Tiptoe in my Tutu

by andlat

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Chapter 1

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"Spencer! Hurry up, you're going to be late if you don't get moving."

"I'm just finishing up, mom!" Spencer called through the closed door. He had been in the middle of psyching himself up, but he knew Mom would not understand that. He looked himself over in the mirror and nodded. Just like last time, he would keep focused all the way to class and then... "This time I'm going to do it." He said to himself, wishing his reflection looked more confident. He shouldered his bag, packed by himself to make sure Mom did not know what was inside, and headed downstairs.

"Have fun, Spencer." Dad said from his spot at the table where he was working on a puzzle. "And feel free to take the scenic route home!"

"Why?"

"Cuz the later you get home, the more puzzle time I get before Mom makes me move it for dinner." He chuckled.

“I got you that board for a reason.”

“And I’m using it!” He winked at Spencer, but Spencer did not really get the joke. If there even was one. "Have fun, sport." Spencer smiled weakly and headed outside. Today's the day. He reminded himself as he walked to ballet. I've done everything I can, Spencer thought. I'm wearing my

lucky underwear, I wished upon a star last night, I'm even making sure not to step on any cracks. I'm gonna march right in and tell the teacher I'm a boy! Today was definitely the day!

It had all started the first day of ballet. He had walked in to find a sign-in table. Since Mom and Dad were both working, he was alone, but he knew he could handle it.

"Hi there, cutie! Welcome to your first day of ballet. What's your name?"

"Spencer."

"That's a pretty name. Everything you need's in this package here. The girls' changing room is the one with the ballerina on the door!" Spencer took the package out of habit, but then stared first at it and then at the woman who gave it to him. There was some kind of mistake. He was not a girl!

"Um, uh..." Come on! Just say it! He told himself. "Um" I'm a boy! I'm a boy! It's so easy! Every time he tried to say it, his tongue seemed like it could not move.

"I think we've got an excited one." The woman said. "Here, do you mind?" The woman next to her smiled and stood up, extending her hand to Spencer.

"Come on, sweetheart. I'll help you." Even as Spencer tried with all his might to correct the mistake, he found himself taking her hand and walking docilely with her into the girl's locker room. The big mirror within allowed him to see himself standing there, smiling gently as she gave him an impromptu tour of his ballet outfit.

"Here's your tights." Pink tights. Girl's tights. I'm a boy! "And your slippers." I'm a boy! Say it! "And of course, this is your leotard and tutu." TUTU!? "You're going to be a real live ballerina!" I'm a boy! Why couldn't he say it? Was this some kind of nightmare?

Since that day about a month ago, Spencer had come to class, determined to tell someone about the mix-up. Despite his determination, however, he somehow ended up in a tutu. He had spent more than one night lying awake, wondering about that. No one dressed him up in it. He would walk into the ballet studio and then, suddenly, he was wearing a tutu, joining the girls in their tutus and the boys in their shorts practicing pliés at the barre. No matter what, every class unfolded the same way. Spencer dressed in tights and a tutu without even realizing he was doing it until after the fact then, try as he might, found himself unable to tell anyone he was a boy, learning along with the girls how to curtsey and tiptoe and a million other things the boys in their t-shirts and shorts were not learning. Every time he tried to say he was a boy, the words seemed to get stuck in his throat. Sometimes he would just gape until the teacher looked away, other times he would only be able to say "Yes, Miss" as she told him what a beautiful ballerina he was becoming.

He saw the dance studio up ahead, but almost lost his single-minded focus as he saw Lisa, one of the ballerinas in his class, standing by the door. She smiled politely at him, but did not say anything. Just to be safe, he stopped and pretended to tie his shoe so she would get ahead of him. The

last thing he needed was for her to strike up a conversation and steer him into the girls' locker room. Did she... he could not help but be curious. Did she think I was a girl just now? No, that made no sense. Lisa was super talkative, so she would have absolutely said hi or something. Did that mean he was still per... per... seen as a boy? None of this made any sense! He stared down at his shoe until the door had closed behind her. Alright, he thought. Here goes nothing.

Boys room, boys room. Spencer chanted to himself as he stepped through the front door of the dance studio. This was it! He could see the door to the boys room right there! He was going to make it.

Spencer turned slightly from side to side, making sure his tutu was perfect from all angles. How'd I get here? He could not be sure. All he knew was that he felt a strange urge to make sure his tutu looked right. But I'm a boy, he thought, blushing as he noticed girls on either side of him, putting their hair up.

