Caitlyn

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The Costume Box
2022

Chapter 1

Caitlyn - Chapter 1

"Give it to me!" Lisa sighed as she set her lemonade down on the counter. Why did it always seem like she could only get a minute's peace and quiet before the kids started yelling again? "Give it, James!" Yep, it sounded like Caitlyn was being bossy again.

The screen door closing behind her was normally enough of a warning for her kids that mom was coming. Today, however, Caitlyn kept trying to tug a stick -- a stick of all things! -- out of her brother's hand. She surveyed the scene as she drew closer. Bryan and James in their matching outfits -- sure, they were eleven months apart, but that was practically twins -- plaid shirts and stylishly torn jeans. And then there was Caitlyn in her pink dress and a big bow in her hair. Lisa almost stumbled. That darn lump! She tripped over it every day! She looked back at her kids and, for the briefest moment, something felt amiss

"James!" Caitlyn yelled. The way she was trying with all her might to get that stick from her brother, she was bound to send at least one of them tumbling into the water they stood on the bank of. Pushing the confusion from her mind, Lisa intervened.

"Caitlyn, James. Both of you into the house. James, you can play in your room, Caitlyn, you can read a book on the couch in the living room."

"But mom!" They said in unison.

"But nothing. You can't play nice, you don't get to be outside."
"But mom!" Caitlyn said. "You need to listen."
"You need to listen to me, young lady." Caitlyn's eyes seemed to fill with tears and her fists clenched. What a drama queen. She was not even a teenager yet, but she had attitude enough for one. "March inside, Caitlyn." A sudden splash startled the girl and she turned toward her brother. James grinned, the stick gone from his hands. He had thrown it into the water.
"James!" Caitlyn yelled.
"Inside, now. And if you speak to your brother again before we leave for grandma's, it'll be a week's grounding." She grabbed her daughter's shoulder and pointed her toward the house. Caitlyn growled and marched toward the house. With her mom's focus on the boys, she did not notice Caitlyn struggling with her dress as if it was the first time she had worn one. In fact, it was. Caitlyn had been Michael up until about ten minutes ago and now that James had thrown the magic wand into the water, how was Michael going to change himself back?

Chapter 2

Caitlyn 2: Grandma's Gift - Chapter 2

"James," Caitlyn whispered. "This isn't funny. You have to figure out a way to change me back."

"Can't." James replied. "Threw the magic wand in the lake."

"I can't stay..." The former boy couldn't bring herself to say the g word. Not yet. "Like this."

"You gonna have to." James said with a grin.

"You'll get used to it, I bet." Bryan whispered. Caitlyn sighed. Why had she sat between the two of them? "Being a girl, I mean."

"Duh." Caitlyn muttered. Get used to it? Bryan wasn't the one stuck there in a pink dress, long hair getting everywhere.

"I bet the spell will make it so even we don't remember you being Michael." Bryan shrugged.

"What are you three whispering about back there?" Their dad asked.

"Oh, leave them be, Mike." Lisa said. "They were fighting all morning. I'm glad they'll at least behave for grandma."

"Course, you never should've thrown the wand away." Bryan continued. "We could've had a lot more fun."

"And changed me back."

"That too." Caitlyn glared at Bryan until he added. “Maybe it’s not even permanent.”

“Yeah, that bird only talked to us for like thirty seconds before it went back to chirping.” James said.

“You know what would really help?” Caitlyn asked, her voice testy. “If you two could tell mom and dad I’m a boy.”

“Why?” James asked with a smirk at the same moment that Bryan said “Would they really believe us?” Maybe grandma will remember the real me, Caitlyn thought, staring morosely down at her pink lap.

Grandma did not even bat an eye as Caitlyn walked up to her, fingers anxiously brushing the sides of her dress.

“Your mom must have picked this one out.” She said as she hugged her granddaughter. “You get prettier every day.” Thanks, grandma, Caitlyn thought, feeling her hope evaporate. “Fresh baked cookies inside, kiddos.” That at least sounded like the grandma she knew.

