to brb, Alexander never got back online. He ate his dinner, but couldn’t stop thinking about why Jordyn had come around to his house to talk to his parents. Why his *parents*? he didn’t have any idea. What could *she* possibly have to talk about with *his* parents?

Haunted by the question, Alexander put his PC to sleep and went to bed, unable to close his eyes. He couldn’t settle his mind, and even got out of bed to pace around his room. He felt restless for some reason. He did some stretching, some push-ups and even some jumping jacks.

Only when he was totally exhausted could he finally sleep.

Alexander woke the next morning with a start. His eyes popped open suddenly, almost as if his body couldn’t wait to be awake.

The first thing on his mind was choosing an outfit. Usually, he left this up to the last second, and grabbed whatever was on top of the pile. That seemed like a foolish oversight to him this morning, so he picked out a few things he liked and put them on his bed.

He also decided that although no one had said anything, he might as well take a shower — something he usually only did at the request of his mother. Once done, he looked at himself in the mirror, and although everything looked normal, something just didn’t sit right with him when it came to his hair. His tousled sand-colored shaggy hair would look better with a quick brush-through, he decided. It took him three minutes just to find where he’d last put his hairbrush, too.

“Shorts?” His mother asked Alexander when he appeared for breakfast. “It’s cold out there today.”

Alexander looked down at the cargo shorts he’d picked out, but he had no desire to change them. They may not have been practical, but they looked good on him. “I’ll be fine,” he said.

“At least put on a sweater.”

Alexander thought about that request. A big cozy sweater would be nice. Especially that maroon one his aunt had given him for Christmas. They would match his shorts just fine. “You know, I think I will,” he said.

“You win, he’s not dead,” Saul said when Alexander arrived. They were gathered at the same corner of the lunchroom the guys always hung out in before class. “I owe you a soda.”

"I'll add it to your total," Tanner replied, making a note on a piece of paper.

"Hey, where were you last night?" He asked Alexander

"Just got into it with my dad," he replied, not wanting to explain his anxiety.

"Really?" Mason said. "Usually you get along so well."

Alexander assumed he was being sarcastic. His fights with his dad were legendary. He sat down and put his backpack on the table and grabbed his physics textbook. "So, what's the formula you used for calculating the viscosity of a sphere in liquid? I was stuck on that."

"You calculate the density of the object," Tanner said, "then measure the radius of the sphere, and then the density of the liquid. Then you can calculate the viscosity. It's a three-step process."

"Of course, you would have known that if you had stayed online last night," Mason said.

"I said I'm sorry!" Alexander said, tossing his arms in the air, the oversized sleeves of his maroon sweater fluttering around his thin arms. "But what's the formula?"

"That's the next assignment. We're just figuring the variables in this one."

"Oh. Gotcha." Alexander felt stupid. Physics was his best subject, usually. "I should have caught that."

"You've never had a head for science, Alexander," Tanner said. "That's why we help you out."

Alexander was about to challenge that assertion, as he loved science and sciencey-type stuff, but as he was trying to bring up all the times he'd been the one to help his friends, the memories weren't responding. In fact, the more he thought about it, the less appealing science was to him. He closed his book and put it away.

"Don't you want to finish that assignment?" Mason asked him.

"Later," Alexander said, bouncing up to stand on his feet. "Life's too short. I'm gonna go walk around. Get some exercise. I gotta burn some of this energy off."

"Yeah, sure," Tanner said, too involved with his schoolwork to really care. "See you in Computer Science."

Alexander shivered. Computers? He hated the idea of going to computer class – and, come to think about it, physics, calculus and just about everything else he was taking. None of it sounded good to him right now. He sighed as he realized he had a very long day of boring, boring classes ahead of him.

After Alexander had left the cafeteria, Mason looked to his friends. "Okay, was no one going to say anything about Alexander?"

"Dude looked like his mom dressed him," Saul said.

Mason was writing Saul's comment down. "That's a good one. Anyone got any others?"

"Those clothes were such a disaster, when trains wreck they just call it an 'Alexander' now," Saul added.

"Ah, the first one was better. Tanner?" Mason asked.

"I don't see what the problem is. He looked fine."

"I haven't seen him wear a sweater in his life," Saul replied. "And I've known him longer than you have."

"Then I guess you haven't been paying attention. Sweaters? He wears them all the time. Well, when it's cold, that is."

"Since when?"

"Since I don't know... Forever! Let's get off this subject, okay? I don't wanna talk about clothes. That's kinda gay."

Saul and Mason looked at each other with crooked eyebrows. They both had known Alexander as a strictly t-shirt and hoodie kind of guy since at least the fifth grade. "Are you sure you're not thinking about someone else?" Saul asked.

"You're trying to make me think I'm crazy. I'm not crazy." Tanner packed up his book and got up. "I gotta get to class early anyway," he said as he left.

Mason looked at Saul, and Saul looked at Mason. "I'm not sure this is important enough to even care about, but he's lost his mind, right?"

"That was a while ago. But yeah, he's lost it."

Meanwhile, Alexander was briskly walking around the corridors of the school. He had been feeling like he'd had six Red Bulls since he left the house, practically exploding with energy, and could only hope that a few laps around the hallways might help him get rid of it.

He hadn't had any luck so far, however. He decided to break into a run. That wasn't the best move, because as soon as he did, he ran straight into Damon.

Not in the sense that he crossed paths with Damon Lynch, the school's largest student and all-state linebacker, but in the sense that he collided with him.

"Open your fucking eyes, you fucking ass-licker!" Damon said to the heap of on the floor.