"Excited for another day?" Lisa asked.

"Uh"

"It's so much fun, isn't it? Getting to dance, even if my sister says we're really not doing ballet until we're on pointe, but that's still years away. I tried it at home a little, but almost fell over. Mom says" Spencer knew from experience that Lisa could keep going like this until it was time for class. I'm a boy, I'm a boy. He repeated to himself. Why could he not say it? Why was he standing here in the girls' room, wearing a

tutu and tights and… and girl stuff! "Are you gonna grow your hair out?"

"Huh?"

"So you can put it in a bun! Ballerinas need a bun, y'know."

"Uh"

"Short hair looks good on you," she shrugged. "But a bun just goes with a tutu, doesn't it?" How would I know? Spencer thought. I'm a boy! "Course, it takes like forever to grow your hair out!" She laughed and Spencer smiled, though he did not get the joke. If there even was one. "Let's go!" Lisa said, excitedly grabbing Spencer's hand. "Time to shake our tutus, right?" Spencer wished that was all ballet was, but it was more about making sure your hands, your legs, your tutu was just so.

"Everyone line up!" One of the girls called. Lisa half led, half tugged Spencer over. A whole room full of girls who saw me in my underwear and they still think I'm one of them, Spencer thought bitterly, trying his hardest to scream that he was a boy as he followed the group out of the changing room. He realized his hands were resting on his tutu. He pulled them away, but soon realized there wasn't really a way to rest them at his sides with the tutu in the way. I'm a boy, I shouldn't even have a tutu.

The boys always seemed to beat them out to the main studio. Probably because they just have to wear a shirt and shorts, Spencer thought, staring covetously at the boys.

“Ooh, are you looking at Harry? He’s the cutest, right?” Lisa giggled, whispering conspiratorially. Spencer shrugged. “Well, who do you think the cutest is?”

“Uh” was all Spencer could bring himself to say. He wanted to tell Lisa everything. She clearly thought of them as friends, surely she would understand he was a boy who had somehow ended up mistaken for a girl! Just say it! He scolded himself. Say I’m a boy! Say it! This would all be so much easier if girls could read minds.

“You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.” Lisa whispered as Madame Marie gathered them all in the center of the room. She smiled at her assembled students.

"Looks like everyone’s here, right?” A chorus of yeses came back. “Alrighty, let's do our warm-up! Gentlemen, hands on your hips, nice, strong marching. Good, Aaron, good! And my lovely ballerinas, arms out like so." She demonstrated, her arms floating out to her sides, bent at the elbow so her hands were raised and her fingers curled delicately. "And flounce! You are a ballerina, but you're also a fairy princess!" Spencer felt his stomach twist. In the chaos, could he get away with marching? It had to be worth a shot. He planted his hands on his hips and began to march. Spencer made it all of five steps before the teacher caught him.

"No, Spencer. Ballerinas are flouncing." She swooped over to him and gently moved his hands from his hips. "There, isn't that better?" She smiled at him. "Now, go!" Spencer began to flounce, feeling his teacher's eyes on him as his tutu bounced

in time with the rest of the girls.

Spencer flounced around the room, feeling horrendously girly as he had to flounce around a couple boys marching along in their shorts and t-shirts. They smiled at him, but he still felt like they were secretly disgusted by this pink flouncing ballerina. Going by other flouncing ballerinas did not make him feel any better though. It only reminded him that he was seen as a girl by everyone there and flouncing along did not help his case one bit.

"Alright, sit down against the wall if your birthday is in March!" A few students immediately marched or flounced over to the wall and sat down. “Sit down if… you have a pet dog.” It continued like this with fewer and fewer of the dancers still marching or flouncing. Spencer continued to go around, not liking how quickly the group was dwindling. C’mon, say your name starts with an S or something. I don’t want to keep going!

Before long, it was just Spencer flouncing and two boys marching. Spencer’s mind raced with fears that he might have to flounce for the whole class. That did not seem like something Madame Marie would do. If anything, she would probably intentionally have one of the boys sit down so Spencer and the remaining boy would have to do some boy-girl thing. But I’m a boy too! He thought. With my luck, it’ll be that Harry kid Lisa was all gaga over.