That was hardly the only thing that sounded like the grandma she knew. Once her grandchildren were suitably placated with cookies, her ulterior motive was revealed.

“I found the most darling outfits for the kids.” She saw their objections sprout on their faces. “I want five photos, that’s all.” Caitlyn sighed. An afternoon of looking like dorky triplets. Hopefully there weren’t sweaters this time.

“Kids.” Dad said. “Are you listening?”

“Yes, dad.” The three of them said in unison.

“James, Bryan, you two have outfits in the green room. Caitlyn, your dress is waiting for you in the blue room.” James snorted. Caitlyn knew her face showed her surprise. A dress? But she always… you were a boy before this morning, moron. She told herself.

“What do you say, kids?”

“Thank you, grandma.” They recited in unison as they headed toward the bedrooms and the latest outfits. Grandma did this every time they came to visit.

“Enjoy your dress, Caitlyn.” James teased as he disappeared into the green bedroom. Caitlyn made a fist, almost looking like her old self. James yelped and disappeared into the room. Caitlyn took a deep breath and stepped into the blue room. There it sat, waiting for her.

Compared to the dress on the bed, the one Caitlyn wore was really a long pink shirt. The dress draped on the bed was a dress with a capital D. The top was sleeveless, but the bottom made up for the relative lack of fabric by being… foamy? Caitlyn almost did not have words to describe it. She just knew she would not be wearing it.

“I am not.” She told her reflection, frowning at the girl in her pink dress, the pink bow steadfastly clinging to her hair. She pictured the boy she was, the boy she had been. She had to go back to being him! She scrunched her face up and tried to make it happen. All that did was make it look like she was

pooping. “I can’t be a girl.” She flopped down on the bed, pushing the dress aside. She pinched her arm, and then her thigh. Definitely not a dream. She knew it wasn’t. Why would she dream about being a girl? She sighed and groaned. Stupid James! They find an actual real life magic wand and what does he do? Turn me into a girl! “I’m not a girl.” Caitlyn mumbled, hoping that that would put things to rights. She even pointed a finger at herself and pronounced it again. “‘I’m not a girl.” She stood up, snarling in frustration at her reflection. “I… I… I’m gonna grow boobs!” She moaned. She felt her chest and then yanked her hands away.

“Caitlyn? Are you ready?”

“No, mom” She said. “Mom!”

“That sounds like a cry for help.” She opened the door and slipped in before noticing Caitlyn was still fully dressed. “Dress off. I can hear your brothers roughhousing in there, but they’re probably still further along than you.”

“Mom, who am I?”

“Caitlyn.”

“No, am I a girl or a boy?”

“Very funny.”

“I’m not joking, mom. I… was a boy. Up until earlier today, when me and James”

“James and I”

“Were fighting.”

“Caitlyn, grandma’s waiting.”

"I swear, mom! I'm a boy! My name was, is, was Michael.’

"Nice touch choosing your dad's name, but all this just to get out of a dress?"

"Mom! I promise you! James turned me into a girl."

"Two boys is enough for me. Three of them and I'd go gray." Mom murmured to herself. "I didn't know James could do that." She said, her smile making it clear she did not believe a word her daughter had said. "And to think I have to fight with him to clean his room even with Bryce's help."

"Mom!"

"Caitlyn Elizabeth." Even though that was not her name, she still froze. The mom tone meant business. "That's enough. You're wearing the dress. Once grandma's got her photos, you can take it off, but you will be taking it home."

“But mom.”

“Dress off, young lady. At least this one didn’t come with matching panties.” Mom looked over the dress as Caitlyn roughly wiggled her way out of the pink dress, her nose wrinkling as she saw what had taken the place of her favorite pair of blue camo boxers. God, girl underwear? “Arms up, Caitlyn.” She said, gathering the dress in her hands. Caitlyn turned her back to the mirror and, once the dress was coming over her head, closed her eyes so she did not have to see the

garment descending down over her body.

"Holy moley, Mi- Caitlyn." James said in disbelief. She had remained hidden in the room for as long as possible, but eventually, she had to leave or Mom would kill her.