The heap, or Alexander as many called him, had bounced harmlessly onto the linoleum floor, leaving Damon unscathed and not needing any emergency medical treatment, although he might have dislodged a fiber of lint from his jacket.

Alexander, however, felt like he'd just gotten a concussion and a kick the groin simultaneously.

"Oh, sorry," Alexander said as he gathered himself up and dust himself off.

Damon used his massive size-15 shoes to push him back down again. “You lookin fer a fight, fuckface? Huh? Is that it? I think you are. You wanna fight!” He was living up to his reputation as a bully you needed to needed to avoid.

On his butt, Alexander tried to scramble backwards away from Damon, a fruitless gesture but one borne out of instinct. Being a life-long nerd, he recognized that particular look in the eyes of a bully which meant they were going to beat the holy hell out of you.

“Wait!” Alexander yelped.

“Nah, brah,” Damon said with a smile. “You can’t just bash into me and think you can get away with it.” He mashed his foot into Alexander’s chest and made a rather unappealing “thud” sound. It was more of a shock than anything.

“Oh my God, Chill!” said a voice. Both boys turned to see none other than Jordyn, with a cross look on her face. “What’s your deal, like, *ugh?*” She said, standing in front of Damon.

Once again using her sexy body as intimidation, Damon quickly backed off. Even with his lack of brainpower and the red mist of a helpless nerd ready for a good punching, the young man could understand that if he ever wanted a shot with Jordyn, he’d better back off — and he did want a shot.

“I’m just scarin’ him, that’s all,” he said to her. “Wasn’t gonna do anything.” He grabbed Alexander by the sweater and hoisted him up with one arm onto his feet. He felt like a child’s toy.

“Like, yah, I totally believe you,” Jordyn said.



“Really. We were just foolin’ around, right?” Damon said, looking at Alexander to back up his lie.

“Just leave us alone, ‘kay?” Jordyn said and turned her back to him dismissively. “That’s a good boy.” She snaked her arm around Alexander’s and escorted him out of the area, through the small crowd that had formed around them. Alexander nearly fainted from being in physical contact with her, and practically floated alongside the living vision of smoldering sexuality escorting him away.

“I’m sorry,” Alexander said. He wasn’t sure what he was specifically apologizing for, but since he was the lowly geek and she was the queen of the school, it felt like he needed to just express regret over needing her help.

“Here,” Jordyn said, as she got to the restrooms. “You better go in and fix yourself up.” She practically swung him into the door for the boys’ restroom, and Alexander barely stopped from colliding with it. “I’ll wait out here and make sure no one comes in to bug you. Hurry up, okay?”

Alexander pushed the door open and did a double-take to see Jordyn playing lookout. Why was she taking any kind of an interest in him? He couldn’t figure it out.

As he entered the bathroom, Alexander’s head seemed to swim. It was just for a moment, but he felt reality dip away before coming back into focus.

He walked to the sink and looked at his disheveled reflection. No blood, though, he observed. That was always his first concern when getting beaten up by a bully. If he had a cut, he’d have to explain it to people.

He gave his face a closer inspection, leaning forward. What he couldn’t see was the impatient Jordyn standing right next to him. “Ugh!” She said. “This is gonna be so hard!”

Alexander was oblivious to her presence. He kept on poking and prodding himself to check for bruises, even as Jordyn walked from one side to the other, looking him over.

“Thank God you haven’t hit puberty, you scrawny freak,” she said. “Okay, let’s get started.” She walked up to Alexander and bent forward to talk into his ear. “You think you’d look better without that shirt,” she said.

Alexander, thinking to himself, came to the conclusion that he’d look better without his t-shirt under his sweater. He pulled both off, and then put the sweater back on. He liked what he saw.

Jordyn was still examining Alexander. “You think you should roll those stupid shorts of yours up. They’re way too long. You should show off your legs, ‘cuz at least they’re thin.”

The boy backed away from the sink counter and looked down at his legs. His shorts had been feeling awfully baggy on him, he thought to himself. He

reasoned that if he rolled up the legs a little bit, maybe they'd feel better. Doing one leg, then the other, Alexander rolled the cargo shorts legs up while Jordyn dropped his old shirt in the trash.

He did feel more comfortable, after rolling up the legs. The boy looked around. "Where did I put that shirt?" He asked himself.

"Who cares," Jordyn said.

"I guess it doesn't matter," Alexander said.

"Now get those ugly socks off, too. Yuk! Do you get all your clothes at, like, Goodwill reject bins?"

"I should take these cheap socks off, too," Alexander spoke aloud. He bent down to untie his sneakers. As he did, Jordyn took a tube of lip gloss from her purse and placed it on the counter.

When Alexander was done, he felt good about the change. Socks were just not a good look for him. Now he could see far more of his thin legs, and for some reason, he liked that.

"You would look better with some color and shine on your lips," Jordyn said.

Alexander's finger tapped his lower lip. "These are so plain," he said to the mirror. He then noticed the tube of lip gloss on the counter. "Where'd that come from?"

"It's yours, stupid," Jordyn said into his ear.

"Oh yeah, it's mine. You're so stupid sometimes, Alexander."

Alexander unscrewed the top and pulled out the wand with glistening pinkish gel on it.

"Hold it," Jordyn said, taking the wand. She bent around so she could face Alexander, and started applying the gloss to his lips. "You're applying your lip gloss just like you always do," she said. "Just like this..." She trailed off as she concentrated. "Pucker."

Alexander stuck his lips out. Jordyn made quick work, smearing his thin lips, and then placed the tube back in Alexander's hand, which was still hanging where it had been.

"You like it!" She said. "You'll make sure it always looks this good."

