Cody

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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Cody stood there in nothing but his underwear, so distracted by the collar he had found around his neck when he woke up that he hadn't even put on clothes. It had a little silver dog tag with his name on it! Why did he have it on and why wasn't he able to get it off?

"I'll deal with it later." He decided after tugging at the collar for a few minutes. It was chilly and he was in just his underwear. Time to get dressed.

"Huh." He stared down at the empty drawers. It was empty. All the drawers were! Did Mom forget to bring his laundry up? Did he dare run downstairs in just his undies -- and the collar. How had he forgotten about the collar? There was only one solution. "Mom! Mom! Mom!" He yelled. It always had to be repeated three times. That was how you got her attention.

"Hush, Cody!" She said as she came into the room.

"Mom, where's my clothes?"

"Here," She held up a strange unitard that Cody had not noticed before. It was pink and flocked.

"What is that?" Rather than answer, she grabbed him and began to wrangle him into it.

Cody fought and squirmed, but his mom seemed like she had

done this before. As she zipped it up, Cody felt the unitard tighten around him, to the point where it almost seemed like a second skin. What was this thing?

The entire garment was covered in short pink fur except where it exploded out into a fluffy pink vest and down below, what almost looked like wooly pink undies. He even had matching fur pompoms around his wrists and ankles, right where the sleeves and legs ended.

Feeling something strange above his butt, he saw a tail with a pink pompom. As his mom secured a headband with pink fluffy floppy ears on his head, Cody realized he looked like some strange combination of a boy and a poodle. A pink poodle, he realized with disgust.

"Breakfast's downstairs." Mom said before Cody felt like he had really come to terms with his unorthodox outfit. She pushed him out the door and down to the dining room, the ears on his headband bouncing as he went down the stairs.

Sitting there on the table was a silver dog bowl with his name on it.

"Mom?" Sensing his confusion, she took the bowl off the table and set it on the floor.

"There you go, boy. Eat!" He kneeled down before realizing how silly this whole thing was.

"Like? Stick my face in it?" Mom had moved on to her next morning task, so Cody picked the bowl up and returned to the table.

"No! Cody, down! Down!" His dad said. "Off the table." Ok, Cody thought. If they want me to eat like a dog, I'll give them eating like a dog!

Lowering himself to all fours, he took a fortifying breath before diving in. Before long, he was having fun with the novelty, relishing not having to sit up straight or use utensils.

He was halfway through before he realized the pellets he was eating weren't his usual chocolate cereal. What was it? It tasted kinda meaty, but good. He kept eating, figuring he'd find out later what it was. If it tasted good and filled his tummy, it couldn't be poison.

"Looks like someone likes it." He heard his dad say.

"Good. It's apparently the most popular brand of puppy chow." Puppy chow? He looked down at the few pieces left with curiosity and concern. It didn't look like the puppy chow he'd had at Cub Scouts...

He licked up one of the remaining pellets of... What? Kibble? It didn't taste the way he would think dog food would taste. It tasted meaty and good, but unlike anything else he could remember eating. Weird.

Well, if his parents wanted him to be a dog, he would play along. He crawled over to his dad and put his head on his leg. To his surprise, his dad automatically began to pet his head. It felt good!

"Cody's getting shaggy. Good thing you made him an appointment at the groomer."

"The groomer?" Cody's head shot up from his dad's knee.

"Yes, the barber, bud." His dad said with a chuckle.

"Oh. I thought you said groomer..."

"Speaking of which, we'd better get going. C'mon, Cody. C'mon boy!" He got up onto his feet and walked after his mom. "Are you ready for walkies, Cody? Cody go walkies."

"Mom, c'mon."

"Yep! Walkies!" Cody stared as he saw something strange hanging on the coat rack: a leash!

"No, no way!" In truth, it was more like a harness with the way mom wrestled it onto him, the white straps sticking out embarrassingly well against the pink wool of his poodly vest. "This is too much!" He tried to pull the ears off of his head, but they seemed stuck to his hair. Had mom pinned them in there somehow? He could feel like a million bumpy bobby pins!

"Oh, Cody's scratching again. I'll have to mention it at the appointment."

"Mom! C'mon, this is... weird!"

"Let's go, Cody. We don't want to be late." That one sounded more normal, so Cody reluctantly allowed himself to be led out into the greater world.

"Shoot! My shoes, mom!" He wiggled his toes as he looked down at his bare feet. She did not seem to care.

"Let's run, Cody. We could both use the exercise." Mom began to jog and, since she was holding his leash -- god, a leash! -- Cody had to jog too, ears flapping and tail bouncing. He almost felt naked as they neared a couple, but reminded himself of his unitard. It really did feel like his skin. Furry skin, but skin nonetheless. Why do I have to be pink though, he wondered as he stared down at his ankle pompoms just above his bare feet. It was strange, but somehow, he could run on the sidewalk without even noticing his bare feet unless he really thought about them. He felt a tug at his chest and realized he had gotten ahead of his mom.

"This isn't demeaning at all." Cody mumbled.

"Hello!" He almost yelped in surprise as he heard the voice of Belinda, his most hated neighbor. More than once, she had called kids' parents for daring to ride their bike on the sidewalk outside her house. He tried to tug on the leash, but it was too late; she was upon him, giving his floppy pink ears a good scritch. It felt good, but the accompanying sickly sweet commentary did not. "Who's a good poodle? Who's a goody woody poodle woodle? Just the cutest widdle poodly poo in the whole wide world!"

"Hello, Belinda." Mom said as Cody tried to get free. If he was really a dog, he'd bite her, and he was almost tempted to.

"Where are you off to with little miss Cody poodly poo?" She had moved on from his ears to holding his face in her enormous hands, squishing his cheeks.

"I'm a boy!" Cody protested, trying to pull away.

“We’re out for a walk.” Mom said amiably. “To take Cody to the g-r-o-o-m-e-r-s.”

“I can spell!”

“Oh, is Cody off to the puppy parlor? She’s so perky, pink, and pretty, I thought she was coming back!”

“You’re telling me…” Cody muttered.

“Off you go, Cody! Prance off to your pretty appointment and come show auntie Belinda what a prissy, pretty poodle you are!” She smiled and waved as Cody was finally able to escape.

Free from Belinda, Cody felt pretty good, at least until he remembered he was outside dressed like a pink poodle. He stayed close to his mom, who gave him a few ear scritches, which did make him feel a bit better and more able to roam around as much as the leash allowed him.

Spying a dog approaching – another dog? – Cody felt a bit daring and tried his best to bark at the black lab. He must've said something wrong because the lab barked back with such ferocity, Cody fell over. Satisfied with Cody showing his belly, the black lab moved on, leaving Cody to feel the most like a wimpy pink poodle he ever had.

"Were you trying to protect mommy from the scary doggy?" She cooed, rubbing his tummy. "What a good boy! Cody's a good poodle! Yes, he is!"

"Then why am I pink?" Cody asked, silently relieved that,

unlike Belinda, mom seemed to still know he was a boy.

As he had feared, they were indeed not going to his usual barber. Dad was the one who took him there. All the same, he was shocked by the colorful sign for Wagging Tails. There were dogs in the window and everything! There was still time for mom to reveal it was all a joke. Maybe Belinda was even in on it. As the door jingled and they entered, he knew it was not a joke.

“I have an appointment for my standard poodle, Cody.” Mom said, all business even as her son stood nervously beside her.

“Would” There was the slightest pause as she looked down at the pink poodle boy. “He like a bowl of water?”

“Sure! He had quite the walk over.” Mom said. She took Cody over to a chair and set the plastic doggy dish of water down on the floor. “Drink up, Cody!” Cody, overcome by a desire to prove he was not a dog, picked it up and tried to drink from it like a boy would.

“They always make such a mess, don’t they?” The woman sitting next to them said with a smile. “What’s the little darling’s name?”

“Oh, this is Cody. He’s a little nervous about the groomer.”

“It can’t be his first time.”

“Oh, no. But you know how poodles can be!”

Cody tried to sit in the chair next to his mom, but she immediately sent him to the floor with a "no! Down!" So

Cody sat cross-legged on the floor, nervously eyeing both the dogs – other dogs? – and a little girl who wore almost as much pink as he did. He was almost relieved when a groomer came out and said his name.

"Here's this." He looked up at his mom in confusion as she handed the end of the harness to the smiling groomer. "I've got some errands to run, but I shouldn't be too long."

"Mom?"

"Mommy will be back to pick you up soon!" That was right. You waited for a kid to get his hair cut. For a dog, you just dropped them off like dry cleaning. "Be a good poodle!" Couldn't she have said boy, Cody wondered as the groomer took his harness and led him into the back.

At least I get to be on two legs, he thought just before the groomer lifted him up onto a grooming station, setting him down on his hands and knees before attaching his collar to a leash on the table. It kept Cody still, and on all fours. He could even only look around so much. The groomers moved in and out of view with concerning frequency.

"Geez, can you believe this lady dyes her boy poodle pink?"

"Well, when you're a poodle, you're a sissy even when you're a boy."

"I am not!" Cody protested. The groomers chuckled.

"See? Cody agrees. He just said he wants to be pink! Little pinky poodle."

"What? No, I didn't."

"That bark sounded like 'hurry up' to me." They shrugged and Cody had to stand there on his hands and knees as they bathed him all over. He could've sworn he felt the tug against his skin as they brushed his fluffy fur briefs and vest. The worst was when they focused on his head. All he could do was close his eyes and cough as they used noxious chemicals and what seemed like gallons upon gallons of water. He only noticed that they had removed the headband when they were putting it back on his head. Even with his floppy ears back, they were not done. He cried out a few times as they tugged on his hair. What were they doing?

"Shh, you're okay." The words did not mean much, but the scritches right above his tail felt heavenly. I'm a boy, not really a dog, Cody reminded himself, but the line seemed especially blurred right now.

Without any mirrors and the leash holding him still, Cody could only guess what was happening out of sight. As he felt his tail moving around, he wondered if he wanted to know. Being a dog seemed fun in theory, but all the not knowing was stressful! At that exact moment, however, he felt more like a drowned rat than a dog. Well, if they were going to soak him, he knew how a dog would respond. He tried to think how to shake like a dog and found himself doing it as if it was second nature.

“Ha!” He exclaimed triumphantly as they jumped back.

“Pinky’s got pep!” One of the groomers announced.

“Well, Cody is still a puppy.” Another one said, coming over and grabbing his wrist. “Got your paw, pup. Ooh, these claws need a good clipping.” Cody wondered what she saw as she held his decidedly human hand, clipping his fingernails before moving around in a clockwise fashion to each of his "paws". He wanted to ask her, but the loud whir of hair dryers drowned out conversation as he found himself being blasted with hot air from all sides. It was enough to make a dog pant and Cody even playfully let his tongue loll out.

“We’re nearly done.” One of the groomers said, giving Cody a scritch behind the ear. It felt good, but something about his head felt different. “Here, drink some water.” He set a bowl of water down on the table, lowering the leash enough that Cody could lie down on his tummy and drink. He could not believe he was saying this, but he almost missed the harness. This leash tugged at his neck!

It took him a moment to devise a system of sucking the water out of the bowl, figuring that it would be too hard to try to lift it while he was on his tummy. Oh, god. He thought suddenly. What if I need to pee? He stopped drinking the water, just in case.

“Alright, little poodle.” One of the groomers said. “You’re all done!” He smiled and pressed something against Cody’s lips until he opened them enough to eat it. It tasted like his breakfast. Different, but not bad. “A treat for our good boy Cody.”

“Wait.” A groomer at the next table over said. “That’s that

poodle from earlier?”

“Yep.”

“Geez! Don’t you think you went a little overboard?” Cody looked at the groomer in shock. What did she mean? Overboard? What had they done to him?

“It’s exactly what his owner asked for, Mindy.” The groomer who had given Cody the treat said, rolling his eyes. “Come on, Cody. Who cares what meanie Mindy says? Let’s get you in the display pen and we’ll see what the public thinks.”

“Display pen?” Cody wiggled as the groomer picked him up and carried him toward the front of the building. He spied an area that was fence on three sides and a window looking out into the world on the fourth. “Let me go!” There was no way he was going in there!

“Alright, squirmy little poodle pup. Down you go!” He set Cody down inside, the dogs already within curiously looking over at the newcomer. He eyed them right back and they mostly returned to what they were doing.

Cody sat there on his butt, trying to decide what to do. Here he was, in a pen with dogs – real dogs – and he could feel the eyes of every passer-by on him. He noticed another poodle across the pen and laughed. She looked ridiculous, at least twice as pink as him!

"At least I don't look as bad as her!" A moment later, realization struck. That poodle, all pink and fluffy with big white bows on her floppy ears to match the big one atop her

puffy pink wool hat, was him! His dark blond hair was gone! Well, his hair was still there, but it had been dyed as pink as the rest of his fur and curled, styled, something so that it matched the wooly fur of his vest, pompoms, every inch of his poodly body. He did not even look like he had a headband anymore! He could still glimpse his human ears under the floppy ears, but the poodle ears looked like they belonged on his head now, thanks to the pink wooly mess that had once been his hair consuming it. It was more than wooly, same as his vest, briefs, and pompoms. It almost looked like he was covered in cotton candy! Pink cotton candy decorated with those horrible white bows! Who would ever do this to a boy dog, let alone a human boy?

Fed up with being a dog, Cody reached behind him to find the zipper. Why had he not thought of this before? Sure, he would be in his underwear, but it was better than being covered in pink cotton candy fur and being treated like a poodle. He'd shave his head or something later.

He stood up to get a better chance at reaching the zipper. Where was it? He almost growled in frustration, but knew that would not help him prove he was definitely not a dog!

"Look, mommy! That poodle's standing on her hind legs!" He froze as he saw a little girl standing outside the window, looking right at him. Muffled as her voice was by the glass, he could still make out every word.

"I think that's a boy poodle, Gracie."

"But she's pink. And she has bows on her ears and tail!"

“Yes, but see how he’s doing tricks? He must be a show poodle, like we saw at the circus. He does look pretty, doesn’t he?” Cody had heard enough, sinking down onto his haunches to try and hide amongst the dogs. He knew there was no chance of that as every single person walking by seemed to see him in all his prissy pinkness. He had to get out of this and somehow, convince his parents he was a boy and not a poodle!