“Alright, let’s have our last few friends come join us at the wall. Harry, Petey. And of course, our final ballerina,

Spencer. Everyone watch as Spencer flounces over to join her fellow ballerinas. Isn't she pretty?" Pretty? Spencer thought. I'm clearly a boy in a tutu. The ample mirrors by the barre only made it that much more obvious. "Everyone up on your feet and let's do some barre work." The class rose and took their positions. "No, no. Let's try and switch things up." Madame Marie busied herself sorting the class in boy-girl order. Spencer found himself guided by the shoulders to stand between a boy he did not know and Zach! Zach sat right next to him in school! He felt his heart gallop, but Zach and the other boy were busy leaning against the barre while everyone got sorted out. Spencer turned to do the same, his back almost coming into contact with the barre when he suddenly twisted and rested a hand on the barre while his feet lined up into third position. His other hand came to rest on his tutu as he watched the teacher with attentive eyes and a high chin. Great, not only am I dressed like a girl, I'm forced to be a goody two shoes too.

The saving grace of barre work was that everyone did the same things. Sure, Zach behind him and James in front of him were praised for their strong posture while Spencer was constantly reminded to be delicate and dainty in his movements, but at least he was not doing overly girly things! Not yet, anyway.

"Alright, everyone." Madame Marie said, clapping her hands. "The gentlemen will be staying on this side of the room to work on their jumps with Mister Chris." The high schooler in his gray tights smiled. How does he make tights look so

manly, Spencer wondered. Probably because they're not pink and he doesn't have a stupid tutu. More than anything, Spencer wanted to wear the black shorts and white t-shirt of his classmates, but he would have settled even from Mister Chris's grey tights. "And girls, we're going to the other side of the room to do some focus work." What does that mean? Spencer wondered. Well, doesn't matter. I'm a boy and I'm staying over here.

"Get over there." James whispered, staring at him. "The girls go over there."

"Who ever heard of a girl named Spencer?" Zach asked, too quietly for Madame Marie or Mister Chris to hear. Spencer spun around. Could this be it? Someone had noticed – finally – that he was not a girl! In his excitement, he tried to speak, but all that came out was a sound a bit too much like a girlish giggle for his taste. He tried again, but nothing came out!

"What are you giggling about?" James asked. "Wait, do.. Do you have a crush on Zach? Oh, my god!" He guffawed loudly.

"Be nice, James." Zach could see the confusion on Spencer's face. A crush? No way! Zach's my friend, but I… I"m a boy! Not some dumb girl. "You are kinda cute…"

"Spencer, please join us over here." Spencer had never felt so grateful to be mistaken for a girl. He ran over to the other side of the room, mortified. I have to get out of this tutu before I have a boyfriend! He thought.

"Alright, girls! Floor tutu!" Madame Marie waited while they

sat in a circle around her. “What's the best part about being a ballerina? Feeling so graceful, yes. But focus work is just as important, isn't it? It shows you're serious about ballet. You girls are all serious about ballet, right?" A chorus of yeses washed over her. “Wonderful! You’ve all come so far and I’m so so proud of each of you. This is a lot of hard work. You don't magically become a ballerina just by walking in that door, do you?” Spencer snorted. “But we're going to work hard and we're going to mold each and every one of you girls into such a beautiful ballerina before our recital in a couple months. Who’s excited?” I’m not raising my hand. Spencer thought, but it was already waving high in the air. “Great!”

Focus work proved to be little more than stretches, though it still pained Spencer to stare down at his feet in satiny slippers at the ends of his pink legs. The real focus on focus work seemed to be on the part of Madame Marie correcting every tiny mistake. She looked around the circle like a hawk, gently prodding each and every ballerina to do things perfectly.

“Everyone up. Feet in third position. Third, Emma. That's second, sweetheart.” Madame Marie nodded as she checked the circle's feet. “A dozen pairs of pink slippers perfectly placed.” She said approvingly. "And touch your toes!” Everyone bent forward. “Spencer!"

"What? I did it." It felt to Spencer like he couldn't do anything right, but that made sense. He was a boy forced to learn the girl stuff!

"You're going to hurt yourself if you jerk like that. Bend nice

and elegantly." He watched as she somehow made touching your toes look like the girliest thing ever, her arms seeming to float as she gently folded her body in half. "And make the basketball hoop as you come back up." She looked at the assembled girls. "And where should your feet stay?"

"Third position." They chimed.

"Try again, Spencer."

"With everyone watching?"