"That really makes a difference," Alexander said. "I should always look this good."

"You would be even more comfortable if you used a touch of mascara," Jordyn said, as she placed a tube of it on the counter.

Without any hesitation, the boy picked up the tube and undid the top, revealing the inky black cosmetic on the tip of a brush.

"Stay still," Jordyn said, as Alexander paused his movements. Just as before, Jordyn took the brush and expertly applied a thick and distinct coating to the young man's eyelashes. "You love having thick eyelashes," Jordyn said to him. "It's your trademark. You apply mascara like this, with gentle sweeping strokes. You're very good at it."

When she was satisfied, she put the brush and mascara back into Alexander's hand and took a step back.

"You have so much more to learn, if you're going to catch up to me," she said to him.

Alexander put the tube into his pocket. "I have a lot to learn if I'm going to catch up to Jordyn," Alexander said.

Behind him, Jordyn pulled the large v-neck of Alexander's sweater to the side so it exposed his shoulder. "That's sexy, don't you think?"

Alexander then pulled on the sweater neck himself, but left it in place. "That's sexy," he said.

"Time to go," Jordyn said. "Oh, and agree to whatever Damon wants."

"I guess it's time to go," Alexander said. He took a deep breath, and Jordyn stepped aside to let him pass.

When Alexander opened the door, he felt another passing moment of disorientation.

"You okay?" Jordyn asked, as she was standing outside by the door.

"I'll be all right," Alexander said. He then froze stiff. Damon was standing right next to her.

"Damon has something he wants to say to you," Jordyn said.

Alexander almost backed away right into the bathroom again, but Damon was not advancing. In fact, he seemed almost non-threatening, in the way his shoulders were slumped and he was fidgeting with his jacket.

"Go on," Jordyn prompted the huge, hulking student.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I was just... I guess I was trying to be a tough guy."

"...And...?" Jordyn was trying to draw more out of him. "You thought that maybe..."

Alexander allowed himself to relax and tried to look a little more poised. Jordyn wouldn't have set this up if he was really in any danger. He trusted her.

"Oh!" Damon said, getting the hint. "I thought that maybe I should make it up to you. You wanna go see a movie?"

Alexander was inclined to agree to whatever Damon wanted to do, for reasons he didn't quite understand. "Sure, I guess."

"Great!" Damon said. "I'll pick you up at six." He then smiled, awkwardly fussed with his jacket buttons and then smiled again before lumbering away.

"Oh my God!" Jordyn said. "Only you could turn falling on your butt into a date. You are such a slut, bestie."

"A date?" Alexander said. "I have a date?"

Alexander spent the next two periods wondering what he had just done. He had a date with a guy, a date with Damon Lynch of all people, who had been torturing and bullying him since he was seven. He was beside himself with fear.

As the day wore on, though, and he began to consider his options about how he was going to get out of this mess, he also began to picture what a date with Damon would be like.

Would he punch him in the face if he didn't laugh at the same jokes Damon laughed at? Would he get shoved into the seat if he didn't like the movie? Would he have to buy all the snacks and the tickets just to keep him happy?

"Tough day at school?" His mother asked when he got home.

"No," Alexander said, as he always lied in answer to that question. "I have to go and get ready for my date," he explained.

"A date?" his mother replied, as she had never heard that phrase from her son, or, frankly, assumed she ever would hear it. No sooner had she thought these things, then she promptly forgot them. Of course her child was going on a date. Kids go on dates. This was normal, she reminded herself. "Oh. Do you need me to drive you?"

"No, it's a senior. He's picking me up at six."



“A boy?” his mother said with a start. This was normal, too, she had to tell herself. Quite normal. Her boy was dating a boy, which was normal. That girl from Alexander’s school had said something about that, whatever her name was. “Well, you probably should pick out a nice outfit then, sweetie.”

Not only had he seemed to have overlooked the minor detail of him dating a guy, but he hadn’t even begun to think about what he was going to wear. “I only have two hours to get ready!” Alexander said as he ran up the stairs. “My hair is a mess!”

“Let me know if you need anything,” she called back after him. “I hope he’s a nice boy,” she said, thinking about how normal it was for her child to be dating boys. She hummed as she resumed dusting the living room.



The next morning in the school cafeteria, Saul was busy scribbling in his notebook, feverishly trying to sift through his notes from the Mechanical Engineering chapter they had been studying. Like most of his notes, he couldn’t make heads or tails of what he had been writing.

Fortunately, his friends were there to help. “Hey, Mason... The formula for the force of friction... I just have the word ‘fun’ written down.”

Mason sighed. “That’s not a ‘u’ it’s a ‘mu.’” Mason said with a smirk. “ $f = \mu N$ ”

“I feel stupid,” Saul said.

“Listen to your feelings,” Tanner quipped.

Saul ignored him. “But what about static friction?”

Mason shrugged. “I dunno, I didn’t get that part.”

“You should really ask Alexander,” Tanner said, scratching his shaven skull. “This is his thing.”

“Alexander?” Saul replied, incredulously. “He doesn’t even take this class.”

Just like they did yesterday, Mason and Tanner shared a doubtful glance.

“I give up,” Tanner said to Saul. “Are you doing some kinda bit?”

“A bit?” Saul said.

“Or are you just trying to rag on Alexander for some reason?”

“I’m not *doing* anything. He doesn’t care that he’s not the science nerds we are, he never has. I’m knocking him or anything.”

“He’s been the top science student in our grade for the past five years, and you know that.”

"In what world?" A noise went off, and Saul reached in his pocket for his phone. "This is him now," he said, reading the text. "He's running late after his big date last night."