Someone came up behind him and Cody quickly spun around, ignoring the exclamations from the sidewalk about his wooly poodle butt being turned to them.

“Huh. I didn’t know poodles looked like that in real life.” A boy about Cody’s age said, staring in at him with a mix of revulsion and curiosity.

“And you thought it was tough walking and brushing Blitz. Just imagine having to take care of a dog like that!” His dad said, lifting a black and white dog out of the pen.

“I’m not a dog.” Cody said, but they did not seem to hear him. “I’m a human!”

A puppy came over to him, curious about this strange dog, and barked at him. He barked back. The puppy raised a paw and barked again, clearly wanting to play. Cody barked again, trying to match the puppy’s tone. Every time he barked though, what emerged from his throat was better described as a yip, high and wimpy to his ears. A few other dogs barked, as if to show Cody that his bark was pitiful. He frowned and growled. At least that sounded a little menacing.

“So? I don’t wanna bark anyway. I’m a boy, not a dog.” Cody stuck his tongue out at them, not panting, but to mock them. They did not seem to care. It didn’t matter. He had to think of an escape plan. And soon.

"Cody? Hey! Cody!" Cody froze as he heard the voice of Carly, a girl in his class. She could not see him like this. "Earth to Cody!" He sighed inwardly. There was no choice.

"Hey, uh, Carly." No one seemed to notice anything amiss about the girl chatting with 'one of the dogs'.

"Got your hair cut, huh? Looks nice."

"Uh, thanks." What did she see? The pink monstrosity that sat atop his head? Something more normal?

"The pink really suits you. We're here for my collie, Barney. I didn't know you went here too!" Cody looked at the dog through the fence. Barney gave him a bark that Cody somehow knew meant hello. He cleared his throat and responded, blushing and regretting it the second the yip sounded. "Aw, I think Barney likes you, Cody." She leaned down and kissed the collie's head. "Do you like Cody? Do you like the poodle?" She laughed. "Well, see you around."

Cody watched her leave, mortified. Mom had to come get him soon or he would die of embarrassment!

A tap on the glass caused him to look over his shoulder, his ears flopping as he stared directly into the camera on his mom's phone. Great. He had just inadvertently posed perfectly to showcase both the bow on his tail and the ones on

his head. How could she look at him so adoringly? Did any parent want their son to look like this? Last winter, he had been in peewee hockey, now he was a pretty pink poodle.

She finally came inside, but went over to the counter and paid before finally walking over and smiling down at him. He didn't care how pleased she was with the way he looked, he wasn't! Every inch of him except for his face, hands, and feet, was covered in wooly pink fur. One of his classmates, not to mention about a hundred other people, had seen him all poodled out and thought it was completely normal! He reached behind him to try again to find the zipper.

"Oh, are you itchy again?" Mom asked. "We might have to take you to the v-e-t."

"I am not going to the vet."

"But that won't be today." Mom said. She lifted her son out of the display pen. "Say bye-bye to the other dogs!"

"Bye."

"Come on, Cody. Be a good boy and say bye." Cody sighed and summoned up a strong, powerful bark.

Yip! He glared at a few people who snickered, but it was hard to tell if they were even listening to him.

Cody was so eager to get out of there that the moment his mom set him down, he ran for the door. He slipped a bit on the tiled floor and he did not really have a plan. All he knew was, he had to escape. Maybe he would go home or to Mike's

house. All he knew was, he needed to go. Anywhere but here!

“Cody! Cody! Come back here!”

“I’ve got him!” Cody had already stopped, but a stranger grabbed him by the collar and dragged him over to his mom, bare feet desperately slapping the floor.

“Thank you so much! Puppies take off the moment your back is turned.”

“I think he’s excited to show off his new look at the dog park.” The man said, laughing and roughly patting Cody on the head.

“No dog park today, Cody.” Mom said as if it had been his idea, pulling the harness back onto him. “We’re gonna go home and show Daddy your lovely new do!” Enough was enough.

“My lovely new do? Look at me! Look at what you had them do!” Cody didn’t even care that he was shouting, a few dogs howling in sympathetic solidarity. “I’m a boy, mom! A boy! I play hockey! It was bad enough with the unitard or whatever, but they dyed my hair! And these freaking bows! Seriously! All my clothes were gone and you put me in this and now everyone’s treating me like a dog! I- I just want everything to go back to normal! I’m a boy, not a dog! I’m not a poodle! I’m… I’m… a boy.” He sighed, feeling better now that he had gotten that off his chest. “And… and you just left me here! I didn’t even know how long you’d be gone. You just left.”

“Yes, mommy missed her Cody too.” She cooed, grabbing his

hand as he reached for the bow right in the middle of his poof of hair. “So much, in fact, I got you something special!” She pulled out a bright red rubber bone.

“What? A dog toy? I’m a boy! A human boy! I’m not a stinking” he stopped as he heard a noise he had never heard before. It was like an ice cream jingle and the chime of a new high score all in one. It was so great, he almost squirmed with delight. What was it though? What had made that – mom squeezed the chew toy again and Cody gasped. How was it making that noise?

“Oh! Someone likes it!” She smiled and gave it a light toss. “Get it, Cody! Go get it, boy!” Cody forgot his rage and ran for it, curious to see if he too could make it make that wonderful sound. He picked it up, hardly even hearing the comments about how much his tail was wagging as he gave it another squeeze. Nothing. He squeezed it again. Was it broken? His mom came over and took it from him.

“Hey! Give that” she pushed it into his mouth and as he bit down on it, it made that noise! He didn’t even care how he looked. If he had to bite it to make it make that noise, so be it.

“There we go.” She gave his ears an affectionate scritch, like it was a normal thing between a mother and son. “Oh, these bows really are darling.”

Cody almost jumped for joy as they reached their block and he saw Belinda’s empty lawn. They were almost home and she wasn’t waiting for him! Thank goodness! Rather than press his luck, however, he pulled at the harness to try and get

out of sight as quickly as possible.

“Ugh!” He groaned as the door opened and Belinda came rushing out.

“There he is! Oh! Look at you!”

“Mom, let’s go.” The toy still in his mouth squeaked and Cody’s guard dropped just long enough for Belinda to get her hands on him.

“Did widdle Codykins have fun at the puppy salon! I bet he did! Yes, he did! Cody wuvs being the prissyest pinkest poodle puppy he can be! And I bet you just begged for your pretty new bows, yes you did! Whining and begging and whimpering! Ickle Cody poodle puff loves his pretty new bows!”

“I did not!”

“Cody, be polite.”

“Oh, it’s ok. He’s just a little embarrassed to be a boy doggy who wuvs being all fluffy and pink and pretty. Aren’t you a pretty widdle poodle? Aren’t you?” Cody feared that Belinda might get a grip on his leash and drag him inside, but Mom finally came to his aid as Belinda began rambling about him prancing around the schoolyard come Monday.

“Well, Belinda. We better get home for lunch. It’s always a treat seeing you.”

“And it’s such a treat to see your pretty poodle. Alma in my bridge club, she has a little black poodle who’s an absolute

terror. Cody here, he’s a proper poodle. Pink and prissy and pampered as all get out.” Cody felt the urge to bite her, so he bit his chew toy and felt the wave of endorphins block out what she was saying. By the time he came to, they were almost home. What would dad say?

"Did you have fun?" Dad's tone almost hinted that he saw his son for what he really was: a boy covered in pink cotton candy fur with bows on his ears.

"Of course! Cody was the perfect little poodle! Yes, you is! Yes you is!" She cooed and scritched, so Cody allowed it. "Sorry, we had a run-in with Belinda down the street, so she's rubbed off on me."

"That woman's a grade A nutcase." Dad muttered. "Cody, can you take out the trash real quick?" The banality of the request startled Cody.

“Uh, sure.” As soon as his harness was off (though his collar stayed on), he took the bag of kitchen trash, still a little taken aback. He walked down to the can, pondering what it meant. Had dad known this whole time? Why had he let mom take him to the groomer then and do… this? He frowned as he threw it into the bin, taking care to put the smaller recyclables bag into its proper spot. Even if dad did know he was a boy again, how fair was it that he had only become a boy again just in time to do chores? Still, if dad knew he was a boy again… he could help him get this ridiculous thing off!

He reached around to his back and dug around in his fur – no, not my fur. The fur of the unitard he wore. That was all. He

dug around in it, trying to find the zipper. He spun around and around in a circle in his efforts to reach around and find the zipper until he realized he almost certainly looked like he was chasing his tail.

“I don’t even have a tail!” He said, glaring back at the stupid thing with its white bow and the big pink pompom of fur. He snarled. The sooner he got Dad to help him get this off, the better.

“Dad! Dad!” Cody yelled, running back into the house.

“Someone’s playful!” Dad said with a laugh. “Cody the playful poodle!” He held up the red rubber bone and though Cody was still intrigued by it, he had more important things on his mind.

“Dad, listen.”

“Who’s a good boy? Who’s a good boy?” Dad pulled Cody over to him, rubbing his tummy. Cody fell onto his back, legs and arms folded there even as he tried to get his dad’s attention.

“Dad, listen! Dad!”

“Poodle, poodle, poodle!” His dad said in a silly voice. Cody knew what he needed to do. He yipped.

“Well, you don’t get that from me.” Dad said with a smirk.

“Haha, real funny. Look, we need to talk. You know I’m not” his voice trailed off as he heard the sound. Looking into the dining room, Cody saw his mom filling the food and water

dishes. He could not decide which was worse: that they were being filled when he had been so close to convincing his parents he was a human boy or that she held a green bag with a happy golden retriever puppy on it, the contents of which were being poured into the food dish. They really were feeding him dog food! For every meal? “Can’t I have something else for lunch?”

“This is good for you.” Mom replied.

“Well, how about I do this?” He sat down at what had, up until that morning, always been his seat at the dining room table.

“Oh, isn’t that cute?”

“Cody, down.”

“Let him sit there for a minute.” Mom snapped a few photos. “Isn’t that cute?” She showed her husband the photos. “Oh, and here’s some from the groomer.” Cody could see them too, sitting as he was right next to his dad. He made a face as he saw the photo of him looking over his shoulder from when mom had surprised him. It was even worse than those photos of him at Easter a few years ago in the yellow overalls!

“Oh, that’s just great.”

“I know, right? I started an Instagram for him.”

“You what?”

“You’ll be a famous poodle, Cody!” Dad said with a laugh. “Hashtag boys wear bows too!”

“Dad!”

“We’ll take some more pics this afternoon maybe. Let’s eat lunch though.” Dad gave Cody a loving pat on his head before grabbing his collar and pulling him onto the floor. “Down you come, boy. Go eat your puppy chow.” Cody got up and shuffled over. HIs parents were having chicken salad sandwiches, which sounded a lot better than kibble and a bowl of water.

Cody felt a little better when he realized he could chew with his mouth open and slurp his water to his heart’s content. Dogs, even pink poodles, didn’t get scolded about table manners. Even then, the fun ran out before his kibble did. He sat there, trying to pretend like his kibble wasn’t dog food and listening to his parents talk.

“I get he’s cute, but don’t you think it’s a little silly for our dog” why did he say it like that? “To have his own Instagram?”

“C’mon, it’s harmless fun. I’ve wanted a pink poodle since I was a kid and” she smiled. “That photo from the groomers already has a ton of likes.”

“Great.” Cody muttered into his kibble. He sucked up the last of his water and immediately knew that was a mistake. He needed to pee!

He jumped to his feet and ran toward the bathroom. Sensing his alarm and urgency, his mom gave chase.

“Cody! No!” She yelled as he charged into the bathroom.

“Mom! I need to pee! Get out!”

“I don’t care how much you whine and beg. You are not drinking out of the toilet!” She closed the lid and stared at him. Cody squirmed. He needed to pee! What was he going to do? Pee right there on the bathroom rug? It would show her, but the last thing he needed was for mom to rub his nose in it. Would she do that? Why did he feel like she had before?

He felt his bladder ache and suddenly, without even knowing why, he charged out of the bathroom and toward the door in the kitchen that led out to the backyard. He tried to stop himself, but some primal part of him told him this was how he would deal with his need, the same part of him that told him he would get there faster on all fours.

A bird took off in fright toward the lazy afternoon clouds as Cody pounded out into the backyard, heading directly toward the tall oak tree that dominated the far left corner. He loved that tree. He could see it from his bedroom window. It was a great tree. It was his tree. He was going to prove it. Cody skidded to a halt right at the base of the tree and lifted his leg. He moaned as he let go, peeing right onto the massive exposed root. Oh, my god. He thought. I’m peeing outside! Like… like a dog! Why does it feel so right?

Chapter 2

Cody: The Park - Chapter 2

Once his relief had subsided, Cody sobered. How had he just done that? Wasn't he wearing undies under the unitard? There was only one way to find out.

Cody reached down, taking advantage of being alone in the backyard to get to the bottom of what he suspected. His eyes widened as he dug down into his wooly fur between his thighs.

"I'm... I... This whole time!?" He felt positively scandalized. He had gone out, gone to the groomers, all that… naked! Panicked, he tugged at his ears, yelping, though it was the yelp of a boy. Right, those were held in place by his hair. He grabbed his tail and was about to tug it when he noticed it twitch in his hand. He had to be losing his mind, right? It was fabric sewn to a unitard. It could not move on its own!

Nervous, he headed inside. He still had human feet, hands, and a face. He was not a dog! Curious, he tried to find the edge of the sleeve, but all found was his hand and the fluffy doughnut of fur around his wrist. It had been skintight all day, but now? Now it seemed like…

Ding! Cody’s head swung up as he heard the doorbell ring.

“Who’s here?” He asked, even as he charged toward the door.

“No barking, Cody!”

“I wasn’t.” Cody rolled his eyes, but as he neared the door, he suddenly… it was hard to explain, but he somehow knew, he just knew, that Leo stood on the other side of the door. He stopped, skidding to a halt.

“Aren’t you going to open it?” His mom asked. Ding! Dingy-ding! Definitely Leo. “Well?”

“No! I mean, uh, no. I don’t want Leo to see me like this.”

“Do you need to primp first?”

“What? No!” He stared at her, aghast. How could she not understand why he did not want his best friend in the whole world to see him all pink and fluffy and poodle and… and… pink!

"He can't see me like this!" Cody exclaimed again, dashing behind the couch.