"Shut. Up." Caitlyn said in a voice almost like her old one. “I’m going to get revenge, you know.”

"Revenge? For what?"

"For making me a girl!?"

"You're older than me."

"What?"

"So you were a girl before we were born." Bryan interjected. Just my luck, Caitlyn thought. Now it's boys against girl. Boys against other boy. I’m not a girl, Caitlyn corrected, staring down at her dress. Couldn’t she fake a stomachache and hide?

Any other day, she probably would have hated being in the outfit her brothers wore, but compared to her frothy petticoated dress? At least James and Bryan looked human, not like some kid-sized doll. At least the bow was gone, she thought as she shuffled after her brothers, the dress’s soft rustle audible to her even over her brothers’ snickers at her misfortune.

Surprisingly, they all wore the same shoes, though Caitlyn was annoyed to learn her socks had enormous lace frill around the ankles. We get it, I'm a girl, she thought. It’s only

for today, maybe? Like, I'll wake up tomorrow and the spell will be broken? She was in her second dress of the day. It had to be temporary. It had to be.

"And we're not done yet." Grandma said, admiring her three grandchildren. "I have these for the gentlemen." She grandly revealed a pair of fedoras. "The hats'll go perfectly with the flower in the backyard." Grandma said. "And as for Caitlyn…" James could not have grinned wider as his former brother had to stand still as grandma tied a matching ribbon in a bow in her hair. The dress was amazing, but the bow really cemented somehow that Caitlyn was entirely a girl.

As grandma and their parents herded the trio outside, Caitlyn would have given anything to have pants like her brothers. She felt as if the dress was horribly conspicuous, bouncing and moving with even the slightest movement.

"So, what?" James said, taking the lead. "We just stand by these trees or what?"

"Oh, that's no fun." Grandma said. "What's a fun pose for the kidlings?"

"Maybe we could have Caitlyn kneel and the boys put their hands on her shoulders?"

"No, her dress is really the focal point." James snorted.

"You're the focal point, Caitlyn." He teased.

"You are the one in a dress." Bryan said after Caitlyn punched James's arm. She turned and did the same to him.

"Kids." Mom said as the adults kept discussing options.

"You hit like a girl." James whispered.

"Well, you are one." Bryan observed.

"Not for long. It's temporary."

"Even if it is, we're calling you Caitlyn for forever." Caitlyn glared at both of her brothers.

"We've got it!" Dad announced. "On the count of three, you're all going to jump up, kay?" They nodded. "We'll do Bryan here, James over there, and princess, you're in the middle." Caitlyn blushed. She had been champ, but now she was princess? That was going to stop.

"Let's do a trial run, Mike."

"Sounds good. Ready? One! Two!" As soon as Caitlyn jumped, she knew it was wrong. Her dress flew up, her hair went in every direction, and she sincerely hoped that there weren't any photos taken.

"Ok, Caitlyn, sweetie." Mom said, coming over. "You just showed me and grandma your panties." James and Bryan's faces turned red as they tried to hold in their laughter. It only got worse as they got to wander around as their former brother got a thorough education in jumping while remaining ladylike. They knew that even if the spell wore off, Michael would never live this down.

"Don't show your panties." James whispered as they took their places again. Caitlyn just ignored him, focused as she

was on doing it right. When Mom said she only had to wear the dress for photos, she should have known it would have still been an eternity.

Even with her now a pro on keeping her skirt under control, the adults still made the trio jump again and again before finally, they were allowed to see the results.

"I look like such a girl!" Caitlyn murmured.

"Yes, you do look pretty." Grandma said proudly. "I really think this one captures you three's personalities perfectly." She smiled and tucked her phone away as Caitlyn yearned to delete every single one of the photos.

“Great photo!” Grandma said with a smile, watching as James and Bryan had their fedoras confiscated before they turned them into frisbees. “Now, how about I take us all out to dinner?” Caitlyn headed back to the house as her brothers cheered. “Where are you going, angel?”

“To change?”

“Nonsense. That dress is more than pretty enough for a night on the town.”