"Date?" Mason and Tanner replied, almost simultaneously.

"Yeah, with Damon Lynch. He told you, didn't he?"

"He's dating a *guy*?" Tanner yelled, standing up from the table. His voice echoed off the plain walls of the large room. "What the fuck!"

On the other side of the room, Jordyn could hear the noise Alexander's friends were making. She could guess why. "Shit," she said to herself as she started to speed over to their spot in the corner.

"This feels like a setup," Tanner said to Mason.

"You know, it does. Alexander must be in on it."

Saul was exasperated. "Are trying to make be think I'm insane by pretending to be insane, so that I think I'm *not* the insane one, but I really am because I *know* you're pretending?"

"I lost track of what you were saying," Tanner said.

Saul rubbed his temples. "You guys are giving me a headache."

If one were to have been carefully listening, they might have picked up the ever-increasing clip-clop of Jordyn's heels as she tried to arrive before something went very wrong.

"It's not a bit!" Mason said, insistently.

Tanner agreed. "I'm not..." Then he was distracted. Alexander had arrived. "What the fucking fuck?" He yelled at the top of his lungs.

Alexander, dressed in a sweater that bared both his shoulders, with a pair of shorts that had been cuffed above mid-thigh sat down at his usual spot. His lips were glistening pink and his eyes were framed by dark, thick lashes, which were currently blinking in confusion. "Did I come in the middle of an argument?" He asked, realizing something odd was going on.

"Why are you *dressed like that*?" Mason yelled.

"Allie's always dressed like that!" Saul countered, getting in Mason's face.

"What the fuck is going on?" Tanner added, gripping his head with both his hands. "Who the fuck is *Allie*?"

"Hey!" Jordyn commanded as soon as she came to a stop in front of the boys. "You're making a scene!"

All four of them stopped what they were doing and realized that Jordyn was standing in front of them, looking quite angry.

Then, she wasn't standing in front of them. In fact, they weren't even together anymore.

Saul was suddenly sitting in his first period class, fifteen minutes into it. Alexander was experiencing the same, looking around, wondering what had just happened.

As for Mason and Tanner, they were unexpectedly outside, now seated on the ground behind the metal shop.

"Huh?" Mason said.

"Waaait a second..." Tanner said. "What's going on?"

"Ugh! You guys take forever to wake up." Jordyn came around the corner, stumbling slightly on the rough ground in her heels. She was holding her phone, talking into it. "Talk later," she said, hanging up. She deposited it in her purse.

Tanner was upset. "You better have some answers..."

"Shut up," she said, with a snap of her fingers. Immediately, the young man went silent. The vexed Jordyn was pacing back and forth in her tight black minidress.

"Gaawd, this is so stressful! I should have taken care of you two so much earlier." She stopped pacing and held out her hands and stretched out her fingers to calm down. "Okay, remember your chakra, Jordyn. Center yourself."

"Where'd she go?" Mason said, realizing he couldn't see Jordyn anymore.

"I'm tripping. I have to be tripping." Tanner wanted to run, but he could feel a hand on his shoulder. One that wasn't there. "Oh, God. What the fuck?"

"Stop being so dramatic!" Jordyn said, as she leaned in to talk in the ears of the two boys. "Now stand up and stay still."

"I'm gonna try standing up," said a very uncertain Mason.

As soon as he saw his friend able to stand, Tanner followed suit. They stayed where they were, though.



“Okay, where do I even start?” Jordyn said to herself. “I don’t have any time, I’ll just do the basic stuff n’ junk, like I did to your friends. That way you won’t screw things up.”

A few minutes later, Mason and Tanner emerged from behind the school building. They were headed to the office to get their late-to-class demerits, and trying to recall exactly why there were late in the first place.

“I... I don’t think I know what just happened.” Tanner said.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Mason said.

“Finding ourselves outside and...”

“Nothing happened. Nothing at all.”

“But you didn’t...”

Mason grabbed his friend by the shirt. “We’re not talking about it again!” He said through gritted teeth. “Got it?”

Tanner knew better than to push his hot-headed pal any further. He had known him too long for that. “Yeah, sure.”

“Can’t believe I gotta take a demerit,” Mason grumbled. “Don’t even know why.”

They still had a few hundred feet to walk before they got to the office, and the silence was profoundly awkward.

Mason was brushing off the dirt he had collected on his cords. “You know, I shouldn’t have worn pants today,” he said.

“Me neither,” Tanner replied.

“Allie had the right idea. Shorts are the way to go.”

“Pants have always bugged me. They’re never comfortable.”

“And they’re really constricting. I’m wearing shorts tomorrow, and you know, I may never wear another pair of pants again.”

“I like the way you think.”

“Wait a sec,” Mason said, putting his arm in front of Tanner to keep them from walking another step. “Allie? When did we start calling Alexander ‘Allie?’”

“Uh... It uh... Weren’t we talking to Jordyn? Do you remember that?”

Neither of the boys remembered anything clear about the instructions they had just been given, about Alexander being called “Allie” or their newfound dislike of long pants. Nor did they remember about the half dozen other commands they had been given.

Still, they both seemed to have some understanding that these thoughts were new to them, that these opinions may not have come from the heart. As they began to compare notes on what they remembered, they got a few more details.

“You remember that weird piercing stare from Jordyn’s eyes?” Tanner asked.

Mason nodded. “Or the way her voice cuts right through to your soul?”

“Or her luscious ass?”

“What?”

“I’m sorry,” Tanner said. “That’s always the first thing I think of when it comes to Jordyn.”

“Same here,” Mason mumbled.