"Don't be ridiculous. He's your best friend and I just know he'll love your new do." Mom frowned. "Did you wash your paws?"

"What?"

"After you went pee? Did you wash your paws?" The question baffled him so much that Cody stood there, paralyzed by confusion, as his mom opened the door and Leo walked in.

"Hey, Mrs. Cody's Mom. Can Cody come out and play?"

"If you can coax him out from behind the couch, sure."

"You playing hide and seek?" Leo asked, walking over to Cody. "Oh! Sweet!"

"Huh?" How could Leo look at him completely normally when he could clearly see Cody's pink wool? And, Cody thought, who knows what else? He crossed his legs nervously as he looked up at Leo.

"Wanna go outside, Cody?" Cody stood up, feeling a little better about being on the same eye level as Leo, but sunk back down to a crouch as he remembered his situation. That lady at the groomer, she had gotten a full eyeful and immediately knew Cody was a boy! That means she... "Hey? Earth to Cody?"

"Here." Mom squeezed his red bone and Cody immediately looked at it eagerly.

"Wow! New hairdo and a new toy?" Leo said. "I... didn't forget your birthday, did I?"

"No..."

"Then why are you? Oh. You smell Dexter on me, don't you?" Dexter was Leo's cat who had always seemed to hate Cody. The feeling was mutual, but that was not the reason why he was hiding! His best friend in the whole world should know he was not a poodle yesterday! "Is that it, bud?"

"No!" Cody insisted. "I mean, your socks could use a change." How did he even know that, he wondered at the same moment that he wanted to know why no one else could smell Leo's socks.

"I think some fresh air will get a certain little poodle back to his old self."

"Ugh, do I really gotta wear that?" Cody glared at the harness in his mom's hands.

"Yes."

"Here, let me." Leo took the harness and slipped it onto Cody's arms. "Wow, this new do of yours is"

"Awful?"

"Really great."

"Then why don't you get the same one?"

"Maybe if I had fur instead of hair." Leo said with a laugh, running his hand through his perfectly normal hair. It was brown, not pink, and Cody doubted a bow had ever touched it. "Let's go outside! Go outside, Cody? Go outside!"

"Be back before dinner." Mom called.

"I'll be sure to bring him back." Leo said with a chuckle. As soon as the door closed, he grinned at Cody. "Grab that frisbee. We're going to the park." Cody picked up the plastic disc, faded by the sun.

"Let's go."

"Uh, why are you holding it like that?"

"How else would I... oh. Oh! Ew, it's been on the ground!"

"Did you pee on it or something?"

"Ew!" Leo shrugged and wrapped the end of Cody's harness around his hand before patting him right on the poof between his ears.

"Hey, um, can you at least take my bows off?"

"What? Why?"

"Cuz?"

"You not wearing bows is like me... I dunno, not wearing pants. It's fine when you're alone, but out in public?" Cody sputtered.

“What? They’re freaking bows.”

“Why don’t you take them off yourself?”

“I’ve tried, but every time I do, mom thinks I’ve got fleas or something.”

“You don’t, do you?”

“No!”

“Exactly. I think you’re just too much of a good boy to take them off after your mommy put them on you.” Cody thought about pointing out that it was the groomer, but hadn’t Mom told them to? “Who’s a good boy?” Leo said, giving Cody a good scratching behind his ears in the perfect spot. “Who’s a good boy? Who’s a good boy?”

“Me.”

“That’s right!” Leo grinned. “Come on, let’s go bother

Aiden.”

If it weren’t for the harness and the fact that he could feel his tail hitting the backs of his legs, Cody would have felt almost normal. He and Leo discussed the sorts of things boys their age tended to discuss and it was only when they got to Aiden’s that Cody suddenly remembered he was no longer the boy he once was.

“Cody! Here boy!” Aiden whistled from the porch. Cody rolled his eyes.

“Aren’t you gonna go say hi?” Leo asked.

“It’s kinda embarrassing.” Cody said, but Leo just shook his head disapprovingly.

“Go on! Go get him, boy! Sic or whatever!” Cody sighed and shuffled over to Aiden. As far as Aiden was concerned, however, Cody was beside himself with excitement. In no time flat, Cody found himself on his back, getting his tummy rubbed by Aiden as Leo scritched his ears. Maybe being a dog wasn’t so bad, he thought, though he realized how weird it was once they stopped and he had to clamber back to his feet without help. At least they had told him he was a good boy. He was a good boy, after all.

“What’s up?” Aiden asked. Cody noticed the boy was looking right past him and at Leo.

“Oh, I figured we’d take the pup to the park.”

“The pup? I’m right here.”

“Yep, we’re talking about you, Cody!” Aiden said, patting him on the head. Cody groaned. Great, now they couldn’t understand him.

“My underwear’s full of farts and butterflies.” He said. What did it matter when they couldn't understand him?

“Underwear? You’re a poodle.” Aiden said with a laugh. “What do you need underwear for?” Cody punched him in the arm.

“Come on, Cody! Let’s go to the park! Wanna run there?” Before Cody could say he was fine with walking, his friends took off and, thanks to the harness, Cody had little choice but to run along with them.

Why were they so fast? He wondered, trying his best to keep up. No, I’ll show them fast! He leaned forward to try and cut down on the resistance from his fur – no, his hair. It worked and he whizzed past them!

“Wish I was that fast on all fours.” Aiden said as Cody realized that the harness also kept him from getting too far ahead. All fours? He looked down. How long had he been crawling? He stood back up, wobbling a bit. Was he going to lose the ability to stand? How would he convince people he was a boy if he could not even stand?

“Look, Cody! The park!” Leo said, pointing ahead of them. “There’s even a place where you can get off your leash!”

“It’s technically a harness.”

“But you have to promise,” Aiden said. “To be a good boy and not run away.”

“His mom’s probably got him chipped or something.” Leo said. “But yeah. Promise, Cody?”

“I promise.” He was always a good boy! Leo laughed.

“He’d say anything to get off his leash.”

“Maybe he wants the other dogs to see his new hairdo. Furdo? It looks really cool, Cody.”

“Cool? I have cotton candy on my head!”

“How else is a pink poodle supposed to look?” Cody glared at Aiden.

“Throw the frisbee, Aiden.” Leo suggested. Aiden complied and Cody watched it soar.

“Go get it, Cody!” Cody jogged after it, but noticed another dog – a dog! He had to stop doing that! – going for it.

“Hey! Drop! That’s mine!” The dog paid him no mind. Cody growled and barked at the dog, who turned and looked at him before dropping the frisbee and going back toward its owner.

“Did that silly poodle yip at you?” The owner, a girl who looked to be in college, said. She rubbed the dog’s head roughly before coming over to Cody. “Hi there!”

“Uh hi.”

“What’s your name?”

“Cody?” She smiled and grabbed at his collar to look at his dog tag.

“Cody! That’s a cute name!” She said, so bubbly he knew she did not see him as a boy at all. “Do you wanna treat, Cody? Wanna treat?”

“Uh, what is it?”

“Sit, Cody! Sit!” She wiggled a lightly closed fist over his head. He sat down in the grass, glancing over at his friends. They seemed to be waiting patiently. “You sit too, Bambam!” The dog sat down next to Cody, tongue hanging out of his mouth. “Now… lie down, Cody!”

“I’m not doing”

“Lie down, Cody! C’mon Cody! Bambam, why don’t we show Cody? Lie down, Bambam!” The dog must have been expertly trained because he stretched his front paws out until his stomach was in the grass. “There we go!” The girl praised as Cody mirrored the dog. Hadn’t he earned the treat yet? “Now, roll over!” This wouldn’t be so bad if she would just talk normal, Cody thought in annoyance. She pushed the treat against his lips like at the groomers and Cody ate it. It was like a soft peanut butter ball. “What a good dog! You’re still a puppy, but you know three tricks already!” She smiled and rubbed his cheeks with her hands as she gushed over him. “You’re gonna be the prettiest poodle when you’re all grown up! Yes, you is! Yes, Cody is! And such a smart poodle too! I… can’t think of a p word for smart, but that’s what you are!” She laughed to herself. “Alright, off you go, Cody.” She

helpfully picked up the frisbee and shoved it into his mouth. He wondered what she thought as he stood up and ran back over to his friends, only remembering to take the frisbee out of his mouth just before he got back to them.

“Putting the moves on that girl?” Leo asked with a snort.

“Shuddup.”

“She seemed very impressed.” Leo said, taking the frisbee from Cody. “What breed was she?”

“Breed?” Cody realized what Leo meant and he stammered before deciding to push past it.

“I’m not getting it if you throw it anywhere near her.” Cody said in warning.

“Wasn’t gonna, but… Try to catch this one in your mouth!” He threw the frisbee high in the air.

“My mouth? Won’t that hurt my teeth?” Cody muttered, watching the frisbee. Catching it with his hands was good enough, right?

“Go get it, Cody!” Aiden encouraged. Cody shrugged and ran after it, keeping a cautious eye to make sure Bambam and – his owner, what was her name? – were far away. “He’s still not doing it right.” Aiden said as Cody returned with the frisbee.

“One more try, Cody!” Leo said, taking the frisbee from his hand. “If you catch it before it hits the ground, we’ll go get ice cream, kay?” Cody felt something brush against his legs.

He was too afraid to discover it was his tail wagging to look.

Cody ran after the Frisbee once Aiden threw it, determined to at least do his best to catch it before it hit the ground. He knew they would probably go get ice cream no matter what, but how cool would it be if he did catch it? Then again, how cool could you really hope to be when everyone saw you as a fluffy pink poodle with sissy bows in your fur? Hair, he corrected, hardly even aware that he had opened his mouth and caught the Frisbee right in it!

"Attaboy!" Leo and Aiden crowed, charging over and knocking Cody to the grass, practically smothering him with praise and pets in equal measure.

"I think you definitely earned yourself ice cream." Aiden said as Leo put Cody's harness back on. "Oh, shoot. Your bow's messed up." Cody tried to back away, but Leo kept him still as Aiden fixed the bow on the poof between his ears.

"I hate bows." Cody muttered. "I hate being pink."

"Is it opposite day?" Leo teased. "Let's go, Cody." Cody kept muttering under his breath, but the one plus of being out in just his fur was, there was no way he would be the one paying for ice cream.

Their favorite ice cream place, Scoop Dreams, wasn't all that far away. Cody would usually race for the door, but the harness made that impossible, so he had to match Leo's more leisurely pace.

"Alright, let's get Cody situated and then we'll get ice cream."

Leo said.

"Situated?"

"No dogs allowed." Aiden said, pointing to the sign.

"What? I'm not a dog!" Leo tied the leash of the harness around the arm of a bench outside the entrance. Cody sighed and sat down on the bench. Almost before his wooly pink butt touched the polished wood, however, Aiden chimed in.

"Cody, down."

"Down, Cody!" Leo said more forcefully.

"I was just running around the park. Why can't I sit?"

"Down!" Cody sighed, but moved to the sidewalk. It felt so ridiculous sitting on the ground right next to an empty bench. "Stay!"

"Come on, guys. This is ridiculous."

"Stay!" Leo repeated.

"We'll be right back, pup." Aiden tousled Cody's fluff and they disappeared inside.

Cody wondered what passers-by thought as he sat there cross-legged and tied to a bench. He stretched his legs out, leaning back on his palms, but quickly realized what a mistake that was as he eyed his lower fur. He shifted back to crossed legs, but stared down at it. It was pink, wooly fur, but it was vaguely reminiscent of the shape of his underwear. He had been wearing his underwear that morning before mom more

or less forced him into the unitard. He tried to find the seam of the unitard's sleeve on his wrist, but when he pushed the fur aside, it just seemed as if the fur was growing out of his wrist and not the cloth of the unitard. That wasn't possible! It isn't!

"Mommy, can I pet the doggy?" Cody jumped, only then noticing the little girl standing in front of him. He scrunched his nose, figuring she had snuck up on him because all he could smell were sugar cones and… well, now he smelled smells that his brain told him were little girl. At least, he thought they meant little girl. It was very confusing and so many smells at once was kind of overwhelming.

"Be very careful." The girl's mom said. "Let him sniff your hand first." The girl stretched out a hand and Cody sighed. Was he supposed to indulge her? Her hands looked sticky! He made a motion as if he was sniffing her hand, even though he could smell her already. "There you go!"

"Nice doggy!" The girl said, patting his poof. Cody's relief in how restrained she was, both in what she said to him and her pets showed. "Look, mommy! His tail's wagging!"

"That's how dogs tell us they're happy, since they can't talk like we can."

"Can too." Cody mumbled.

"See? All he can do is whimper and yip."

"She sells seashells by the seashore." Cody retorted, but they had already moved on. He looked up to see his friends

emerge from the ice cream shop. Yeah, his tail was definitely wagging, but that did not matter. What did matter was that things felt almost normal when he was with them.

"We really should've used Cody to save a spot." Aiden said. Every table was occupied except for one that was covered in trash and a mystery substance.

"We did. This bench is perfect." Cody stood up, but Leo had other plans. He set a paper bowl down on the sidewalk and Cody followed it back down in defeat.

"What is this?"

“A pup cup.” It was a paper bowl filled with what looked like unflavored shaved ice. This was not ice cream at all!

"Pup cup?"

"Guy inside said it's guaranteed safe for dogs."

"But I'm... uh..."

"Can you have chocolate?" Aiden asked out of the blue.

"I don't know." Cody said thoughtfully. He didn't know a lot of things now. That morning, he had been an ordinary boy. Now he was... a pink poodle? He was pretty sure he was no longer a boy in a unitard. He absentmindedly touched one of his ears to see if it had become a headband again, but all he felt were the bows. He gave one a tug, surprised at how much he felt it.

"You should probably leave those alone. Your mom gets mad

when you come back without your bows, remember?"

"Not really." He frowned as something occurred to him. As far as he recalled, this was all new to him, but comments like that almost made him wonder. "Wait, have I always" a greeting bark -- how did he know that? -- interrupted Cody. He turned and came face to face with a tan dog. Cody got to his feet to try and not feel so small. The tan dog tugged at her leash.

"It's ok. She's friendly!" The man holding the leash said with a grin.

"So's Cody!" Cody stood there as the dog walked around him and gave his butt a sniff.

"Why do you dogs do that?" It took Cody a second to realize he was more likely to answer than the other dog.