"Down" she stretched out the word for the entirety of her downward motion. "And up." Spencer wished he could just tell her he was a boy as he mirrored her motion. "Much better! Did everyone see what she did there?" Spencer looked around in confusion as they clapped for him. Had he done it right? He must have because they all sat back down and moved on to their next stretch, though Spencer could not shake the worry that he had done something so girly so well on his second try.

Worse was when they got to their feet to go to the barre. Spencer made a beeline for the barre, but noticed the other girls – no, just the girls, he reminded himself – had stayed where they were to brush out their tutus. Gotta make them look just so, Spencer thought mockingly until he realized he could feel his tutu. Looking down, he saw his hands putting the finishing touches on fluffing his own. He tried to grimace, but his lips parted into a pleased smile. A part of him felt like it would be so much easier to focus now. What is happening to me, he thought as he straightened his back and raised his

chin to match the other girls coming to the barre.

Spencer looked over at the other side of the room longingly. I could squat and jump as well as any of those guys! He thought until the teacher got between him and the boys, blocking his jealous gaze.

"Alright, ladies. Let's see your tendus!"

For the next half hour, Spencer stood in his place in the line of ballerinas, going through a variety of drills. Hadn't they already done enough barre work? Every chance he got, he looked over at the boys. They were doing leaps, he was trying to point his toes and float along from position to position. What unnerved him most of all was how natural a lot of it seemed. He knew it was not supposed to be; a boy couldn't move the way Madame Marie wanted him to, and yet, he rarely had to be corrected twice. It just wasn't fair! He should be over there, one of the boys, doing push-ups in a line. Instead, he was stuck in a pink tutu doing dainty little port de bras forward and back.

"Keep your arm in fifth, Spencer." She took his hand. "Here. Uncurl your fingers. There we go. Everyone show me fifth." The line of girls - including Spencer - moved in unison, raising their arms over their heads. "Excellent, girls. Spencer, are you an elegant ballerina" she uncurled her fingers and held her arm just like his. "Or an angry crab?" She closed her hand like a pincer a few times.

"An elegant ballerina, madame." He heard himself say. She nodded approvingly. "Back to port de bras, please!" Aren't we

done yet? Spencer thought. As if she could read his mind, Madame Marie clapped her hands. “Alright, girls. Let's move to the center!” Hardly anyone had even left the barre before she shook her head and clapped again. “Everyone freeze! Leaving the barre does not turn us from ballerinas into buffalo. Everyone look at Spencer. See how her chin is up, her back is straight, and where are her hands?”

“On her tutu.” The girls replied.

“Exactly. Spencer looks like a ballerina, doesn't she?”

“Yeah.” The girls chorused, with a few adding how pretty he looked. Spencer could hear a few scoffs of derision coming from the boys and his face grew hot.

“From now on, I want you to try to walk like this every time you're here. You can do it at home too, of course, but it's especially important here. Thank you, Spencer, for being such a great example for your fellow ballerinas.” But I'm not a ballerina! Spencer thought, but he smiled and nodded. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a girl curtsying. What's she– ohmigod, that's me! He had mistaken his own reflection for a prissy pink ballerina. He shuddered, but Madame Marie was no longer looking at him. “Everyone follow Spencer's magnificent example and let's go to center work.”

Center work was the worst. It was everything they had done at the barre, but so much closer to the boys. Spencer tried so hard to join them or even just object to the fact that he was expected to go through these girly exercises with a smile on his face and a tutu around his waist. Why did everyone think

he was a girl? He had friends in this class, but whenever he saw them outside the studio, they never seemed to remember he was a ballerina, or in ballet with them at all. Zach sat right next to him and he had never mentioned that Spencer spent Tuesdays and Thursdays in a tutu!

“Spencer, I won't tell you again, young lady.” Madame Marie said. “We're thinking light, airy thoughts, not daydreaming.” At least she had not accused him of staring at the boys.

If someone asked Spencer what his least favorite part of ballet when everyone thinks you're a girl was and pushed him past the gut instinct of saying ‘everything', he might say center work. He could not shake the feeling of being on display as the boys worked on their jumps as the girls did frappés, pas de chats, every move as girly as the next. The boys were congratulated on their strong vertical leaps, the girls (and Spencer) were congratulated for keeping a serene smile on their faces as they pranced. But there was one thing Spencer hated even more than center work.