They seemed to have recognized they had been influenced in some way, but unfortunately, neither boy was going to be able to find much clarity in the clutter of their teenage minds.

“Well, I’m not calling Allie... I mean Alexander... I mean Allie...” Mason shook his head, clearing the confusion. “I’m not calling Alexander ‘Allie!’” He clarified.

“Me too.” Tanner was on board. “I’m wearing pants today, tomorrow and forever.”

“What’s she doing to us? Do you think she’s hypnotizing us?”

“Maybe it’s a drug? Maybe she drugged our food?”

“We haven’t eaten today.”

“I don’t know what she’s doing, but she’s not going to manipulate us!”

“We’re on to her.”

“I’m gonna tell her. Get right in her face and show her she isn’t going to win!”

“Fuck yeah!”



“I don’t know how she does it,” Mason said, seated once again at the gang’s little table in the corner of the cafeteria.

“She’s, like, a wizard or something,” Tanner agreed.

“Who?” Alexander asked, as he touched up the mascara on his thick lashes.

“No one,” Mason said, not wanting to reveal their defeat.

“Right,” Alexander said.

“It’s nothing, Allie,” Tanner said, crossing his bare legs at the knee.

Mason looked wistfully down at the shorts he was wearing, now for the fifth day in a row. Not only had the boys’ plans to confront Jordyn not gone well, it appeared that it had boomeranged. They barely even recalled the attempt to fight back. Resistance was futile. “Yeah, what he said, Allie.”

“Why are you guys so mopey lately?” Alexander asked.

“You ever get the feeling you aren’t in control?” Tanner said.

“Is that all?” Alexander said with a smile, putting his mascara into the small purse he’d begun to carry around with him. “That’s just life. I love that shade on you, by the way.”

“Oh. Thanks.” Tanner wanted to reach up and wipe the lipstick off his face, but for some reason, he stopped himself. He didn’t know why he felt naked without lipstick, and why he felt insecure when he didn’t have any on.

The expression on Mason’s face said he was thinking the same thing.

Now he was looking at that tube of mascara going into Alexander’s purse and dearly wishing he could put some of that on, and hating himself for even thinking it.



It was a crisp fall day outside, but Alexander was humming to himself like it was the first day of spring. He felt wonderful this morning, and truthfully, he had felt like this every morning for the last month.

He was doing a light workout in his jammies even before he was thinking about it, stretching his lean body out. Alexander couldn’t dream of starting his day any other way. Some yoga poses and some aerobic dancing was better than a gallon of coffee. He felt awake and alive in just fifteen minutes.

Getting ready for school, he whisked through his closet and picked out a cute top. It wasn’t noted the precise moment when shirts had become tops to him, but the event had passed without fanfare.

He then dove into the bathroom and decided it was time to shave, so he got his lady Gillette and ran it up and down his long, lean legs, leaving them hairless. Just as they were meant to be, he thought to himself. He took care of his pits too, while he was at it, and showered up using a floral bodywash Jordyn had turned him on to.

In the mirror, Alexander tousled his hair in dissatisfaction. Every time he looked in the mirror, he wished he could do more with his hair. He'd been letting it grow out for a while, and it had been two months since his last haircut, but it was still too short. Even dying it blonde as he had, it still felt like an embarrassment. He did his best by fluffing his bangs out and used a hairdryer to give him maximum volume. He added a hair band, but still, he felt restricted by his shortish hair.

He popped his daily pills, the ones Jordyn had gotten him, as she had promised they would help him grow that hair faster and do 'even more' to make him 'super hot' she said.

It was weird, as he had found himself hanging out with the mega-popular Jordyn from time to time. Even weirder, he wasn't bored. In the past, talking about makeup, celebrities and fashion would have felt like some kind of death sentence. Somehow, Jordyn made it fun. He could talk that stuff for hours with her. She was also the one who had pushed him to go blonde, and Alexander had to admit she was right.

His outfit of the day was going to be simple, with white trainers, a spaghetti-strap belly-baring sky blue top, and a pair of rust red micro shorts barely bigger than a bikini bottom. He was also wearing a strappy pair of pink panties he liked, because the straps would slowly rise on his hips over the course of the day making his shorts look even sexier. He also liked them because they kept his little peeny-weeny tucked away tightly. A crotch bulge was ugly and gross, as he and Jordyn both agreed. Well, unless it was on a really hot body... And super huge.

He spent the next hour in front of his makeup mirror. Alexander was now well beyond just lipstick and mascara. Foundation, concealer, powder, eye shadow, eye liner, highlights, blush and even glitter were all a part of his repertoire.

"You're not going anywhere. You look like a tramp," his father said to him when he came downstairs for breakfast.

"Daddy..." Alexander whined. He was tired of having this same argument.

"He looks fine," his mother said, also seated at the breakfast table, sipping some coffee. "He looks like the other students at his school. That's just how kids dress these days."

"I don't like it," said her husband. He, too had been growing tired of the argument, and let the subject go since had better things to do. He was skimming his iPad looking at the morning financials, dressed in a spotless black



business suit with a red tie, his face cleanly shaved and his expensively-maintained hair combed in neatly place.

Things had changed a lot in Alexander's household since his dad had gotten his new job at the bank a month ago. He had been working as a self-employed tax preparer with a dwindling number of clients, but as luck would have it, he was offered a Vice President position at the local branch of Blakely Financial, which paid him just a few dollars short of one million dollars a year. The job was like winning the lottery, but it came with a huge change in their daily lives. It wasn't long before Alexander's father was sober, dressing and acting the part of a high-finance executive, wearing fine Italian suits and driving a luxury sports car.