"It's just another way to say hello." He eeked out as the dog and her owner moved on.

"Bark! Bark! Hi, Cody! You've got awesome bows!" Aiden laughed at his own joke and then shrugged. "What? They suit him, don't they? I mean, if he's pink, he might as well."

"You do know he's not naturally pink, right? What color is your fur normally, Cody?" Cody shrugged.

“I don’t really know. I only became a dog this morning.” He waited to see what their response to that would be.

“Ugh, we’d better finish our ice cream fast.” Leo said. “Dad’s texting me to come home for dinner. School nights suck!”

“Wait. School?”

“Well, duh. It’s Sunday.” Leo said.

“That means school tomorrow, pup.” Aiden said.

“And I go to school?”

“Well, duh!” Leo said with a laugh. “Finish your pup cup.” Cody stuck his face down into it, but he could not decide how to feel. Even though he was apparently a dog, he still had to go to school? I really am a boy at the worst possible times, he thought.

Chapter 3

Cody: School - Chapter 3

Once his friends dropped him off, the house seemed like it always did on
a Sunday night. Sure, his dinner was once again kibble served from a
dish on the floor, but after that, the plan was to watch a movie in the
living room.

“Cody! Down!” His dad said as soon as Cody took his normal place on the couch.

“What? I always sit here.” Dad sat down on the couch with a groan.

“Sit, Cody.” He said, pointing to his feet.

“Well, this isn’t demeaning at all.” He muttered as he obeyed. His dad rewarded him with a good scritch.

“Am I gonna have to wear bows to school?” He wondered out loud.

“Did you get your homework done?” Mom asked.

“Yeah, Friday night.”

“Good boy.” He could not be sure if that was human or dog praise. Did it matter?

Even

sitting on the floor, things felt so normal. They watched TV, joking
and chatting over the commercials. If it weren't for the fact he could
see his pink fur legs, Cody might have almost forgotten he was a poodle
boy now. Things even felt normal when mom looked at the clock and said
her familiar Sunday night decree.

"Alright, Cody. It's time for bed."

"Already?" That too was half tradition, half genuine.

"It's
a school night." Mom said. "Now outside to go potty one last time and
then it's off to bed." Well, Cody thought as mom took him by the collar
as if he could not possibly find the back door on his own, this was not
normal.

He peed at the base of his tree. It was funny how simply
peeing on a tree really did make him think of it as his, he thought
before heading back inside. Mom made him wash his hands in the sink and
then he went into the bathroom to brush his teeth. After that, it was
off to his room with Dad close behind, where Cody

discovered his bed was
gone. He had woken up in it just this morning, but now, there was a dog
bed in its place! Still, one thing surprised him even more than that.

"It's not pink!" Cody felt relieved, even if he still had a dog bed where his normal bed had been just that morning.

"If
it were, you'd blend in." Dad teased. "Into bed, poodle pup. You've got
school in the morning." Cody felt a little strange as he sat down on
the bed. It was basically a giant pillow. No blankets or anything. I
guess my fur is my blanket, he thought. Shave off all my fur and then
don't even give me a blanket. He wasn't even cold; it was the principle
of the matter! He checked his wrist again to see if he could find where
the unitard ended, but it was time to face facts: he was a poodle with
human hands, feet, and a human face. This was his life now and, somehow,
he was still expected to go to school tomorrow.

"A boy at the
worst times." He told the ceiling as he reclined, reaching under him to

move his tail from its uncomfortable position. He scratched a floppy
ear. Somehow, he still had both human ears and dog ears. He played with
his earlobe a bit, more out of curiosity than anything else. He fell
asleep, barely even waking up when his mom snuck in to drape a blanket
over him.

Morning came and Cody rubbed at his eyes, sluggishly
walking over to his dresser to grab fresh underwear only to remember the
events of the day before.

“Would it have been so bad to wake up
normal?” He muttered. He batted at the poof of fur atop his head. He
could not help but feel like having his actual hair dyed pink and
poodlified like this was especially terrible. He sighed. At least his
hands and feet still looked human, he thought as he wiggled his fingers
and toes.

“Morning, Cody!” His mom said, walking in. He almost
scolded her for not knocking, but what did it matter? He was lucky he
even had a door anymore. “Do you need to go potty?”

“No.” He said.

“Did you have good doggy dreams?” Cody could not remember if his dreams had been boy or dog dreams, so he stayed silent.

“So, what am I going to wear?”

“Your bows, of course.” She gathered them from the drawer that had once held his underwear. “School colors!”

“Great…”

“"It
was either the bows or you that had to be school colors, remember?" She
smiled. "And there was no way I was going to let them dye my son green
and gold.” She chuckled. “We’ll get your bows, then you’ll eat breakfast
and then I’m sure Leo will be here to walk you to school.”

“I’m not dressed!”

“Well, hold still.” She examined the bow she had removed. “These white bows are nice. They really pop against your fur.”

“No, I… Mom! I can’t go to school naked!”

“Cody, that’s enough. You have your bows.”

“But
I need a shirt, pants… underwear!” Saying that word to his mom was

almost as humiliating as all the poodle treatment he had had over the
last day.

“I’m not gonna be known as that mom who sent her dog to school in people clothes.” She laughed. “And why waste money on pants
that I’d have to cut a hole in?” She shook her head at the very thought.
“Speaking of, turn around, Cody pup. You need a bow on your tail yet.”

“Why?”

“It’s just how things are done.” Mom said. “Poodles need bows.”

“Even boy poodles?”

“I bet all your classmates would think it was weird if you didn’t have
them. It’d be like one of them not wearing pants.” Cody remembered Leo,
or was it Aiden, making a similar comment just yesterday. “Besides,
you’re a poodle before you’re a boy.” She murmured, more to herself than
to her son. “There! Downstairs for breakfast.”

“Gee, wonder
what it could be.” He almost convinced himself it wouldn’t be puppy

chow, but there it was, sitting in his bowl like always.

“Eat
up, Cody.” If there was one silver lining of all this, it was that Cody
was almost expected to chew loudly with his mouth open. He may be a boy
at the worst times, but he was a dog at mealtimes. “Leo will be here any
minute, finish eating.”

“Am I really going to go to school like
this?” Dogs did not go to school! Maybe, just maybe, he could get out
of it by acting like a dog? No, not a dog… a prissy… he could not even
finish the thought. He stood up, stretching his back and groaning. He
could not spend all day on all fours, he decided.

“Let’s get your leash on.” Mom said.

“A leash? For school?”

“You were perfectly content with it yesterday.” She said, wrestling his
arms through the harness. “And I’m not having you run off and get lost.
Come to think of it…” She stroked his ear pensively, lost in thought
for a moment. “And here’s your backpack.” That was not his backpack! His

was denim blue, this one was aggressively pink!

“That’s a girl backpack!”

“It is not.”

“It’s pink!”

“So are you. It’s a poodle’s backpack.” Cody frowned, but she pushed
the backpack into his arms as the doorbell rang. “It’s got your lunch in
it, so you’re carrying it.”

“How am I supposed to put it on my back?”

“Your leash gets in the way.”

“I know.”

“So carry it, silly pup.” Cody rolled his eyes. Was there still time to
fake a stomach ache? What if he dropped the backpack and started
playing adorably with a toy? I’d probably get to take it to school then,
he thought, but then Mrs. Duquette would take it away. She always took
toys away ‘until the end of the day’ only to conveniently forget to give
them back. He was not going to lose his red bone!

“Cody!” Leo exclaimed. Cody fought the canine urge to run over to him.

“Can you believe this?” He muttered as one boy to another, nodding to his backpack.

“Your lunch is in there.” Mom said. “Oh, and Leo, he hasn’t pooped yet.”

“Mom!”

“Do
you wanna real quick, Cody? I’d uh” Leo’s voice trailed off. “I’d
rather not stop on the way to school, yeah.” Cody’s face burned.

“Can we just go? If you’re making me go to school like this, might as
well get it over with.” He marched out of the house sullenly, feeling
the harness around his chest tug. He sighed. “Hurry up, Leo.”

“Sorry, Cody! I don’t have your energy.” He laughed.

“So, um… what’s school like?”

“What do you mean? We sit there, bored out of our minds, waiting to go home. Geez, the weekend wasn’t that long!”

“But for me?”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about.” Leo said with a shrug. “You sure you don’t need to poop?”

“If I do, I’ll just use the boys’ room at school.” Leo laughed.

“Good one!”

“You know, you don’t need to hold that thing. Where will I go?”

“Oh, yeah. Totally gonna let go of your leash when it’s clear you don’t want to go to school.”

“No one else needs a leash, do they?”

“If your mom says you need a leash, I’m not gonna argue.” He shrugged. “Plus do you really want to go to the pound?”

“What? I’m a human being!” Leo’s face was unreadable. He was a human
being, wasn’t he? Leo stopped and eyed a maple tree. Cody tugged at the
leash, but had little choice but to stop.

“How’s this place smell?”

“Smell?”

“For, you know.”

“Don’t dogs usually tell you when they need to go?”

“Just figured, you seem grumpy. Maybe you need to”

“Let’s go to school. I’ll use a toilet IF I have to go.” Leo seemed
puzzled, but he followed Cody all the way to school. “We’re here.” The
pink poodle boy said. “Get this off of me.”

“You know the rules.” Cody did not actually. “Leash stays on in the halls.”

“What?” Leo’s shoulders rose and fell in a shrug.

“Principals, man.” Cody fumed as he led Leo through the halls, hardly
able to ignore all the people staring at him. He had to look ridiculous,
all pink and wooly, carrying his backpack as Leo held his leash.

“Good morning, Cody!”

“Um, good morning, Joey?” Cody stiffened up nervously as Joey walked
over and scratched behind his ears. He pushed past him and into the
classroom, more focused on getting away from him than making sure Leo
was behind him with the other end of the leash.

“Did you have a good weekend, Cody?”

“Uh, sure?” He stared at Rebecca in confusion.

“Hi, Cody!”

“Morning, Cody!” Cody soon found himself all but surrounded by nearly
the entire class. Leo walked over to his desk, letting the leash go and
grinning knowingly at Aiden. With his adoring fans all around him, how
could Cody run away?

Cody turned in a circle, trying to make sense of what was going on. Hands caressed him all over, burying hands into his wooly poodle fur, everyone seemed like they needed to wish him good morning that very instant, and it was all so strange! He had never really been unpopular, but he mostly hung out with Aiden and Leo. Why was everyone so friendly?

“Alright, to your desks, students.” Mrs. Duquette said. It might have been the very first time Cody was relieved to hear her stern voice. “Yes, Cody got a new hair cut, but he’s still the same poodle.” The crowd dispersed. With the familiar sounds of Mrs. Duquette ordering them to their desks, Cody walked to his, still dragging the leash behind him. “Leo.”

“Yes, Mrs. Duquette?”

“Why is Cody still wearing his leash?” The class all giggled in that way students do when one of their own gets in trouble. Leo jumped up and unbuckled Cody’s harness.

“Sorry.” He said, more to the teacher than to Cody. Cody

hurried to his desk.

“What are you doing?” Leo asked, having hung Cody’s leash up by the door.

“Sitting in my desk.”

“My desk.” Leo said. “You sit behind me. Always have.” Cody nodded, but
was confused. Behind Leo’s desk, there wasn’t a desk. Just a bit of
frayed carpet that… Cody could not explain it, but something about the
rug told him it was his. The smell? The general air of it? He could not
put it into words, but it was his. He sat down cross-legged on the rug.
He could still see Mrs. Duquette and the board, not that he had ever
been a good student by any stretch. Why did this feel so right?

Cody pondered it throughout the morning, but tried his best to pay
attention all the same. If he was going to sit on the floor like a dog,
why couldn’t he play with a toy? He missed his squeaky red bone and his
video games equally.

“Cody? Do you know the answer?” He looked at the board and tried to puzzle it out.

“Uh, forty-nine?”

“Good boy!” Mrs. Duquette said. Cody could not help but grin so wide,
his tail actually wagged. He filed it away to investigate later. “But
pay closer attention.”

Cody felt the need to at least attempt to
obey and pay attention, even as it began to rain and there were drops
to watch race down the window. He glimpsed out the window. It was
pouring! Was recess going to be inside, he wondered? That felt more like
one of his own thoughts. All this thinking about water made him realize
he needed to pee.

He raised a hand, blushing as he was reminded once again of the little fluffy pink doughnut around his wrist.

“Yes, Cody?”

“May I go to the bathroom please?”

“Well, it’s nearly time for gym.” Cody knew what that meant. He would have to wait. “Whose turn is it?”

“Mine, Mrs. Duquette.” Devin said, standing up and looking out the window. “Do I really hafta?”

“It’s your turn, Devin.” Lisa said from the front of the class.

Devin sighed.

“Come on, Cody.” Cody sat there. What was going on? Everyone knew something, but what? “Cody, come! Come on, boy!”

“What’s going on?” Cody slowly got up from his rug.

“Here’s a treat.” Mrs. Duquette said, handing it to Devin.

“Cody, I have a treat!” He said, shaking his hand. Deeply confused, Cody walked to the front of the class. “Sit!”

“Have him do tricks later.” Mrs. Duquette said. “The custodians have cleaned up enough accidents.”

“Alright.” Devin held out his hand, palm up. Cody took the treat and
put it in his own mouth, chewing on it calmly as Mrs. Duquette put his
harness on him.

“The bathroom’s just down the hall.” He muttered. “I’m not gonna run away.”

“Try and stay dry.” Mrs. Duquette said to Devin.

“Let’s go, Cody.”

“Is she worried I’m gonna pee on you?” He asked as they left the classroom.

“I think she’s more worried about the rain.”

“Rain? Hey, I’m not going out there!” He tugged on the

leash. “Let’s go to the boys’ room.”

“And do what? You can’t use a urinal.” Cody looked up and down. He was on two legs. Couldn’t Devin see that? His bladder ached. He had to pee too badly to really argue.

“Fine.” He muttered.

As they neared the door, Cody caught a glimpse of his reflection, only then remembering he had bows in his fur, especially the one right in the middle of the pink wooly fur atop his head that had once been a normal boy’s hairstyle. It was still hair, right? It felt a lot like the fur on the rest of him and really, what was the difference between hair and fur? Boys had hair, dogs had fur, he thought.

