Public Ballerina

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"I can't believe I'm doing this, I can't believe-"

The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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"I can't believe I'm doing this, I can't believe-"

"You can quit, Aidan." Mom said. "You've said that for the last twenty minutes." Aidan fought the urge to groan, knowing it would only make it worse on himself. What did she expect though? He was outside, in a tutu! And a massive one, at that.

"That's actually just what the order said." Mom had explained when he had complained earlier. "Massive tutu for my daughter's solo adjudication." The way Charlotte had snickered, Aidan still was not sure if Mom had been joking or not. Then again, Charlotte had snickered the whole time she had helped get him ready. He knew part of it was because she had escaped having to model Mom's latest creation, but it was probably mostly because her brother had been transformed into the very picture of a prissy ballerina.

"It's just across the street." Mom said. "Look, you can see the house right there."

"Yeah, so everyone can connect the dots. Hey, doesn't Aidan live there? Hey, isn't that Aidan in a tutu?" He shuddered. Tutu. Why was it such a girly word? When Charlotte had touched up his makeup -- oh, god, I'm wearing makeup! -- she had called his tutu frou-frou. He had almost quit right then and there.

"Charlotte, can you" Mom looked at the teenager. "Can you wipe that smirk off your face and help your bro-" she saw Aidan's horrified expression. "Our model, for whom we're very grateful, pose?"

"You have always wanted your ears pierced." Charlotte murmured as she felt the little hoops in her brother's ears. He only grunted. "Hey, I told you, be glad there aren't tights. At least you can look at these photos Mom's gonna take and say 'those are my legs. That's me."

"Not helping." Aidan muttered.

"Alright, so, you're gonna be spending time on your toes. Here, use the wall with your one hand to stabilize yourself and" she disappeared under the tutu. "Let me move your feet. I need to position them." Aidan squirmed as he felt her hand on one of his feet. "Can you quit being ticklish for one second?"

"Sorry." He muttered.

"There." He wobbled. "Hold onto the wall." She looked at his hand and scoffed. "Not like your life depends on it! Geez! Mom should've made you take gymnastics. You're so unbalanced." She stepped back to appraise him and then immediately swooped back in, grabbing his free hand. "We're nearly done, so try and hold everything exactly how I have it." Aidan saw a couple walking a poodle on the other side of the street. Least I'm not the sissiest thing out here. He thought. "There!" Charlotte stepped back. "What do you think, mom?"

"Looks good." Aidan shivered as a breeze tickled his bare shoulders, almost biting right through the sheer leotard.

"Oh, that wind is making the tutu look even better, mom!"

"Smile!" The camera clicked again and again and again. How many photos did she need?

"That's great!" Charlotte said. Aidan looked over her head at their house, feeling as though boyhood was in there and he was trapped outside. Charlotte had figured out some way to seem too big for this outfit, he just knew it.

"You can get off your toes now, Aidan." Mom said, looking up from her camera. "Go ahead and put your sneakers on. I want to go to the park and get some photos by the fountain."

"What!? Mom, no!"

"Yes. You're already out here."

"The park's like a mile away!"

"It's five blocks. You'll be fine." He fumed as he pulled on his sneakers. "Keep it up and you'll wear that for your own adjudication."

"Huh?"

"Mom means she'll sign you up for ballet." How come Mom never seemed to notice how much Charlotte loves my bad luck? Aidan thought as he stood up.

"Let's go." He muttered, taking the lead. His only hope, he knew, was to cooperate. If he threw a fit and delayed things,

they'd still be at the park when the Little League games started. He did not notice Mom fishing her phone out of her pocket and snapping a few pictures. Sure, this was mostly for her business, but there was nothing wrong with taking a few personal photos, right?