His mother, too, had quite an adjustment to make. Along with the job came the company membership at the country club, which Alexander's father had encouraged her to make full use of. His new job was all about networking and making alliances, and he made it clear that she was to get on a first-name basis with the other wives in his new company. She protested, saying there was no way she could do this and maintain the household.

"Breakfast?" Ingrid, their new maid and cook asked Alexander as she turned away from the stove. The new domestic had been hired to take the burden off Alexander's mother, so she could become the executive wife that her husband needed her to be.

"As if, Ingrid," Alexander said, curtly. "I never have breakfast, I don't want to become a cow."

"You're going to starve yourself to just skin and bones," Alexander's mother said. She was already dressed for tennis, and her day at the club. Her face was made up almost as heavily as her son's was, and her hair had been straightened into long blonde locks. "Not like I'm going to stop you, though. That's how I got your father, after all, and at least you'll make for a beautiful corpse. I need a drink. Ingrid? Gin and tonic."

"It's eight AM, darling," her husband pointed out.

"And I've been awake for nearly a full hour without a drink," Alexander's mother replied. She held out her hand. "Quickly sweetie."

"Mother!" Alexander objected. "You're turning into a lush."

"And loving every minute," she replied.

"Honestly, darling," her husband said.

"Don't you come off all high and mighty to me! I know what you're doing with that secretary of yours!"

"You're impossible!" Alexander yelled at both his parents before storming out.

A lot of things had indeed changed in Alexander's house since... Well, if he had to place a day on it, since the day that he had first talked to Jordyn. That was quite a coincidence, he thought to himself.

Alexander arrived in the cafeteria walking confidently to the usual table, his long bare legs looking incredible, and his face looking doll-perfect. It wasn't like this every morning. Some people had been giving him trouble for "acting like a fag" or some such nonsense, but that had been weeks ago. Jordyn was always there to stick up for him, and once she chewed them out, Alexander hadn't gotten any more trouble. Even the staff didn't hassle him after Jordyn talked to them, which was nice.

"Hey guys," he said, lowering himself into his usual spot and immediately flipping open a compact to touch up his face.

"Hey Allie," Mason said. Tanner and Saul both nodded and mumbled a welcoming grunt.

"I'm just glad to get out of that house," Alexander said, tossing his blond bangs out of his field of vision. "My parents are total assholes."

"Been there," Tanner said.

"Same," Saul replied.

"Yeah, Saul's right," Mason said. "Your parents *are* assholes, Tanner."

"Hey!" Tanner snapped.

Alexander spoke as he dabbed a makeup sponge on his nose. "Mother is drunk all the time and father is always at work. And the new maid is going through my things, I just know it." He sighed, "God, could my nose be any bigger?"

"Your nose is fine. Didn't you say you were going to get the maid fired?" Saul asked.

"Daddy said no," Alexander said, turning his eyes to the skies. "He said not while he pays the bills. He's probably fucking her."

Tanner snorted in amusement. "Your life sure got dramatic all of the sudden, didn't it, Allie?"

"Oh my God, tell me about it," Alexander replied, with a sigh. "So much drama."

"Here are your math problems," Mason said, sliding a piece of paper across the table. "You'll get an 82 on it."

"Oh! Thank you sooo much!" Alexander said, gushing.

"No sweat. If you get another worksheet today, I can get it done at lunch." He lowered his voice a little. "Is that the new Maybelline Mega Lash?"

"Here," Alexander said, handing it over to Mason.

"For me?" He said, his red lips curling into a smile.

"Not to keep, asshole. Just try it out. It's *so* clean."

"Thanks," Mason said, as he whipped out a small mirror to apply it to his already long lashes.

"Can I try it?" Saul asked.

"Sure. But don't clog the brush! I'll fucking poke your eyes out!" Alexander looked at the paper and then tucked it away in his tiny backpack. "You're a life saver, Mase — Honestly! Maybe I should just transfer out of Algebra. I hate math and I suck at it."

"It's not so bad," Tanner said. "Math doesn't have to be boring."

"Yah, but Mr. Tillis makes it boring. He is so *old*! I wish he would just shrivel up and die. Do us a favor, kill yourself and get out of the way, right?"

"That's mean."

"Yah? Well, I meant it." Alexander tried to look fierce, but broke into a smile. "Kinda."

"Aren't you done yet?" Saul said to Mason as he tried to grab the mascara from him. "Your lashes are going to catch birds and low-flying planes."

"Back off!" Mason said, turning away from his grasp.

Across the room, the unmistakably slim and curvy figure of Jordyn Blakey arrived. "Oh! Gotta go say hi to Jordyn," Alexander said, as he took the mascara from mason.



"I didn't get a turn!" Saul complained.

"Oh my God! Chill! I'll see you at lunch, okay?" He swiped up his things and headed over to Jordyn's spot.

"You look ridiculous," Tanner said to Mason.

"What?" He replied, unaware that one of his eyes had lashes twice as thick as the other.

"Hey, Jo-Jo!"

"Hey, Allie!" Jordyn said, giving Alexander a girl hug to preserve makeup and hair. "Those hotpants are scaaaandalous!"

"I know, right?" Alexander responded. He had an impish smile on his face. "Daddy almost didn't let me leave the house."

"My parents *never* give me any trouble," Jordyn said. "They know it's not worth fighting me, and they'd lose anyway." She looked around for a place to

sit. The nearest table was occupied. “Hey. Fatties. Find another place to hang out. This is my table now.”

The eight teens who looked quite comfortable where they were looked up, thought about it, and then collected their things and left. They knew better than to cross Jordyn Blakely.