“Your leash should reach if I stay in here, right?” Devin asked. “No point in both of us getting wet.”

“I’ll shake off on you.” Cody said, rolling his eyes.. Something suddenly occurred to him. “If I poop, you gotta scoop it, right?” Devin seemed to turn green.

“Ew, dude!” Cody cackled. “Just go pee.
We’re doing dodgeball in gym.” Cody nodded. No one wanted to miss
dodgeball. He took a breath as if he was about to take a plunge into a
pool and stepped out into the rain.

Knowing that he was out here
to pee, Cody felt instinct take over. He went over to a bit of the
brick wall that he somehow felt like he had peed on before and peed.
Even standing on two legs, he lifted one to pee, rain pouring down on
him and nearly flattening his fur. He hoped he did not look as much like
a drowned rat as he felt as he returned to the door. Devin made a
series of gestures.

“What? Open the door!”

“Shake off!”
Devin was muffled. Cody sighed and jumped up and down, shaking his body.
“Good dog.” Devin said, opening the door.

“Back to class?”

“Boys room first.” Devin decreed. “You need to dry off more.”

Even though it was his idea – or had it been? Cody couldn’t

be sure
what the rules were – Devin still seemed annoyed as he watched Cody dry
off under the hand dryers.

"This is taking forever!" Devin complained.

"Oh
like you wanted to go back to class anyway." Cody said while his fur
got endlessly poofier. "Here, take my bows to the other hand dryer if
you’re in such a hurry."

"Yeah, like I know how to put them back
in your fur." His nose wrinkled. "You know, this is the first time you
smelled like a dog. Do you perfume your fur or something normally?"

"What? You don't stink normally, so do you wear perfume?"

"No,
but I wear like deodorant and stuff." Devin shrugged. “I mean, if you
do, it’s ok to admit it. I know what poodles are like.”

“How many poodles do you know?”

“Well, you’re the only one.” Devin admitted. “But I mean, you’re pink and you always have bows.”

“I’m not naturally pink.”

“But you gotta like being pink, right?” Cody sighed.

“Does your mom or dad buy clothes for you?”

“Yeah?”

“That’s
what it’s like for me.” He thought back to the groomer’s. “My mom told
the… barber” Devin snorted in disbelief. “What she wanted done and now
I’m pink and… poodly, I guess?” He laughed. “Parents, right?”

“I guess.”

“Yours
make you wear… I dunno. Dorky shirts to church? Mine make me wear bows
and leashes.” Parents, he thought, shaking his head as he tried to dry
his ears. Just two weeks ago, he had forgotten to tell his parents where
he and Leo were going, so both Mom and Dad had been furious when he got
home. Maybe I deserve this whole leash thing then? He thought. Is that
how it worked? Disappear for a couple hours and you get turned into a
dog boy?
“Aren’t you done?” Cody realized that his fur was not
getting any drier, only more and more poofy, so he stepped

away and did
his best to make his bows look right.

“See, dude? Uh, dog? You like your bows.”

“No,
I’m just worried Mrs. Duquette will make a big deal if they’re not just
right.” He sighed and wondered if he should have tried to make a run
for it while Devin had been holding the handle of the leash loosely. Too
late now, he thought, as he led Devin out of the bathroom.

“Hi, doggy!” A first grader said as he passed them on his way to the bathroom.

“Uh, hi.”

“His name’s Cody.” Devin explained.

“He doesn’t need to know that.”

They returned to class just as everyone was lining up to go to gym. Mrs. Duquette eyed Cody and adjusted a few of his bows.

"Look!
Cody's wagging his tail!" Someone called out as Mrs. Duquette put the
finishing touches on his bows. He realized he was, and why shouldn't he?
Sure, he was fluffy, pink, and infested with prissy bows, but it was

dodgeball day in gym.

"Aiden, can you take Cody's leash?" Mrs. Duquette asked. Cody grinned at Aiden, who gave him an excellent ear scritch.

"You're extra poofy today." He observed. "Excited for gym?"

"No talking in the halls please." Cody rolled his eyes and nodded his answer to Aiden's question.

He
looked down at his wrists, trying to slip a finger under the cuff of
his outfit. Part of him knew the cuff didn't exist anymore, but it still
made no sense. Maybe he should go to the nurse and ask? Could he fake a
tummyache? A hurt paw? What if the nurse had become a vet?

"What's so funny? Aiden asked as Cody laughed out of the blue.

"Nothing."
He said as they entered the gym. He skidded to a halt, nose wrinkling.
"Ugh! It reeks!" Aiden shrugged, sniffing the air audibly.

"Smells the same as always." Cody buried his nose in the furry pom pom on his wrist. At least that smell was him.

"Like
major bee oh." He muttered, spying the rubber balls that confirmed

dodgeball and feeling a little bit better. “You really don’t smell it?”
Aiden shrugged.

"Alright, Aiden." Mr. Goode called across the gym
from the middle of a ring of orange cones. "Go ahead and take off
Cody's leash. Cody, all fours." Cody blinked in confusion. Did Mr. Goode
just say all fours?

"Aren't you going to listen?" Aiden asked
as he set Cody's harness aside. "You only get treats when you have
proper form, you know."

"What are you talking" he felt his ears
rise as Mr. Goode whistled. "Cody! Here, boy!" He beckoned Cody over to
join him in the ring of cones.

"Class, over here for dodgeball."
Mr. Donavan called, clapping his hands. Cody looked from one gym teacher
to another, confused. Why were they both here?

"Cody, here boy!" Cody walked over to Mr. Goode, who shook his head with a laugh.

"Nice try, bud, but remember proper form."

"What?"

"Aw,
you got a case of the Mondays?" He patted Cody's shoulder. "Down, boy.
Down." He kneeled down and Cody followed. The moment his hands touched
the floor, Mr. Goode nodded. "There you go. Good dog." He patted Cody on
the head, right on his bow. "But to get a treat, I want you to go back
and come over to me properly."

"What do you mean, properly?" Mr. Goode chuckled like an adult who didn't quite get the joke, but recognized it as one.

"No
tricks, nothing fancy. On all four legs with your head up." It was
surprisingly easy to go a short distance away and then come back on all
fours, which was good because Cody was busy puzzling over the situation.
Across the gym, he could see his classmates splitting into teams for
dodgeball while he was busy walking on all fours. He had a suspicion he
would not be playing dodgeball today. "Good boy!" Still kneeling, Mr.
Goode held out a treat. "No, not with your paw. I didn't say shake."
Cody sighed and grabbed it with his teeth. "There we go."

Mr. Goode stood up and Cody began to follow. "Down." Cody sighed. "Sit." The poodle boy twisted around and sat cross-legged. It had been good enough for class, right? How else should he sit?

Cody soon found out as Mr. Goode kneeled down and began to move his legs around.

"Proper form, Cody." He said. "Good posture and proper form are important for being active and healthy." Cody figured out what he was aiming for and shifted so that he was sitting like a dog. "Back straight. Good boy!" At least it earned him a treat. "Stand, Cody." That one was easy, even if he was tempted to stand up all the way up. "Sit." He went back down. "Stand! Sit! Stand! Sit!" Ten reps earned him another treat. "Alright, let's move on." It was like a game of Simon Says except Cody had to obey every command. At least Mr. Goode was generous with the treats and never really yelled at him, even when he did not quite get what he meant by speak.

"Speak!"

"Uh, hello."

"Speak!"

"Um, good morning?"

"No, Cody. Speak!" Cody wondered how long it would go before Mr. Goode knew he knew what he meant.

"Bark!" Cody said, trying to make the word at least sound like a dog noise.

"I can keep going as long as you can, Cody. Speak!" Cody sighed.

"Yip!"
His high-pitched bark echoed through the gym and he heard a few giggles
from over at the lively dodgeball game, where the students who were out
were standing on the sidelines and watching his obedience lesson.

"Speak!"

"Yip!"

"Up!" Cody obeyed. "Speak!"

"Yip!"

"Good
dog!" Mr. Goode gave him a treat and Cody did not even

hesitate to
snatch it with his mouth. "Alright, do a lap around the cones." Cody
made his way around the cones on all fours, still getting used to how
natural it felt. What did it mean? What if he could not stand up again?
When Mr. Goode looked away, Cody squatted on his haunches, just to make
sure he could. "How about we see how fast you can go, poodle pup?" Even
half poodle or whatever he was, going fast still sounded great to Cody.
He took off running around the cones, trying his best to ignore the
laughter from the dodgeball sidelines as a prissy pink blur sped past,
circling the cones.

"Alright, take a water break." There was a
water fountain on the wall of the gym that Cody knew of, but he had
never seen the stainless steel water bowl beside it.

"Wonder
where I'm supposed to go?" He muttered, walking over. He knew Mr. Goode
was watching him, so he stayed on all fours until he reached the water
fountain. He stood up and immediately yelped, covering his

ears as
possibly the loudest, shrillest sound he had ever heard suddenly split
the air.

"Cody! Down!" Mr. Goode said, whistle falling from his
lips as he jogged over. "None of your classmates need puppy slobber on
the spigot."

"What was that thing?" Cody moaned, still shaken.

"Sorry,
buddy. We don't like to use that, but I needed your attention." Cody
eyed it, the rational part of his mind wondering if it was a dog
whistle. No one else seemed nearly as affected. No, it was just a normal
gym teacher's whistle. So his hearing definitely had changed, he
thought. Dog toys sound amazing and whistles were awful! He shuddered.
"Have your drink."

Once Cody drank his fill, marveling at how the
water dish refilled, he returned to Mr. Goode to review the tricks?
Moves? Whatever he had learned, ignoring the snickers as he yipped again
and again.

“Mr. Goode. Can we play fetch with Cody?” Mr. Goode

looked at the kids who had asked, considering it.

“If
Mr. Donavan says it’s ok.” He said at last. The other gym teacher
nodded his head and that was how Cody spent the rest of gym class,
chasing after balls thrown by his classmates.

“Proper form,
Cody!” Mr. Goode called every time Cody tried to do something undoglike.
He had eyes like a hawk, Cody thought as he grabbed the ball in his
mouth before bringing it back over to April, who smiled.

“Sit!”
She said. Cody rolled his eyes, but obeyed. She didn’t give him any
treats, but at least ear scritches were good no matter who was giving
them. “Give.” She held out her hand.

“You could say please.” Cody said. April giggled.

“You’re
cute.” Cody stared at her, trying to decide if she meant he was a cute
boy or a cute dog. “I like your bows.” Dog. “Go fetch!” She threw the
ball and Cody ran after it.

“Alright, who’s going to take Cody back to class?” Mr. Goode called at the end of class. Finally, Cody thought. I can stand up again. As if he could read his mind, Mr. Goode looked at Cody, harness in his hand. “Stay down, Cody.” He kneeled. “Your homework is to practice your proper posture and form. No going up on your hind legs to impress your classmates, understand?”

“For the rest of the day?” Mr. Goode did not seem to hear him, giving Cody’s head a rough rub before handing the leash to April.

“I have an idea.” April said. She held the leash out to Cody. “Want this, boy?”

“Huh?”

“Well, a member of the class has to hold your leash. You’re a member of the class, right?” She laughed. “Just promise not to run off.”

“I promise.” She shook her head.

“Cross your heart, hope to die, pink and floofy til the day you die?” Cody blinked. Had she just come up with that? All the same, he

repeated it. I
hope I’m not pink and floofy until the day I die, he thought, suddenly
wondering just how long mom would keep getting to pick his hairstyle.
Probably depends on if I’m a boy or a dog.

He felt nothing like a
boy as he returned to class on all fours, leash in his mouth. Mrs.
Duquette barely even blinked as he sat down at his spot. She had already
begun to talk about nouns and adjectives before Cody realized he was
sitting like a dog. Mr. Goode had gotten to him! He shifted back to
crossed legs, glad it did not feel too weird to do so. I may be a poodle
before I’m a boy, but I’m human before I’m a dog. He thought, wishing
he believed it.

“Leo. When’s lunchtime?” He whispered as he felt his stomach grumble.

“Cody? Do you know where the adjective is in this sentence?” Mrs. Duquette said.

“Uh” Cody stared at the board.

“Dumb dog.” He heard someone mumble.

“You know what they say about poodles.” Another mumbler mused. Cody glared at them.

“Isn’t it ‘big’?” He said. Mrs. Duquette nodded.

“Very good. But please pay more attention. And sit properly like the
others.” Well, they’re in desks and I’m on the floor, Cody thought. Did
she mean he shouldn’t sit cross legged? Well, that wasn’t going to
happen!

Finally, the time came for lunch and Cody realized he
would have to stand up if he wanted to carry his lunchbox. He stood,
stretching as Mrs. Duquette fastened his harness to him. Would he have
to keep it on during lunch? With my luck, probably, he thought.

“What’s the rule, kids?”

“Don’t feed Cody off our trays.” The class said in loose unison.

“And no begging, Cody.” She said to him. “Now who’s taking Cody’s leash?”

To his relief, no one commented on Cody standing up again as they went
to the cafeteria. Things felt normal as he joined the others who had

brought their lunches over to the table.

“What are you doing?” April asked with a giggle. Was that all she did, Cody wondered.

“Sitting to eat lunch?”

“You’re gonna get in trouble!” She said in sing-song. Cody stuck his tongue out at her.

“Alright, Cody. Let’s not go through this again.” Miss Nancy, the lunchroom monitor, said. “Down, boy.”

“But”

“Your lunch is down here.” She took the lunchbox from in front of him
and opened it on the floor. He did not know what he expected, but it was
not his tail wagging as he caught a whiff of kibble. “Down you come,
Cody. And remember, boys and girls, no feeding him scraps. Even if he
tries to beg.”

“I’m not going to do that!” Cody said. Miss Nancy just patted him on his poofy head.

“Not your fault, boy. Poodles are natural attention hogs.”

“That’s not very nice.” Cody mumbled.

“I’ll take it that growl is because you’re hungry.” She said. “Go on,

eat. I'll find your water bowl." Cody looked around self-consciously,
but was too hungry to really care if anyone was watching him.

"Whatcha you got today, Leo?" Aiden asked.

"PB and J. With strawberry J." Cody pulled his head out of his food and
smiled. Even with everything so different, Aiden and Leo were still
sitting right next to him. Well, above him since he was down on the
floor.

"Cool! How 'bout you, Cody?" Cody blinked.