“Keep those toes pointed when we're doing second en plié, please, Lisa.” Madame Marie said. “That's much better.” She clapped her hands. “Alright, girls, it's time for ankle conditioning!” Spencer remembered being fooled by how innocent that sounded on his first day of class, but every day since, he had tried to do anything other than go along with what was coming. “Back straight.” Spencer felt his straighten up before he even registered the words, his shoulders sliding back exactly as the teacher said “shoulders". He tried to fight, to slouch, to do anything. “Head up, chin out.” Could he at

least say he needed a drink of water? “And up on your toes!” Spencer only managed to fight it for a second or two before he had joined the rest of the pink ballerinas on their toes. He glanced over at the boys, who were stretching. He could see a few who were doing a bad job of hiding how amused they were by what the girls were doing. He could not really blame them, but wondered how they would feel if they were stuck in the middle of the line like he was. “And sing!”

“I like to tiptoe in my tutu” the girls began to sing, tiptoeing along in time with the song. “Tiptoe in my tutu, feeling so pretty. I love to tiptoe, in my tutu, you see!” The song repeated again and again as they tiptoed around the studio, the boys grinning at the downright feminine display.

“Keep those heels up, girls!” Madame Marie called. “And everyone should be singing to help keep the rhythm.” Spencer would never dare sing a song about how much he loved tiptoeing and tutus, but he made a show of mouthing along to avoid having to do a solo or something.

Around and around they went before finally, they were allowed to return their heels to the floor and drink some water. Spencer avoided his reflection as much as he could. Maybe I can get that stupid song out of my head by dinner this time. He thought.

“Very nicely done, girls.” Madame Marie said. “I want you all to sing that song tonight before bed, okay?” Spencer had to believe she was joking. There was no way! “Once you're watered and caught your breath, let's meet over here. And I

want to see your nicest ballerina walks!”

Spencer took his time, getting a few drinks of water and sitting down before finally giving in and heading back over to the group. He walked fast to get it over with, but Madame Marie never missed anything.

“Back to the water fountain, Spencer. We're practicing our ballerina walks, remember?” He sighed and tried again. “Don't stomp. Light and airy. Back you go.” What do you expect? I'm a boy and I'm finally walking like one! Attempt three still was not good enough. “Nope, take it nice and slow, each footstep deliberate and delicate. You must be tired, hmm? We'll get this right.” Attempt four, his hips were too tight. Finally, on his fifth attempt, Spencer hammed it up and walked in an exaggeratedly feminine fashion. Of course, this one's perfect. He thought morosely as the girls applauded for him.

“Mister Chris, are the gentlemen ready for révérence?”

“They certainly are, Madame Marie! Boys, let's line up behind me.”

“Ladies, please line up behind me. Keep those backs straight and for today's révérence” Why does she always say it like that? Spencer thought. It just means I gotta do a dorky curtsy! “I'm sure the gentlemen will be very impressed by our elegance.” Oh, they'll be impressed, alright. Spencer thought as he took his place. With Madame Marie in the middle of the room, he found himself more able to relax and even slouch a bit. Today's the day. I'll prove to everyone I'm a boy. He tried

not to think about just how long he had spent already today as the girliest girl there ever was.

The line slowly moved forward as each girl met a boy in the middle, they curtsied and bowed respectively, and then came Spencer's least favorite part. The boy took the girl's hand and escorted her back to the ballerina side of the room. He craned his neck to try and count which boy he would be stuck with, but they kept shuffling around to avoid going next. Spencer's heart stopped as he watched the final girl in front of him float out to the center of the room. It was his turn next.

Spencer watched the boy walk towards him as he floated along. I must look like a total sissy, he thought, but he knew the teacher would make him try again if he moved his hands from where they rested delicately on his tutu. Why was it all so natural?

The boy stopped and began to awkwardly bow. Spencer knew he was supposed to curtsy, he could feel the urge to do so, if only just to get this over with. He bit his lower lip. Here it goes! The boy across from him seemed almost startled as Spencer pointedly bowed. Madame Marie laughed.