“Shoo, shoo!” She said as they weren’t leaving fast enough for her tastes. She sat down and tugged Alexander to follow, as he was watching in disbelief as the students just left without making a fuss. Jordyn always seemed to get her way, and he was hopeful he’d never be the subject of her wrath. “Now sit. We need to talk.”

“About what?” Alexander said as he sat down on the bench next to her.

“You’re still taking those pills I gave you, right?”

“Yeah, of course! I think my hair is growing faster every day,” he said, patting the ends of his volumized short hair.

“What about your chest, does it itch?”

“Oh, my God, Jo-Jo! Don’t remind me. Now I’m going to think about it.” He already looked uncomfortable as he had the urge to scratch the funny little knobs that were growing under his skin. “Wait, how did you know?”

“Friends know these things, sweetie.” Jordyn paused for a moment, almost looking pensive to Alexander, as if she was going to ask some monumental question. He got a little scared for a moment. Finally, she said what was on her mind. “We’re friends, right?”

Alexander was relieved. “Oh *gaaawd*, Jo-Jo! Like, I thought you were going to say something serious! Of course we’re friends!”

A flick of what looked to be a genuine smile passed through Jordyn’s lips. Then she steadied herself and whisked away any stray hairs from both sides of her face. “Of course we are,” she said with satisfaction. “So, I wanted to ask you, like, a really strange question. You don’t have to answer, okay?”

“Uh-huh...”

“So let’s say you’re out at a party, and... Someone called you a girl? You know, mistook you for a girl and treated you like one? Would that bother you?”

“Really?” Alexander replied. “I don’t know why you’d even ask that.”

“Just curious.”

“Are you saying I look like a girl?”

“No! No!” She waved off the question. “No, just, you know, as a ‘what if’ thingy.”

Alexander crossed his arms. “Ugh. Well, I guess not. I’d call them ignorant, but I guess being mistaken for a girl is okay.”

“And say you had to stay that way all night? Pretending to be a girl...? Maybe even had to blow a guy to avoid any misunderstandings...?”

Alexander was helpless but to blush at the question. “Suck off a guy? I mean, is he cute?” He changed the way he was seated, clenching his legs together. He didn’t seem to realize he was scratching his chest.

“Never mind,” Jordyn said, already knowing the answer from Alexander’s body language. “Forget I even asked.”

“Are you teasing me?” Alexander said.

“Never, Allie! Friends don’t do that kind of thing, right?”

“Actually, the guys do it all the time. That’s all we ever do, come to think of it.”

“Really? You must be right. But anyway. I have this *biiiiig* English test that I completely didn’t study for, and I’m going to just skip. Come with?”

“Skip? *School?*”

“Sure! It’ll be fun! I want to show you something.”

“What kind of thing?”

Jordyn stood up and slung her purse around her shoulder. “Something that’ll change your life, Allie!”

“I don’t know. I have a perfect attendance record.”

“That’s not the Allie I know.”

He covered his mouth in shock at what he had just said. “Oh my God! My attendance record? What the fuck is wrong with me?” He giggled a tinkling little giggle. “Fuck that shit, girl! Let’s get out of here.”

“Now *that’s* the Allie I know,” Jordyn said.

It wasn’t very hard to duck out of school. Much to Alexander’s surprise, all Jordyn had to do was tell the security guard at the main gate they were leaving. Alexander knew that if he or his friends would ever try such a thing, they’d chased away and written up. The guard even opened the door for them and doffed his cap like a doorman.

Being a senior, and filthy rich, Jordyn had her own car — and a fancy one at that. A gunmetal grey Mercedes-Benz SL 65 AMG convertible was in her spot, and Alexander was sure it wasn’t the only luxury car he’d seen parked there this year.

When Jordyn pushed the start button, the car came immediately to life with a lit up dashboard and a responsive purring engine sound. The top retracted itself without even being asked to. If Alexander hadn’t known better, he would have thought it was responding to her like a lover would.

“Where are we going?” Alexander asked, trying to get any kind of answer out of Jordyn.

Jordyn just smiled. “Not telling!” She said as she pulled the car out and gunned the motor. “I wish it was later, we’d go get some fucking food.”

“Oh, not me, I’m still on a diet,” Alexander said. “I wanna be down below 110 by Halloween for my costume.”

“What are you going as?”

“Zombie cheerleader,” Alexander said. “I fell in love with the skirt.”

“You are going to love what I have planned for you, Allie. And I think we’re just in time!”

Alexander didn’t understand what she meant at all.

A half-hour later, Jordyn pulled up in the parking lot of a modest complex of buildings. The sign on the front read “Nouvelle Clinic.”

“A clinic?” Alexander asked. “Jo-Jo, what are you planning?”

“Ugh! Allie, shut up and let me surprise you n’ stuff, okay?”

They got out of the car and came through the front door. Alexander had never seen a medical clinic like this one. It looked more like a spa, with white walls, wood furniture and leafy green plants everywhere.

“Jordyn Blakley,” Jordyn announced to the girl seated at the reception desk. “Yes, *the* Jordyn Blakely.”

“Yes, miss,” the pretty receptionist said, with a little bit of stress in her voice. “We have your room ready and the doctor will be with you shortly.”

Jordyn already looked pissed off. “Oh my God, I’m *Jordyn Blakely*! I don’t wait for *shit*! Get the doctor *now*!”

“Yes, miss.” The girl said, rapidly punching buttons.

“Let’s go,” Jordyn said, pulling Alexander along.

“Shouldn’t we wait to be shown...”

“It’s the luxury suite. I know where it is. I always get the luxury suite.”