"Uh, kibble?" He said, looking up at his friends. "Uh, how about you, Aiden?"

"Mom packed me some kinda meat. Bologna?" He studied the sandwich.
"Wanna try it, Cody?" Cody looked at it with interest. He had been
eating kibble for every meal and that pup cup yesterday barely counted
as people food. I'm people too, he reminded himself.

"Aiden,
you better not." Leo said. "You know Miss Nancy always watches Cody
closely. Ever since…" his voice took on a dramatic tone. "The Chili

Incident."

"Food fights always work better in the movies." Cody said in his own defense. "It was a good idea," he muttered, going back to his kibble. It wasn't so bad, after all. It seemed to be getting better every time. He turned his attention to his water dish and began to slurp at it loudly. Getting to slurp and smack his lips as much as he wanted was especially great. Do I like being a dog? He wondered. Was he a dog? Everyone seemed to think so. Except when they don't, he thought.

It was very confusing. One minute, he's being called on in class, the next he's eating kibble out of a lunchbox on the floor. "So, you not sharing, Aiden?" Aiden laughed.

"You always beg." Cody returned to his kibble, but had to wonder what that meant. No one – except him – saw him being a dog as anything strange, but he knew, knew, that he had been a boy last Friday at school. He could remember sitting right there next to Leo, eating his sandwich, drinking chocolate milk. Why did no one else remember that?

As he finished off his lunch, Cody searched his brain for something so memorable that someone would have to remember him being a boy. A real boy, he thought as he stared down at the pink fur doughnut on his wrist.

“All done, boys and girls? All done, pup?” Miss Nancy said, closing Cody’s lunch box. “Who’s got leash duty?”

“Me!” Cody said at once, raising a hand. Miss Nancy laughed.

“That’s a good one, Cody. But here, we’ll have someone else take it. Your teacher does a whole schedule, after all!”

“It’s my turn, Miss Nancy.” A girl named Casey said, looking less than thrilled.

“Huh?”

“Here you go, Casey.” She said, handing the girl Cody’s leash.

“We really can’t just tie him to a post? That’s what we do with my dog.”

“What? What’s even going on?” Cody asked.

“I get to hang onto your leash while you sniff around and do your business.” Casey said. “Lucky me.” She sighed.

“Are you like this with your dog?” Cody muttered.

“My dog’s a real dog.” Cody blinked. Did she mean… Before he could ask,

Casey snapped her fingers. “Go on, Cody. Lead the way. Even a poodle knows where the playground is, right?” Even if he did not, the herd of students were all heading in one clear direction.

“What now?” Cody muttered, giving the leash a tug.

“No, Cody. No pulling.” Casey said. “Go pee or whatever.” Cody smirked.

“Maybe I’ll do more than that.” He mused to himself. “Hey, aren’t there any toys or anything? What if I get bored?”

“No chasing squirrels.” Cody rolled his eyes.

“It’s a playground. I’d be more likely to chase kindergartners.”

“You’d be too worried about their sticky hands in your pretty poodle fur, I bet.” Cody tried to deny it, but he remembered the little girl from yesterday and involuntarily shuddered. She smirked. “You poodles are so vain.” That triggered Cody’s memory.

"What did you mean earlier that your dog is a real dog?" Did someone else finally realize how weird this all is?

"Well, she is." She shrugged. "Poodles just are... Different. And you’re like… super duper poodly.”

“What does that mean?” She seemed surprised he did not

realize what she was referring to.

“I mean, just… just look at you. You're pink, fluffy, and always have bows like you just left the poodle parlor."

"I'm not normally! My mom"

"Not
normally pink?" She snorted. "Uh-huh. The way you yip and prance,
pink's the only color for you. Do you even know how to fetch?"

"Sure I do!" Had she not been paying attention during gym?

"Your yip hasn't deepened. At all. since kindergarten."

"It will!" Since kindergarten? Had he been a poodle back then? No! No, but everyone seemed to think…

"Is
that what your mommy says when she puts your pretty prissy bows in your
pretty prissy fur?" He scoffed. “Poodle-woodle loves your bows, right?”

"Honestly? Take them out of my fur. I hate them."

"Do
it yourself." She smirked. "But you're too much of a goody two shoes
poodle priss to do it, aren't you?" Cody scoffed again, though it
sounded more like a soft yip.

“Me? A goody two shoes? Do you even know me? Me and Leo used to”

“See? Trying to change the subject to keep your pretty bows.” Cody frowned. He could see a trap coming a mile away.

“Someone will just put them back on.”

“Won’t know until you try.” Cody tugged on the leash.

“So
gonna poop and make you scoop it up.” That at least seemed to shut her
up, but then Cody realized he might actually have to go. Did that kibble
go right through him? Or was it breakfast? Did it matter?

Once
she realized that Cody was not going to take the bait, Casey seemed
disinterested in him. Cody felt a little weird about walking around the
playground with her close behind. Couldn’t he hang onto his own leash?
What am I thinking? I don’t need a leash!

"How much time is left for recess?" He asked, only half expecting Casey to answer.

"I dunno. Ten minutes? Why?" Her eyes widened as Cody squatted down. "Oh. You're cleaning that up."

"I'm a dog." Cody said. He winced inwardly, but continued.

"Just a pampered silly poodle."

"I'm not scooping that up!"

"You have to. You're on leash duty and that is doody."

"You
scoop your own poop." Casey said, hands on her hips as her voice took
on a bossy tone. "Everyone knows that!" Cody huffed. “Don’t growl at
me!”

"I wasn't."

"Scoop that up or I'm telling." Cody held
firm. Her voice was so annoying when she got bossy! “Unless you’re a
bad dog?” Cody scoffed.

“You really think that’s going to work?”
In truth, he felt a sting deep down. He wasn’t a dog! Even if everyone
acted like he was. It was really confusing. He looked like a boy, didn’t
he? A boy with pink fur. But it’s not like

“Scoop it!” Casey interrupted his thoughts.

“With what?” He mimicked her snotty tone.

“Seriously?
Drop the dumb dog act, Cody. With one of your bags.” She pulled it out

of a plastic bone on the leash. How had I not noticed that? Cody thought.

“I don’t… I don’t wanna touch it.” Casey sighed.

“Wrap the bag around your hand and then grab it. It just came out of you.”

“That’s gross.”

“You better do it before the end of recess. Do you want detention?” She smirked, knowing she had won. “Or maybe I should call the playground monitor over?” She looked in her direction, murmuring to herself. “Don’t know why she can’t hold your leash.” She looked back at Cody, who was trying to psych himself up for this. “God.” She muttered. “Pink, covered in bows. You are such a poodle. You really are prissy, you know that?”

“Believe me, I do.” Cody took the bag and a deep breath. Was he really about to do this?

“Hurry up!”

“I’m trying to concentrate.” He muttered.

“Don’t growl.”

“I’m not!”

“Maybe your mom should sign you up for barking classes.”

“What does that even mean?”

“Quit getting distracted.” Great, she was sounding bossy again. “Scoop!” Cody sighed.

“If it’ll shut you up, fine.” The best plan, he figured, was just to go as quickly as possible. He scrunched up his nose and grabbed it, nearly gagging.

"Ugh, finally."

"So gross." Cody didn't even dare breathe. “What now?”

“Throw it away, weirdo.” Casey said in disgust. “We gotta go inside and there’s a trash right there by the door.” She watched him hold the baggie out at arm’s length, rolling her eyes. “Have you ever even tried not being such a freaking poodle?” She muttered under her breath.

“What’s your problem?” Cody asked, glaring at her.

“I just lost a whole recess to have to babysit you.”

“So?
Everyone takes turns, don’t they? And it’s not like I can help being…
whatever I am.” Casey scoffed. “But you know what? You can stop being a
bully.”

“I’m not a bully.” Casey said, offended. “And if you tell
Mrs. Duquette that I am…” Cody knew he had won. His celebration in his
head was short-lived, however, as he walked into the classroom.

As
soon as he saw her, he realized he had smelled her in the hallway. His
mom stood there by the teacher's desk, smiling as she saw him walk in on
his leash.

“Mom?!”

“There’s my poodle! Oh, here, let’s get your leash off. You’ll wear your harness with me.”

“Huh? What’s going on, mom?”

“Your
bows are all messed up.” She said to a few snickers. “Hold still. And…
there!” As far as Cody was concerned, it felt like his bows were the

exact same as they had been before. “Who’s my pretty poodle? Cody’s the
prettiest poodle in the whole wide world!” Another chorus of snickers
washed over him. “Come on, Cody. We have an appointment to get to.”

“Say bye to Cody, kids.” Mrs. Duquette said.

“Bye!”

“Lead the way, poodle pup.”

“But
mom, where are we going?” He kept asking, but she refused to answer
until they got to the car and he was safely in the backseat. “Come on
and tell me! Where are we going, mom?”

"We have an appointment."

"Ugh! Not the groomer again!?"

"You went yesterday, silly."

"That's my point!" She looked back at him and smiled.

“Were your classmates not complimentary enough about your fur? Is that why you want to go to the groomer again?”

“Huh? I don't!”

“Don’t worry, you’ll always be mommy’s pretty poodle!”

“Mom, c’mon! I’m a boy!”

“Boy poodles are pretty poodles. Especially boy poodles with pretty bows in their pretty pink fur.”

“You did this to me.”

“No
growling, Cody.” She started the car. “Especially when we get to our
appointment.” She looked back at him. “Oh, and there’s a chocolate bar
on the seat you can have.” Can I eat it? Cody wondered, half-remembering
something about it being bad for dogs. I’m not a dog though. He gave it
a tentative nibble, but something seemed wrong. Well, not wrong
exactly, but something was bothering him. As the trees went past the
window, he suddenly realized what it was. Mom only ever bribed him with
candy when they were going to the doctor!

Chapter 4

Cody: Doctor Jemisin - Chapter 4

"Mom!" Cody yelped. "I can't go to the doctor like this!"

"What do you mean?"

"Like this!"

"You just went to the groomer yesterday and I promise"

"Mom!"

"No! No barking, Cody." She looked at him in the rearview mirror. "Sit still and I'll fix your bows when we get there. I promise Dr. Jemisin will think you're the prettiest poodle."

"Who's Dr. Jemisin?"

"Oh, the appointment was last minute, so I had to get whoever was available."

"I like my usual doctor..." Cody mumbled.

"Sorry, pup. We need to get to the bottom of your itching."

"It's these stupid bows!"

"You love your bows." Cody frowned. Hopefully this doctor would tell Mom she was crazy to insist he wear prissy bows all the time. Even if he was stuck as a pink poodle, he'd take what victories he could get.

"We're here!" Mom said.

"Great..." She got out of the car.

"Stay, Cody. Sit! Let Mommy make you nice for your appointment."

"Mom, c'mon." Cody whined as mom gave him an impromptu brushing in addition to 'fixing' his bows.

"Nearly done. Who's my pretty poodle? Cody is! Yes, he is!" Cody heard a thumping and glared at his tail. Traitor, he thought before it fully sunk in that his tail was wagging. "Alright, pup. Out we come!" Cody hopped out of the car, feeling the harness tug at his chest. How was he already getting used to it? He sighed, but that was all forgotten as he stared at the building in front of them. This wasn't right!

"Mom? Where are we?"

"The doctor. Don't tell me you're pretending you can't read again." Cody looked at the sign as they walked toward the building. Mom was the one who couldn't read. That sign clearly said vet on it.

As they walked inside, Cody realized this might not be so bad. A vet would recognize immediately that this boy was, well, a boy! Not a dog.

He felt like every eye was on him as mom took him up to the receptionist, holding his leash tightly. He eyed the room, half-expecting to see another dog boy like him. The only boy was reading a comic book as his little sister chattered beside him.

"Well, hi there, Cody!" Cody looked up at the receptionist.

Why did she sound like she knew him? "I'm Mrs. Rainey, y'know, Dalton's mom?"

"Oh. Hi."

"Cody! He's a little grouchy."

"You got out of school early though!" She smiled down at him. "But I've been saving a treat for a certain special poodle right here." She pulled out a dog treat and held it just out of Cody's reach. He eyed the little brown bone. Was it a cookie? “You know what you gotta do to get it though.” She said in sing-song

“Can I please have the treat?” He asked dutifully.

“Aw, look at the little cutie patootie beg. Can you sit, Cody? Sit!”

Cody sat down on the floor, staring at the poster on the front of the reception desk about some medication. If I gotta be a dog, couldn't I be a dog like that? He thought as he looked at the romping black lab covetously.

"Good boy!" He looked up and got a treat. Glad I didn't have to work for it, he thought.

"Come Cody." Mom said as he chewed. "And stay down. Last thing this waiting room needs is a rambunctious poodle boy running around."

Cody wished no one would look at him as he crawled along beside his mom, but the excited girl had finally gotten her brother to look up and see Cody in all his woolly pink glory.

"Yeah, that's a poodle." He said, uninterested.

"Can we go pet her? Can we? She's soooooo cute."

"Yes, you can go pet the poodle." The girl's dad said. "But make sure you ask first. Even cute little puppies can bite if you startle them." How can I be startled? Cody thought as he sat cross-legged at his mom's feet. I can hear everything you say!

"Hi!" The little girl had skipped over alarmingly fast. "Can I please pet your dog?"

"Sure!" Mom said. "Just be gentle. He's a little nervous about the doctor."

"Cuz it's the vet!" Cody muttered

"Aww! I think she said hi!" The girl rubbed Cody's head, which actually felt good.

"His name is Cody." Mom explained with a smile.

"But he's a poodle!"

"There are boy poodles." The girl considered this and shrugged.

"Ok."

"I'm obviously a boy." Cody muttered.

He shifted slightly, unsure if it was even more obvious than he realized. Well, my fur... He didn't want to finish that thought. I'm at the vet, though, so... Another thought he didn't

like the idea of finishing.

"Can I take Cody outside to play?"

"No, sweetie, it's almost his turn to see the doctor."

Almost as if by cue, the receptionist called his mom's name.

"Bye-bye Cody! I love you!" The little girl said.

"Isn't that nice?" Mom said, giving Cody's leash a gentle tug. "Say bye to your fans, Cody. The doctor's waiting."

"This is your last chance." Cody said as they left the waiting room.

"For?" Mom asked. Cody looked up at her, surprised she had actually responded. He realized he was crawling and got up on his feet.