Chapter 3

Caitlyn 3: The Search - Chapter 3

Caitlyn told herself she went out into the woods to try to find a new wand, but she knew a part of her just liked to spite Mom. Mom wanted her to wear dresses all the time and she, being a former boy (the former still stung to admit), refused. At least it would all be fixed soon.

Much as Caitlyn hated to admit it, there were some nice things about being the only girl. She no longer had to worry about a brother stealing her favorite shirt, they were forbidden from barging into her room, and she could not deny that it was kind of nice being mom's obvious favorite. All the same, she still refused to believe she was getting used to being a girl, Bryan's words from that car ride to grandma's echoing in her head. There was still plenty she would never get used to, like mom insisting on picking out the absolute worst outfits for her.

"You're still young enough that I can choose some of your clothes." Mom would say, showing her yet another hideous dress. Caitlyn sighed. As far as mom was concerned, it was not enough that she was a girl. It had to be shoved in everyone's faces with dress after dress and, more often than not, a bow or something in her hair.

More than anything, Caitlyn wanted to become Michael again. Day after day, she marched through the woods, hunting for another wand, undeterred by mom forcing her

into the tub every time she came back with even a slightly muddy dress. Her brothers could be muddy all day long; she was kept squeaky clean.

"Honestly, you're as bad as the boys." Mom said every time she ran a bath, oblivious to the fact that Caitlyn had been a boy for most of her life.

"How can you even tell if it's a magic wand?" She muttered, tossing another stick away. At least that was satisfying, even if she was annoyed James refused to help. The way he saw it, she was perfect the way she was. Why had he thrown away... "Wait... Why don't I try to find the wand James threw in the lake?" She dashed back home excitedly, convinced this was the best idea.

Her enthusiasm only increased when she managed to evade mom all the way back to her room. Even the still fresh shock of seeing her room with its purple bedspread and closet full of dresses did little to dampen her excitement. It would all be back to normal soon. She would find the wand and turn herself back into Michael.

“No more dresses, no more pink, no more being a girl!” She said to herself. She tugged open the drawer that had held her swim trunks last time she had checked and her face fell. No. There was no way she was wearing that. “Do I skinny dip?” She muttered, but immediately dismissed the thought. If either mom or dad caught her swimming naked, they would ground her for a year! Good luck finding a magic wand when you can’t leave the house! There was only one thing to do.

She had teased James and Bryce about their pink luau print trunks just a few weeks ago, but now, she knew there were far worse pink things someone could wear. Plus, much as she hated to admit it, the fact that they were pink would help her avoid suspicion from mom. She swapped out her white shorts for the pink trunks, figuring her flamingo t-shirt went well enough with it. Was that a girl thought, she wondered in alarm. No, it was just practical. She was avoiding mom, after all. She did not see anything wrong with borrowing Bryce's swimsuit. Mom would probably make her wear a dress though as penance or whatever. She sighed and flipped her hair over her shoulder. That wasn't a girly move, was it? She left her reflection behind rather than think too much about it.

Mom was still nowhere to be found as Caitlyn snuck out toward the back. She could hear her brothers half arguing, half playing a game in the living room. Hopefully they would not see her wearing, she was pretty sure they were Bryce's, trunks. They'd probably tattle. Little brothers, she thought, rolling her eyes.

Suddenly nervous, she rushed outside and toward the lake, shedding her shirt at the shore. She took a deep breath. Was she hesitating just because the lake was always cold when you first jumped in or was it because she knew Mom would probably throw a fit about her being topless outside?

"I'll be a boy again as soon as I find that wand." She muttered through teeth gritted in determination. Mom could not punish someone who did not exist, could she? She jumped into the lake.

Caitlyn had always been a strong swimmer and that seemed to hold true in her new life. Sure, the photo of her epic cannonball now featured her in a white and yellow floral swimsuit, but the sentiment remained the same. It gave her some small comfort that she was still the same person, just a girl now. She had still played peewee soccer, even though the photos all showed a smiling little girl with a missing tooth and pigtails.