It was a short walk to a huge suite that could have easily been the penthouse at a luxury hotel. The bed was enormous, a 70-inch TV screen was on the wall, and there was a couch and a concert piano on one side, and a waterfall over on the other.

“This is a hospital room?”

Jordyn flipped a switch on the wall, and the white vertical blinds opened up to a spectacular view of the city. “Ugh. I hate that term. This is a *recovery suite*.”

“Um... I thought we were visiting someone or something?” Alexander said.

“No, this is for you!”

“Me? But I...”

“You’re getting a nose job, homie!” Jordyn said. “I know how much that’s been bothering you.”

“Nose job?” Alexander replied, startled. He was terrified about getting surgery, especially without even being asked. Then again, he did hate his nose. How many days had he spent looking in his mirror and wishing it would be a normal nose? “I... I... I can’t afford it.”

“It’s a gift! From me to you!”

“A gift?” Alexander was almost shaking. “I can’t accept this!”

“I already spent the money.”

“No, I can’t!”

“Yes you can! You want to be a big-nosed freak for the rest of your life?”

Tearing up, Alexander shook his head. “No,” he said quietly.

“Then get the surgery!”

Alexander cupped his face with his hands, worried that his makeup would start to run. Then he opened up his arms and embraced Jordyn. “Thank you! This is the nicest thing anyone’s ever done for me!”

“God, get it together!” Jordyn replied.



“How did it go?” Jordyn said as she wheeled the slumbering figure of Alexander out of surgery and back into the recovery suite.

“Just perfect,” the doctor said. He looked just like a plastic surgeon would, a sixty year old man with blonde hair and a v-neck scrub that showed off his hairy chest and a gold necklace. He smiled with radioactively white teeth. “The nose was quick and simple.”

Two large orderlies wheeled Alexander all the way to the bed and carefully lifted him out into the huge soft double bed.

“Good. And the other stuff?”

“Even easier. No complications. He’ll be fully recovered in five days.”

“Great. Now get out.”

The doctor raised an eyebrow, but turned and left. He knew who was paying his extravagant bills. He was quickly followed by the orderlies.

“And leave us the fuck alone!” Jordyn yelled as the door closed.

She walked over to the side of the bed where an upholstered chair was positioned, ready for her to sit down in luxurious comfort.

An hour later, Alexander was waking up. “Whu... Where am I...? Mom? Guys?”

“Shh...” Jordyn said. “You’re with me. Your best friend.”

“Tanner? Mason? Saul? Is that you? Everything is so blurry...”

“No! Jordyn!” The girl snapped. Then she went back to her soothing voice.

“You know, your bestie, Jordyn.”

“What... Where...”

“You just had surgery, remember?”

“I did?”

“Yes... Now, you’re back in the recovery suite. In a nice, soft bed.”

“Oh...” The worry on Alexander’s face slowly dissipated. His shoulders relaxed and he sank into his plush pillow. “Hi Jordyn...”

His vision began to clear up, and the world was coming back into focus, and he looked into Jordyn’s piercing eyes. Then, suddenly, he was alarmed again. Jordyn had disappeared.

“Jordyn!” He called out. “Where...”

“You know everything’s okay,” Jordyn said into his ear. “No need to worry.”

For some reason, despite the sudden disappearance of Jordyn, Alexander thought that everything was okay. There was no need to worry.

He had no idea where she could have gone, but maybe it was the anesthesia wearing off or something, he figured.

“You are feeling great after surgery,” Jordyn said. “You feel that you’ve finally been released from your prison. You are becoming the person you always knew was inside.”

Alexander felt better, more at peace. He hadn’t seen himself yet, but he knew anything would be an improvement. He was becoming the person he always knew he was inside. It was like being released from prison.

He looked around, only now recalling the details of where he was. The room was so large and so luxurious. He couldn’t believe he was really allowed in such a nice place.

“You know that you deserve the best. You’re worth it, Allie. You’re better than everyone else. You know you are.”

Of course, as Alexander continued to think to himself, he had to consider that maybe he was putting himself down. He deserved a bit of luxury. He deserved to be in a place like this. He deserved the best.

Jordyn leaned in very closely. “You are delighted with the changes the doctor has made. They’ve turned you into one of the beautiful people. The privileged people. Someone worth being called Jordyn’s friend.”

Alexander couldn’t really describe the feelings running through him. All his life, he’d been the geek, the nerd and the lowly scrawny kid everyone made fun

of. Now, he was going to look so much better after this surgery. He might even be called beautiful. It was bound to intimidate people, looking beautiful. Only someone like Jordyn would really understand.

“You know in your heart what this means, Allie,” Jordyn continued, hovering around Alexander. “You want to be beautiful. You want to be special. If only you could be more like Jordyn. If only you could be a girl.”

Alexander had to admit to himself that he wanted things to change. He wanted to be beautiful. Being around Jordyn just made him realize how much he envied her, and how much he wanted to live like her. If only he could be more like her... If only he could be a beautiful girl like Jordyn.

“You feel like it’s time to look at your body, now,” Jordyn said. “What do you see?”

Alexander had been reluctant to see what had been done to him. There was some faint thought that he was just having a nose job, but there were more changes he could feel under the covers. He was changing all over.

“Huhhh!” Alexander made a sharp noise of inhaling his breath as he looked down at his body. He could see the bandages strapped across his chest, ballooning out, blocking so much from his view. What had happened to his chest? He had no idea.

“You know what’s necessary to be like Jordyn,” Jordyn whispered. “You have to have a gorgeous, perfect, desirable, super hawt bod just like hers. That means big, soft breasts, Allie. Your breasts are going to make you beautiful.”