"To realize how weird it is to take your son to the vet. Your human son."

"Get all your grouching out now. The doctor doesn't want to hear it, pup." Mom said. Cody sighed.

"Well, I guess the vet will know I'm human." Why didn't he believe that? With his luck, the vet would... he tried to think of the worst possible thing the vet could do.

He didn't know what he expected, but the vet was not in the room when they arrived. Maybe this is like a human doctor, he thought. Everything else in his life had been a weird blend, right? He tried to decide which alternative he would prefer. How about neither?

"So, do I go up on the table or?" Mom answered by lifting him up on the table. He quickly shifted to sitting like a human and looked around the exam room. Photos of cats and dogs. It -could- be a pediatrician, but he doubted it.

"Here we go." Cody said just before the door opened. His heart raced.

"Good afternoon." The doctor said, studying the clipboard. "My name is Dr. Jamisin and..." The clipboard came down. "And this must be Cody."

"Sure am." Cody said, nervously.

"Aww, it's ok, pup. I'm just here to make sure you're a healthy poodle for years to come." The doctor pushed a few buttons on the table Cody sat on. "Let's get you all the way up so we can check your weight. Can you stand on the table for me?"

Despite asking, Dr. Jamisin grabbed Cody's sides and put him on his hands and knees on the table.

"Try not to move. Good boy. These are some cool bows!"

"He does love his bows." Mom remarked from the chair. "Those are his school bows."

"I'm sure your classmates were disappointed their pretty poodle buddy had to leave early."

"Not really."

"Actually," mom laughed. "Cody thought we were going to the groomers. We just went yesterday!" Both adults laughed.

"I was gonna say, this looks like a new haircut!"

"Uh, thanks?" Cody felt very embarrassed, but at least that earned him a scratch behind the ears.

"Keep holding still. I'm just going to measure your height."

Cody tried to get up off his hands and knees, but Dr. Jamisin very gently returned him to all fours, measuring from his hand to his shoulder.

"You're checking my arm length?" The doctor just laughed.

"Height and weight look good. Let's see... Oh, we still have him in our system listed as brown." Dr. Jamisin looked over at Cody and then his mom. "Are we planning to keep him pink?"

"No!" Cody protested.

"Cody, shh. Mommy's talking. He looks so nice like this. I even started a silly little Instagram account for him." Cody glared as out came mom's phone to show the vet. "So I'd say he'll be pink for a while."

"That's good enough for me."

"I always wanted a pink poodle growing up." Mom sighed happily.

"Well, you have a son." Cody muttered, watching as the vet updated the records to officially medically declare him a prissy pink poodle pup.

"Records updated." Dr. Jamisin said. "I see Cody's due for a

few immunizations."

"Whole reason I made the appointment."

"But before we get to that, Cody's getting to a certain age, isn't he? So we need to have the talk."

"What kind of talk?" Cody asked.

"Cody's getting to that age where puppies start to" Dr. Jamisin gestured. "Act on certain urges."

"Mhm." Mom said as if she knew exactly what the vet meant. Maybe she did, but the poodle boy on the exam table did not.

"What urges?" Cody asked.

"Shh, no barking." Mom said.

"Now there's no pressure, but he's getting to the age where it's best to do it, if you want to, that is."

"I'll talk it over with his dad." Mom said. "For now, let's just"

"Move on to shots, got it." Dr. Jamisin said with a chuckle.

"Shots?"

"To help you be a healthy pup."

"I feel healthy."

"They're just in case, Cody." Mom said. "Be a brave little poodle pup."

"What kinda shots are they?" Could dog shots hurt him?

"They're to help your body fight diseases." The doctor

explained. "It's no fun being sick, is it?"

"No." Cody had to admit.

"So you'll just feel a few pricky pokes in your back and we'll be all done."

"What kind of shots though?"

"It's just a few small needles and this one bigger one."

"Why's that one bigger?" Dr. Jamisin seemed to glance at his mom.

"Oh, I'm not sure. I think it comes from the manufacturer like that."

"Here," mom said. "If you hold still for the doctor, I'll give you a treat, kay?" Cody watched her dig in her bag and pull out a candy bar. An actual candy bar, not a dog treat! His eyes widened and he felt his tail wag.

"I think that's a yes." Dr. Jamisin chuckled.

"How many shots is it?"

"What a brave pup. What a good boy!" Dr. Jamisin said. Cody was a little annoyed he was being ignored, but being told how good he was made up for it.

"Nearly done." Dr. Jamisin said. Even with Cody unable to see the shots, he felt every one, but tried not to yelp.

Every sound echoed in here and his yelp was hardly manly. The people out in the waiting room can't see my pink

poodlyness, he thought, and I'm not yelping like some sissy poodle.

"Alright, pup. Last one. Saved the best for last." Best? Cody thought. "Mom? How 'bout you come hold him?"

"Uh, why?"

"Shh," mom cooed. "You're being so good! Such a good boy"

This time, Cody yelped like the prissiest poodle, but he didn't care. That hurt! At least Mom seemed apologetic as she alternated between rubbing his ears and straighting his dumb bows.

"And now we're all done! What a brave poodle you are!" Put that in my record, Cody thought. With his luck, the doctor would put 'yelps like a wimp' in there.

"Thank Dr. Jemisin for making sure you're healthy, Cody."

"Thanks, I guess." He mumbled.

"Cody!"

"Don't worry about that! Vets are used to surly patients."

With the visit done, Cody soon found himself back in the car, buckled in like a human boy, despite Mom taking a moment to adjust his bows and woolly fur. He chose to ignore her murmurs about him being a prissy poodle.

"My back itches." He tried to reach between his shoulders.

"It'll be a little sensitive cuz of your shots, pup." Mom said as

she came around to release him from the car with a head pat. "But I bet you feel healthier already."

"I feel the same." He mumbled.

"Well!" Mom laughed. "Trust me. Those shots will keep you healthy and safe."

Cody jumped out of the car, wiggling a bit until he realized he looked like a dog shaking off. Plus the bows! He shuddered.

Who knows what dog shots will do to me? He thought as he headed inside. He looked down at the furry doughnut around his wrist and shrugged inwardly. Could it really get any worse?

Chapter 5

Cody: In the Doghouse - Chapter 5

Cody waited for the effects of the dog shots to kick in as Mom herded him to the fluffy pink dog bed in the corner of the living room. He rolled his eyes as he saw a three panel mirror set up apparently so he could see himself from various angles. They won't buy me a new video game, but apparently they'll blow all the money they can on me now that I'm a poodle. He wasn't a poodle though. He knew he wasn't!

"Let's get your school bows off." Can you take my dumb pink poofs off too? Cody thought. "You were such a good boy at the vet today." She praised, pulling off his green and gold bows. "These really do clash." She murmured.

"You're the one who dyed me pink."

"Hush. It doesn't hurt to be pink." She patted the poof atop his head. "Who's my pinky poodle pup? Cody is! Cody is!" He groaned, but he could hear his tail thwacking against the dog bed. "See? Deny it all you want, but your waggly tail proves you like being pink."

"But"

"But nothing. I am your mother. As long as you're a puppy, I'll be making decisions for you. Your friends' moms pick their haircuts and I pick yours. You look so nice." She gave him another pat on the head, but then her hand moved downward. Cody looked over his shoulder, only then becoming aware he had been sitting like a dog this whole time. Mom began to scratch right at the base of his tail,

between the two orbs of fur on his butt. Cody began to pant, amazed by how good it felt. I'm not a dog, I'm not a dog. He repeated to himself. Mom smiled and kept it up. "Good poodle. See? Mom knows what she's doing, huh?" She pulled her hand away. "Now, we gotta dress you for dinner." Cody was still in the throes of those grade A butt scritches, but he yelped as he saw the lacey white bows in her hands. No! No way.

"Mom!" He whined.

"We talked about it this morning, a poodle without bows is like a boy without pants." Had that only been this morning?

"So you admit I'm not a boy."

"That's not what I said." She smiled and scratched his ear. "I just want to take a nice photo of my... handsome poodle. Is that so much to ask?"

"But why do I need bows?"

"Cody. No whining. We're doing this because Mom says. Now sit still." Cody tried his best to sit still, but quickly found himself wishing he had been able to turn his back to the mirror as Mom covered him in bows. A bow on his tail, one a piece on each wrist and ankle, one on each ear and a big one right on top of his head poof.

"Aren't we done?" Somehow, the bows made him look pinker, prissier, and more like a poodle!

"Almost! We're gonna take your collar off."

"So don't run away." Dad joked, walking in. For a split second, he seemed to eye Cody sympathetically as if he saw his son as fully human.

"That reminds me, Steve. I sent you that link to that app."

"Got it downloaded."
"Perfect." Mom undid Cody's collar and added the pièce de résistance: a big white ribbon tied in a big bow around his neck. Cody stared at himself and could only bring himself to whimper. How could things get any worse?
"Wow. He sure is something." Dad said, staring in disbelief at his poodly son.
"Hush. It's just for a photo or two." Dad nodded, knowing there was little point in talking his wife out of things. Cody was her poodle more than his.
"Dad, you can't let her put photos of me like... like this online!"
"You look cute." Mom said. "And howling isn't going to get you out of your photoshoot. Now pose!"
"Pose how?"
"Hear the poodle. Be the poodle." Cody glared at his dad. That was not helping.
To his relief, Mom gave in and directed him to sit up straight, lie down, roll over, and show off his bows. It was humiliating, but Mom praised him enough that he could not help but feel like he was doing good.
"So the vet didn't snip-snip?" Dad asked as Cody lay on his back, making what Mom called his 'puppy dog eyes' to the camera. He yelped.
"We'll talk." Mom murmured to him. Dad nodded.
"Are we done now?"
"I suppose we can be. Steve, can you fill Cody's bowl?"
"Time for these things to come off." Cody batted at his bows.
"Oh, leave them. You look so pretty."

"I don't want to be pretty." Cody muttered.
"Doesn't matter if you want to be, you are." Mom said. "My pretty poodle puppy." Cody kept batting at his bows, hoping that somehow, Mom would realize no boy should be pink and riddled with bows! "Leave your bows alone." Mom said. "Bad dog."
"But"
"But nothing. I don't have time to put another set of bows on you. Now, let's go eat dinner." Cody got to his feet. "No! No jump. Down, boy. Down." She pushed down on his head until Cody returned to all fours. "You're getting too old to be jumping up, Cody."
"But" He sighed, knowing that this was one battle not worth fighting. He walked into the dining room on all fours, bows bouncing with every step.
"Decided to keep the bows on, pinky?" Dad asked with a laugh.
"He looks pretty." Mom said. "My pretty poodle puppy, all pink and perfect." Cody muttered just what he thought of that into his puppy chow.
Cody's dish was empty before his parents finished eating. He looked up at them from the floor.
"Cody, don't beg." Mom scolded. How did she see him through the table?
"People food isn't good for poodles." Dad said. He looked at Cody and snorted before quickly holding in his laugh. "Sorry, bud. You look"
"He's getting lots of comments." Mom interrupted. "They all love his pretty bows."

"How many of them think he's a girl?"
"Steve! You know that's par for the course when you have a poodle."
"Especially when you dye me pink."
"Dr. Jamisin updated Cody's records today. He's all up to date on his shots and his description is all set."
"You're a card-carrying pink poodle?" Dad teased. Cody growled.
"Cody!" They scolded in unison.
"I didn't mean to..."
"Steve, get a photo of our pouty poodle! Look at him, it's like he knows he's in trouble."
"Well, I do speak English..." Cody muttered.
"So precious." Mom murmured as she studied the photo. "Oh! We've been having so much fun, we forgot about Cody's special surprise!"
"Surprise?" Even before his poodlification, that was a word that was sure to make Cody's ears perk up.
"Someone's excited." Dad chuckled. "It's in the backyard."
"Like he knows where that is." Cody had already taken off.
"See?" His dad said, chuckling as he followed.
"He's not wearing his collar!" Mom called as Cody barrelled through the backdoor. His ears flattened as he saw what awaited him there.
There, right by his tree, was a doghouse. But not just any doghouse, a pink one with his name over it in white painted letters. He whimpered, spying the dog bed from his room within it.
"Isn't it great, bud?" Dad roughly tousled his head wool.

"Your very own place."
"But I have a room."
"You're getting too old to sleep inside." Mom said. "You're not our scared little puppy anymore, are you?"
"But... I'm not even..." Cody could not think of what to say.
"You'll still come inside for meals." Mom said. "And scritches and brushes and bows."
"See? But now when you've had enough of ole mom and dad, you can come out here and be your own poodle." Cody looked at his parents. Sleep outside? Was it any worse than any of the other things he had put up with? There was only one thing to try.
Shifting his weight, Cody got to his feet. His parents immediately exchanged a grin.
"Jumping with joy!"
"But down, Cody." Dad said. "No jumping." Cody sighed and returned to his hands and knees. His paws? He wasn't even sure anymore. "Should we..." he heard dad said.
"I think it'll be fine." Mom shrugged, looking over her shoulder at the fence. "The back gate is fine. Sure, he jumps every now and again still, but you'd need an opposable thumb to turn the lock. Dainty little poodle paws won't work."
"Plus I don't see our bow obsessed puppy making it on the streets. Hard to be all tough when you're woolly and pink."
"Aww, be nice, Steve. Besides, Pet Patrol came highly recommended. The doctor said" Cody rolled his eyes, tuning his parents out. Sometimes, he had no idea what they were talking about, like they spoke a different language.
He crawl-walked into the doghouse. At least his red bone was

in here. He grabbed it in his mouth as if it was the most normal thing in the world, chuckling to himself as it squeaked. When he turned around, his parents had gone inside.

"Guess I live in a doghouse now." He said to his bone, sitting down on the dog bed. "My own place..." He lay his head down and sighed. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad? "Oh, fuck. I'm still wearing these stupid bows!"

Chapter 6

Cody: The Dog Life - Chapter 6

At first, Cody wondered if he would be able to sleep outside, but in a way, it was like camping. The next morning, he emerged from his doghouse with a yawn. He made it over to his tree and peed before he wondered why he was crawling when he was alone in the backyard. He stood up, wobbling a bit.

