The Snowball

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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Ba-ding! Kyle groaned and rolled over so that his back was to the phone. He pulled the blanket up to his chin. It was too early for this. Of course, he recognized Noah's text tone, but it couldn't be an emergency. He had noticed the freshly fallen snow outside and resolved it was a good day to stay in bed just a little longer. He would've bet twenty bucks Noah was just texting about the upcoming dance. As far as Kyle was concerned, the Snowball was no big deal. And what a stupid name! They were in middle school, it wasn't senior prom!

To his surprise, everyone else at school was treating it like the hugest deal in the world, and no one more than Noah. Noah was obsessed with finding a date, but had failed to. Not that it was his fault. Every girl he asked was already going with someone, a fact that surprised Kyle almost as much as Noah. Kyle had shrugged it off. Noah had gone a bit crazy, to the point where he had even asked Kyle if he would have gone to the dance with him if he was a girl.

"I guess?" Kyle had said, but that had led him down a contemplative rabbit hole, Would they still have been best friends if he was a girl? He figured as much. After all, they had become best friends because their dads worked together, which led to their moms taking them to the same daycare. "Still, best friends let each other sleep in on snowy days."

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Ba-ding! Ba-ding! Kyle groaned and grabbed his phone. He was surprised to discover there was no mention of the dance. In fact, Noah was inviting him to, of all things, the first snowball fight of the year!

"I creamed him last year!" Kyle exclaimed, jumping out of bed and then out of his pajamas by the time he had reached the pair of jeans he had stepped out of the night before. He dressed in a whirlwind and was downstairs before he even thought to text back a thumbs up. "Going to Noah's!" He called.

"Hat." Dad called back from the kitchen.

"Got it." He pulled the navy blue stocking cap roughly down so it covered his ears.

"Gloves."

"Well, duh!" It was a snowball fight, so of course he would need gloves.

"Hippopotamus."

"It's how I'm getting there." Kyle stepped outside before dad could come up with another one. He grinned at the snow, suddenly seeing every snowbank as a potential arsenal.

Kyle jogged most of the way, heedless of the potential for icy patches on the sidewalk. Sure, Harry Jensen had slipped and chipped a tooth last winter, but that could never happen to him! He grinned as he turned the corner onto Oak and saw Noah's orange camo stocking cap from three houses away.

"Guess he's not planning on a sneak attack." He jogged over.

"Dude."

"Dude." Noah grinned broadly. Did that mean he had someone to go to the dance with? Kyle wasn't going to be the one to bring it up, so he quickly set the topic. "So, we gonna do normal rules?"

"No crotches, no faces." Noah agreed.

"And no ice balls this time!"

"Cross my heart." The boys nodded and bumped fists before going to opposite sides of the small field across the street from Noah's house. They busied themselves with making snowballs, another mutually decided rule.

"Three, two, hey!" Noah had launched a snowball early and it slammed into Kyle's coat. He brushed off the snow and bent down to grab a snowball, launching it at Noah before he realized something was bothering him. His coat was purple! And not just purple. He reached back as he felt something tickle his neck. His hood now had fur around the edge! This was not the coat he had thrown on, the coat Mom reminded him to hang up each and every day after school. Distracted as he was, he did not have a chance to dodge the second snowball that hit his knee.

"Two to zero!" Noah exclaimed.

"Dude, time out!" Kyle called. His jeans were now tight to his legs and had a butterfly applique poking out from under his

coat on his left thigh. He shifted slightly and felt weird, as if something about his balance was different. He walked nervously over to Noah, noticing immediately that Noah was pretending like he had not noticed the changes too. Now that was suspicious. "Dude, what's going on?"

"What?"

"You're a sucky liar. You noticed that everywhere your snowball goes, it changes my clothes."

"Not-" Noah coughed. "Not that I can tell?"

"Dude!" Kyle gestured up and down his body.

"Well, maybe it's a coincidence." Before Kyle could even react, Noah dropped the snowball he was holding onto Kyle's boots. They instantly became the tan boots every girl at school had started wearing the second the weather turned cold.

"Dude, quit!" Kyle grabbed one of the snowballs and chucked it right at Noah's chest. He tried to dodge it with a high-pitched howl, but it hit his arm. He looked himself over, but nothing seemed different.