Caitlyn searched the bottom of the lake, finding countless sticks that sent her heart racing, but none of them were like the wand James had tossed in. She sighed. If James and Bryce would just help! Maybe she could make it a game.

She emerged from the water, tossing her shirt over her shoulder and marching inside. She took care to at least half dry her feet on the welcome mat before going into the living room.

“Hey, let’s see who can” her brothers’ faces made her pause. “What?”

“You’re not wearing a shirt.”

“So?”

“So, you’re a girl.” Bryce said. Caitlyn rolled her eyes.

“Shuddup.”

“Girls are supposed to wear shirts.”

“Says who?”

“Everyone.” Caitlyn growled.

“You two are useless.” She turned around and saw Dad standing there.

“Caitlyn.” She was in no mood to get a lecture from her former namesake. She stormed up to her room and tried to think of a new plan. Once Mom heard about her swimming misadventure, Caitlyn found herself confined to her room for the apparent crime of having an attitude with Dad. She knew the truth; Mom was upset she had dressed like a boy and not worn one of her frou-frou swimsuits.

The next morning, Caitlyn came downstairs for breakfast. She still did not like her brothers seeing her in mermaid pajamas, but she was too hungry to care today.

"What's so funny?" She asked as she saw them giggling and whispering.

"Don't tell her. it'll be a surprise."

"What?"

"C'mon, Bryce. Let me tell her." Bryce sighed.

"Fine."

"Bryce overheard mom tell dad" James giggled. "That she's gonna buy you" Another fit of giggles long enough that Caitlyn rolled her eyes.

"What?" Bryce leaned forward and whispered something, but James was giggling too much for Caitlyn to catch it. "What?"

"Shuddup, James." Bryce punched his brother in the arm. "Mom's gonna take you to be a" he dropped to a whisper again. "A bra." Caitlyn felt her face pale.

"She is not. No way. I don't even have" her hands moved up to her chest, but she quickly pulled them away before she could feel. No. There was no way. When did girls get boobs? She realized she did not really know, but none of the girls in her class had... wore... did they? How would she know? She did her best to hide her annoyance at this latest obstacle until after James and Bryce left to go over to a friend's. Caitlyn had been avoiding her friends, so she declined to go with. Besides, she needed to talk to Mom.

"Mom! You can't!"

"It's a part of growing up. You're becoming a young woman."

"But… I'm still a kid."

"Yes, but" she paused. She had gone over this conversation again and again ever since Michael had told her what he had seen, but it was tough to actually bring it up. "You're starting to blossom. There." She nodded to her daughter's chest. "Your brother might not notice, but your father and I do, so it's"

"But mom!"

"Let me finish. You're going to start noticing your shirt rubbing your chest more and more as they become sensitive." She almost laughed at Caitlyn's face. "This is uncomfortable for both of us." Yeah, Caitlyn thought. I'm a former boy

growing boobs and you're just my mom. "But you're going to want a bit more cover there, especially if you're going out for soccer this fall." Caitlyn nodded. Mom had brought up extracurriculars for school and as soon as she floated dance and gymnastics, Caitlyn had put her foot down and said soccer. Dresses were bad enough. There was no way on earth she was letting her brothers see her in a leotard or even a frigging tutu!

"But I don't need a" she forced the word out. "Bra."

"You will soon. Lots of girls your age" Caitlyn felt tears welling up.

"This... This is a punishment, isn't it?" Mom rarely ever was surprised by what her kids said, but this? This was a definite surprise.

"No! What? Of course not. This is a wonderful thing. You're growing up into a young lady!" Caitlyn still seemed horribly distressed, so she hugged her. "Listen, maybe we could" What was she saying? No, this was her chance to lose a battle, but get a step closer to winning the war. And it was really just kicking the can down the road. Caitlyn, like it or not, would be wearing her training bra on the first day of school.