"There we go." He said. A squirrel in the tree chittered angrily at him and he yipped at it before realizing that was not the right way to prove he was still a boy. He cleared his throat. "Get out of here, squirrel!" He said, but something told him that more yips were all that came out of his mouth. "If I'm going to be a dog, can't I at least bark like one?" He wondered aloud. "If I'm gonna be a dog, why do I gotta be a woolly pink one?" He picked at one of the furry doughnuts around his wrist as he walked toward the house.

Finding the back door locked, Cody sat down in one of the chairs on the patio, looking down at his pink feet, pink legs, the pink woolly shorts he had around his... he crossed his legs as he became very aware of his nudity.

He heard motion in the house, but more than that. He could swear he could hear his parents talking in the house! He listened in, but something seemed off. Half of it seemed garbled somehow. He tried to listen harder, but all he could hear was what seemed like gibberish.

"Must be too far away." He mumbled with a shrug. They

probably weren't talking about anything good anyway.
"Mah gah bawn dah." That was Dad.
"Fleh jay wana." Mom replied.
"Tawvay Cody." Dad said. Cody, he knew that word! The door unlocked.
"Good morning!" Mom said. "Cody, down!"
"What's he doing now?" Dad asked.
"Sitting on the patio furniture you said you were going to put in the garage."
"Well! Clearly he's trying to help."
"He's a dog, Steve. He doesn't even have thumbs."
"I do too." Cody said, holding them up.
"He can tell we're fighting." Dad replied. "Cody, how about you head inside and eat your breakfast before Mom gets you ready for school?"
"School?"
"Yes, Cody. You left early yesterday so I want you to be extra attentive today." Mom said. "And that means no jumping. Four on the floor. Understand?"
"Yeah..."
"Good. And you were such a good boy keeping all your bows on all night." Cody stuck his face into his dog bowl, eating his kibble and avoiding acknowledging Mom's comment. "Poodles need bows, especially pink poodles." Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Mom holding her phone. Was she talking to someone else? She had to be. "And you just love being a pampered pink poodle pup, don't you? Don't you?" Cody rolled his eyes, but he ran out of kibble before Mom gave up.

"Yeah, sure." He said, surly.
"Oh, don't be a growly pooch." Mom cooed. "Come on. Who's my pampered pink poodle pup?" Cody rolled his eyes and tried to go around Mom, but she wasn't going to give up quite so easily. "Cody, sit!" Cody could not be sure why, but he quickly shifted until he was sitting cross-legged in front of her. "Oh, for the love of" Mom set the phone aside. "I keep telling that gym teacher of yours we need to break you of your puppy sit." She kneeled down and adjusted his legs until he was sitting like a dog. "Stay!" She grabbed the phone again. "Stay, stay. Good boy! Now, who's my pampered pink poodle pup?"
"Me."
"Come on. You love it. Say you love being my pampered pink poodle pup."
"I... I" A loud squeak suddenly sounded as Mom held up a dog toy right by her phone. She squeezed it again and Cody grinned. He could not help it. The squeak of the toy just put him in a good mood!
"I love being a pampered pink poodle pup!"
"There we go. We'll just clip out the grumbly growlies and all my Instagram fans'll see our happy poodle who loves his bows!"
"What? You're putting that on Instagram?" Mom smiled and turned the phone toward him. He watched as his recorded self professed his love for being a poodle. He frowned. "Why does my voice sound like that?"
"It's always sounded like that."
"No, it sounds like I'm yipping the whole time."

"Poodles yip." Mom said.
"And as you get older, you might notice changes to your voice." Dad added.
"But it's s'posed to get deeper, not higher." Cody muttered.
"I love being a pampered pink poodle pup!" His recorded self declared again as Mom edited the video. The real Cody groaned.

"Now, Cody." Mom said when his friends arrived to take him to school. "I don't want to hear about you jumping today. Four on the floor is how good poodles are. Understand?" Cody nodded. She smiled and turned her attention to Leo and Aiden. "Boys, va bay gawn Cody."
"Huh?"
"Talking about you, not to you." Mom said, handing his leash to Aiden. "Have a good day at school, boys! And you be a good dog, Cody."
Once they had left, Cody tried to stand back up, only to discover that Aiden and Leo expected him to keep 'four on the floor'. Even starting to stand up was met with a firm 'down, Cody!'. He sighed and walked along on all fours, feeling ridiculous. He was bright pink, covered in bows, and now he had to crawl everywhere!
"Hey!" A voice called from across the street. Cody looked and saw someone walking their Greater Swiss Mountain Dog. He looked at the human, but she was staring at her phone. "Hey, poodle!" Cody realized it was the dog!
"That dog's speaking English!" Cody exclaimed to Leo and Aiden.
"Oo ga school, Cody." Leo said. "You can't bark at other dogs."

"Cody gee na yip yip." Aiden remarked.
Cody spent the day on his cushion, trying to figure out why everyone around him seemed to randomly switch to gibberish from time to time. At least I'm not expected to participate, he thought. The only class he really had to do anything in was gym where he was once again put through obedience training.
"I'd take dodgeball over this." He muttered as his water break was interrupted by Mr. Goode fixing his bows and calling him a pretty poodle.

"Let Cody out back." Mom called from the front door as soon as they got home from school. Leo shrugged and opened the gate to the backyard.
"Just gotta get your harness off first." He said. Aiden grabbed a tennis ball from the grass and threw it.
"Go get it, Cody!"
"Uh"
"Go!" Aiden said. Cody ran after the ball. It was kinda cool how fast he could go on all fours. He picked up the ball and ran back, only realizing halfway back to Aiden that he had the ball in his mouth. How else can I carry it?
"Good boy!" Leo praised.
"Pink boy." Aiden said.
"Yeah, but it's not like dogs can see that sort of thing."
"I can hear you, you know."
"Oops, go get the ball, Cody!" Aiden threw it.
"He's obviously a boy dog. You can see his balls."
"Ew, quit looking."
"I'm just saying." Cody hated that his new hearing made every word perfectly audible. And why was he able to

understand this? What happened to the gibberish?
"It is weird that she dyes him pink." Aiden took the ball from Cody and threw it again. "And makes him wear all those bows."
"He's her dog."
"Yeah, but poodles are like hunting dogs. His fur's that way to protect his organs."
"How do you know that?"
"I did research since we're playing with the poodle every day." Aiden said.
"If I had a dog, it'd be like a golden retriever or something."
"That's so generic. At least Cody has character!"
"Uh, thanks." Cody said, dropping the ball at Aiden's feet.
"We better get going." Leo kneeled down and scratched behind Cody's ear. "You're lucky. Dogs don't have homework."
"Do you wanna eat my homework?" Aiden asked with a laugh.
"I would if I could." Cody said. It felt right to help his friends out. Their impromptu game of fetch had almost felt normal.
"Yip means yes!" Leo said with a chuckle. "C'mon, dude. Bye, Cody!" They left, locking the gate behind them.
"Cody!" Mom called from the patio. He walked over, still feeling happier than he had all day. Mom dangled a piece of bacon in front of his face and he followed her inside. Boy or dog, bacon was bacon!
He soon realized what a trick it was. She wrestled him into the tub, gave him a thorough bath and dry that left him feeling even fluffier. Then it was time for enormous bows and

a full-fledged prissy pink pampered poodle pup photoshoot.
Dogs don't have homework, but they gotta go through this! Cody thought sourly as Mom posed him again and again. It was some solace imagining Leo or Aiden -- or even that bully Devin! -- as a poodle.
"Alright, back outside, pup." Mom said, setting his bowl of kibble on the patio.
"What about my bows?" He asked as the patio door slid shut, leaving him staring at his own sissy reflection, He padded over to his kibble, ate, and then went into his doghouse for the night. Why did it feel so normal? He thought as he lay down on his dog bed, chewing on his red bone for a bit.
The next morning, Cody ate his kibble and then waited for Leo and Aiden to come get him for school. He ran over to the gate as he heard them coming.
"Hey, Cody!" Aiden said, leaning over the fence to rub the poof on his head. "We're just quick swinging by to see our favorite pup."
"Why do you tell him things like that?" Leo asked. "He's a dog."
"So? He's fun to play with."
"Only cuz no one else has a dog." Leo muttered. Cody glared at him, betrayed.
"He doesn't mean it. I think you're cool." Aiden gave him another pat on the head.
"Yeah, he's fun to play fetch with." Leo agreed. "But can you imagine walking him where Dylan could see?"
"Maybe if he didn't have his bows..." Aiden thought.
"You boys better get to school. Cody will still be here

afterwards." Mom called from the open kitchen window.
"Shoot! Sorry!" Aiden gave Cody one more good pat and then it was Leo's turn.
"You're lucky." He murmured. "Ditzy pinky poodles don't gotta go to school." No school? Cody ran around the yard in delight and even chased the squirrel. The squirrel's angry chitters almost seemed like laughter as he sat at the bottom of the tree and tried his best to bark menacingly. Why could he only do these whimpy little yips?
"Bark." He said in his deepest chest voice. "Bark! Bark!" He felt like he was finding a good rhythm, but it soon turned back into those annoying little yips. The squirrel chittered back. "Oh, yeah. Well, I've got a trick up my sleeve." He wobbled as he tried to stand up on two legs. Even using the tree for support, his claws scraped the bark and he fell down. He was stuck on all fours.
"Oh, Cody. Bleh foo mehn." Mom said from the patio. "Cody, come here, boy. Come here!" He ran over and Mom looked him up and down, sighing. "Gee van poodle keen bath." She picked him up and he yelped as he knew where he was headed.
Over the next few days, a rhythm began to develop. Cody would sit by the side gate in the morning to see if Aiden and Leo would come by. Sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't. Then he spent his day running around the yard, chasing the squirrel, chewing his bone, even just lying in the sun. He went back and forth on if he should avoid the mud or not. He hated baths, but getting to be a brown poodle with matted fur for an hour or two before Mom saw him and

returned him to his fluffy, pink glory always felt nice. He knew he was thinking more and more like a dog as time went on. It hardly even surprised him when Mom put him, freshly bathed and as pink and prissy as can be, on his cushion for a photoshoot and he saw his muzzle. He was all dog now but somehow, that did not bother him. Being a human had been more trouble than it was worth, he figured.

"Hmm." Mom said as she inspected him following yet another bath. "I see your roots, Cody." She ran her finger through his fur. "And you could do with a trim, I think."

"Why can I understand you now?" Cody wondered aloud, stomach twisting. Almost by cue, Mom returned to gibberish.

"Gee van groomer." Mom remarked and he sighed. "You'll want to look your best for your puppy play date."

Puppy play date? Cody hoped for more details, but Mom did not mention it again until they were sitting in the lobby of Wagging Tails. Knowing what was coming made the experience no less of an ordeal, especially once Cody was plopped into the display pen. All the brown, black, and white furred dogs in there only made him look and feel more pink.

He thought he could sneak into the mud before whoever his playdate was with arrived, but Mom was ahead of him. She kept his harness on and kept him sitting nicely on the patio, all pink and prim and proper. He hoped whoever was coming had been told he was a boy dog because there was no way he looked like one. He tried to summon up a powerful bark and yipped once again.

"I'm excited too, Cody." Mom said, patting him on the head.

"Hello!" Cody's ears perked up. He knew that voice! That

was Leo's mom!
"Cody, no barking." Mom said. He only then realized he had been yipping in excitement.
"Make sure that gate locks." Mom said. Cody looked from Leo's mom to the dog she had on a blue leash. He was a golden retriever, Cody knew that much. When had they gotten a dog? And why was Leo's mom here instead of Leo? Leo would have been over the moon about a dog!
"Alright, ready to go off your leash?"
"Yes!" The dog said and Cody felt a mix of delight and horror. That... that was Leo! He whimpered.
"Ok, Cody, you can go free too." Mom undid his harness and he approached Leo cautiously.
"Isn't this great, Cody?" Leo exclaimed, barking with excitement. "We're dogs now! I can't believe I thought you were just a poodle and had always been a poodle, but now I remember you used to be a human boy, but now I'm a dog and you're a dog and we're dogs together!"
"Leo, calm down." Cody said, chasing after Leo as he ran around and around the yard.
"But we're dogs!" Leo exclaimed. "We don't got homework or chores or anything!"
"It's not all good."
"What's not good about being a dog?"
"The vet." Leo barked dismissively. "The groomer."
"The groomer's fun. I only gotta get one good bath a month, he brushes me, and gives me treats."
"Yeah, but-"
"We even go to the same groomer." Leo flopped down into

the sun and Cody sat nearby.
"Yeah, but... I... they do more to me!"
"Yeah." Leo agreed, rolling in the grass. "But aren't they required to by law or something?"
"What?"
"You're a poodle." Leo said. "A poodle-poodle-poodle." He howled.
"Stop that."
"It's true though." Leo rolled onto his belly and grinned at Cody. "And you've always been a poodle."
"You just said-"
"Yeah, but you were kinda poodly before, right?"
"No." Leo barked his disagreement.
"I heard my mom tell your mom all about how she dogified you."
"What?!" Leo jumped to his feet and ran around. Cody gave chase, taking care to avoid the mud even as Leo tramped right through it.
"Yeah, she was telling my mom that you becoming a poodle was a surprise, but she once walked in on you doing your hair in just your underwear." Leo laughed. "And she said that was total poodle behavior." He stopped and stared at Cody. "You really do run like a poodle, ya know." He barked with laughter again."Ohmigod, you did gym class as a poodle! I forgot about that!"
"It's not funny."
"I wonder why you changed kinda slowly. Me, I just stayed home from school and I was a dog in like three days." Before they could puzzle that out, a loud boof! came from the gate.

They turned and saw a Saint Bernard with his front paws up on the gate.

"Down, Aiden." His dad said, unbuckling the gate. "Oh!" Aiden charged toward his friends, leash and all, barking happily. The three of them ran around in circles and even tried to tour Cody's doghouse though Aiden was too big for the door.

"Even your bed is pink." Aiden remarked. Cody grumbled, resolving to drag it into the mud puddle at first opportunity.

Eventually, Aiden and Leo had to leave, but Cody knew they would be back. It's nice that they're dogs too now. Cody thought as he went to sleep that night. I don't really wish they were poodles, but I do wish Mom would kinda cool it on the bows. Cody fell asleep and dreamed of running and playing with Aiden and Leo. Sometimes they were dogs, sometimes they were humans, but in each and every dream, Cody was a poodle.