"It didn't work."

"You sure? That squeal seemed pretty-" Kyle coughed as Noah launched a snowball right into his throat. "Dude! That was not funny! That felt-" Kyle stopped talking as he realized his voice was higher, softer, more... "I'm gonna fucking murder you!" It sounded much less threatening coming from

his lilting girl voice, but the snarl and charge was still terrifying for Noah. In retrospect, trying to tackle his best friend into feminizing snow was not the smartest plan, especially once Noah had him pinned down and they both knew the transformation was complete. Kyle's hat was furry and white, he now wore a pair of fuzzy white mittens, but his face was the biggest change. He still looked a lot like his dad, Noah thought, but more of his mom was coming through now in the curve of his face and the shape of his lips.

"Wow." Noah stood up, feeling a strange urge to grab Kyle's hand and help him up.

"Let go of me!" Kyle snarled, brushing snow off of himself with the mittens. "What happened?"

"I don't know." Noah stammered. Kyle eyed him. A moment ago, he had thought Noah was behind this, but now? Now he sounded as genuinely mystified as Kyle. "Mom's making cocoa, let's go inside."

Unsure of what else to do, Kyle followed him, muttering darkly about the way his body moved now and especially the stupid white mittens he wore. Those gloves had been a gift from Uncle Markus!

Kyle had dressed in such a hurry, he could not even remember what shirt he had pulled on, but he had a pretty good feeling it was not the lilac tee with bubble sleeves and a scalloped hem he now wore. He yanked off his hat and yelped as hair cascaded down all over his face. He sputtered and pawed at it until it was out of his mouth and eyes, but

knew a good brushing would be needed to tame it. Noah's mom keeps one in the bathroom, I'll just – what was he thinking? First of all, he refused to give Noah the satisfaction of seeing him act like a girl. Secondly, all he needed to do was walk into the kitchen and Noah's mom would see that Kyle was now-

"Hey there, Kaylee!" Noah's mom said, coming around the corner. "Brush is in the bathroom. Figured you wouldn't bring your purse for a snowball fight." Kaylee stood there, stunned into silence. Noah's mom gave him a strange look. "Here, I'll uh show you where it is." She led him into the bathroom, closing the door behind them. She waited until Kaylee's shaking hand found the brush and he tried to brush his hair like he had seen girls do on TV. "I actually wanted to ask you something."

"What?" His new girl voice trembled.

"Well, I'm sure you know about the dance next week." * *

Oh, no.

"And, well, I'm sure you noticed Noah's been excited." * *

Oh, no, oh no!

"And, well, I'm his mother and I think, well, I thought..." she laughed nervously. "What if you and Noah went as friends?"

"What?"
"I know it might be a little awkward. Between us girls" Oh, god. "I think you think of him as a brother. Right?" Kaylee

felt himself nod. "Well, maybe you can mention it to him? You can wear a nice dress, I can do what I can to clean him up." She gasped. "Oh! Another boy hasn't asked you already, right?"

"No." He said truthfully.

"Well, think about it." Kaylee was definitely thinking about it as Noah's mom left her standing there in the bathroom, brush in hand. There had to be a way to turn back, right? Who could he even ask? If Noah's mom was any indication, no one might remember Kyle. Noah does, but he could barely even pass a math test, how was he supposed to change Kaylee back to Kyle? Maybe I can set some rules. No slow dances, definitely no kisses... What am I doing? I can't go to the dance with him! But I can't go alone either. It's the Snowball! A romantic sigh escaped his lips and he shuddered.* Still... it'll be fine! Everyone knows we're more like siblings. Brothers. Well, not anymore... Ugh! It'll be fine. Everyone's got a date, I can't be the only- He did not dare finish that thought. He would go have cocoa. He nodded to himself, liking the way his wavy hair framed his face. I really need to get mom to relax and let me just try makeup. Shaken by that thought, he reminded himself that there was cocoa waiting in the kitchen. Who knows? Maybe it's magic cocoa that turns girls into boys. What would I look like as- Kaylee dismissed the thought and she could not even remember why by the time she got to the table. Noah grinned at her and she smiled back. He is kinda cute with whipped cream on his nose. Dorky, but... He'd be a better date for the dance than chipped tooth Harry.*