At first, James and Bryce snickered about their new sister wearing dresses and skirts for a full seven days, but once she proved she could still beat them at soccer in a dress – not even a sundress, but a full-blown frilly one – they stopped laughing. At least, about that. She refused to admit it to

anyone but herself, but dresses weren't the worst thing in the world. Sure, her pajamas were off-limits since they all had pants, but she simply slept in her underwear, although she always took care to wear a nightgown until mom said good night after mom yelled at her about that. She threw on a dress before breakfast and counted down the days until she could go back to shorts, not that wearing a dress stopped her from tromping through the woods in search of a magic wand. School was coming and there was no way she was going to school as a girl!

The approaching school year hung in the air more and more with every passing day, which only increased Caitlyn's desperation. James and Bryce still refused to help. In fact, James found it much more fun to antagonize his former big brother.

"Look, you still have the first day of school photos!" Every year, mom took a photo of them holding a sign with facts about them ranging from favorite food to future career, sporting their first day of school outfit. Caitlyn did not even want to look at what she had worn. This year, she would be a boy again by school. "Kindergarten, it says you want to be a fairy princess when you grow up!" He grinned. "The next year, you said mommy and baker. Caitlyn the mommy!" Caitlyn was beginning to seethe. "Oh, and last year you said supermodel pilot, whatever that means."

"I did say I wanted to be a pilot last year."

"Supermodel pilot." James showed her the photo. She looked

away before her girly outfit from a year ago sunk in.

“I meant as… never mind.” She stormed outside, determined that today would be the day to find the wand.

Every passing day seemed to bring something new, but Caitlyn was starting to accept her role in life. It was almost funny how much softer Dad’s voice was when he talked to her versus James and Bryce and sure, she wore panties now, but underwear was underwear and she found herself preferring hers to the gross underwear her brothers wore. Had she really thought blue camo briefs were cool, she wondered one morning as she dressed for the day. Even the dreaded training bras, when they inevitably arrived in her drawer, turned out not to be the end of the world. Thinking practically, she realized it made more sense to wear them quietly without a fuss rather than running the risk of her brothers learning she was wearing bras. Still, the straps felt weird and it took days before she did not feel like she had enormous mountains on her chest. She eyed her mom over breakfast on day three of her bra wearing and wondered if that was her future. She shuddered at the thought and continued her search through the woods, bra and all.

“Caitlyn! Out of bed!” Her mom said, pounding on the door far more loudly than anyone ever should. She got yelled at for closing her door slightly harder than she should, but mom could pound on it with what sounded like a sledgehammer. “It’s almost time for school.”

“Shi” Caitlyn muttered, pulling off her Little Mermaid

pajamas and getting dressed. Mom insisted that she wear a dress for her first day and Caitlyn knew she had no choice, but she still eyed the hoodie she had stolen from James and Bryce's room. "Tomorrow." She said, dutifully pulling on her yellow sundress. "If she really wanted us to match, I wouldn't be in a dress." She muttered to her reflection. So much of her face was still Michael's, but that was undeniably Caitlyn standing there with sleep still in her eyes. "I'm really doing this, really going to school as a girl."

There was one final gambit and she almost felt sick enough for it to work as she saw her brothers in their shorts and yellow t-shirts to match her dress.

"A whole school year as a girl." Bryce whispered to her as they piled into the car for the drive.

"If you guys had helped me!"

"Why would we want to?" Bryce asked with a shrug. "You're gonna look great once mom forces you to take ballet!"

"She's not going to." Caitlyn said. "I'm still doing soccer." Their school's soccer team was mixed gender, so Caitlyn would even get to play with her old teammates. Her stomach twisted as she wondered just what friend group she was part of now. "Mom, can I please stay"

"It's the first day of school." Mom said. "But, if you're still feeling sick at lunch, go to the nurse, kay?" Caitlyn nodded glumly. "And all three of you keep your masks on all day, understand?

“Yes, mom.” They chorused.

“Good! Now, everyone out so we can take your picture in front of the school!”

“Why?” Caitlyn groaned and refused to smile as they stood in front of the school. No one else had to do this, year after year. Unfortunately for her, her upset face only made the photo all the better. Like it or not, Caitlyn really was off to her first day of school as a girl.