"That was very good, but girls curtsey." I'm a boy. Spencer wanted to say, but his mouth felt like it was glued together. I'm a boy! Say it! He felt the corners of his mouth turn up into a smile. "Go on, Mike. Bow to Spencer and then, Spencer, you'll curtsey back, kay?" He just stared at her, still fighting with his locked lips. "Right hand curled on your chest like this, left hand resting nicely on your tutu,

sweetheart." Just tell her! He urged himself, but he couldn't seem to do anything other than smile. "Don't be shy. Curtsy like this." She demonstrated. Spencer shuddered inwardly, feeling terribly self-conscious as he matched her movements. "Very nice. Mike, would you be willing to let her have another chance to curtsy to you nicely?" Mike nodded. "Alright, back to your lines." Spencer felt a hand on his shoulder as Madame Marie bent down and murmured "and remember, walk like a ballerina this time."

"I thought I did." Spencer murmured back.

"Light, airy thoughts." She replied. "That's a good girl."

Spencer wondered if this meant he was breaking the spell or whatever was doing this to him as he returned to the line of ballerinas and began his approach again. He felt like he was walking the same as before, but a glance at Madame Marie showed he must be floating more than he had been. Mike once again awkwardly bowed. He's so stiff! Why don't the boys have to take this as seriously?

Spencer shuddered from the sensation of his legs in their tights rubbing against each other as he dipped into a curtsy. Almost done, he thought, barely hearing the teacher's gentle reminder of what came next.

He offered his hand and the boy took it, his other hand tucked behind his back as Spencer's free hand returned to his tutu. Spencer felt like everyone was only barely holding back laughter, floating along as the boy escorted him back over to the watching ballerinas. For the briefest second, he thought

Mike might kiss his hand, but then he released it and hurried back over to the safe harbor of other boys.

“That was really funny.” Lisa whispered.

“Huh?”

“When you bowed as a joke. I like that you have fun. Some of the other girls are so serious and you still curtsy so much better than them."

“Uh, thanks.” Lisa smiled and hugged him.

“You're my ballerina bestie.” She said with a smile. She gasped suddenly. “We should have a sleepover!”

“Uh”

“I'll ask my mom. Obviously not today cuz it's Tuesday, but maybe some time soon!” Spencer had slept over at friends’ houses before. Heck, he and Zach hung out and slept over at least once a month. But a girl's house? I'm only a girl at ballet. It'll never actually happen. He smiled weakly, which Lisa took to be approval.

Class ended and Spencer did not even try to fight his walk back to the girls room. Taking off his humiliating outfit almost made up for being in a room full of girls in nothing but his underwear. But they're my underwear. I'm still a boy. He thought reassuringly.

He walked out of the changing room and almost collided with Madame Marie. He wondered for a moment if she saw him as ballerina Spencer or normal Spencer. Real Spencer? No, it's

not like ballet's a dream or something.

“Ah, Spencer.” She said. “I'm glad we” she smiled. “Ran into each other. I wanted to say how wonderful you've been in class.”

“Thanks.” He was almost relieved he felt very little urge to curtsy in his street clothes.

“You'll be a very beautiful ballerina if you keep working so hard. Though I think you'll feel better if you wear a bun like the other girls.” Spencer ran a hand through his hair. How am I supposed to do that? “Well, have a good night!”

Unnerved, Spencer raced home, only feeling normal again when he was back in the safety of his room. A boy's room.

“I'm a boy.” He told the row of action figures and the teddy bear that sat at the foot of his bed. “A boy, not a ballerina.”

Everything felt normal again. He sat at his desk, knocked out his math homework, and then wandered his room, thinking about anything other than ballet. When he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he noticed how pointed his toes were, how straight his back was, and most concerningly of all, his hands hovering as if resting on an invisible tutu.

"I'm being brainwashed into a ballerina!" Spencer moaned, flopping onto his bed and burying his face in his pillow. He stayed like that for a few minutes until he heard his bedroom door open.

“Laundry!” Mom said. Spencer's hamper was still half full,

so what had she… his eyes saw the pink tights in her hands. “Oh, and a package came today with a few more tutus for you, but I left it downstairs.” Spencer climbed off his bed.

“Doesn't it confuse you that these are my ballet clothes?”

“Why would it? I wore this stuff when I took ballet.”

“But I'm a boy and it's all so… pink!’

“Yeah, that's because you're still young. Once you get more advanced, you'll start wearing black and white.”

“But mom!”

“Oh, sweetie. There's no pressure to stay in ballet that long. You do whatever you want to do. Do you want to quit?”

“No.” I just wish I could be a boy in ballet. “You really don't think it's weird that I wear a tutu?”

“Well, it's a change from what you normally wear.” She laughed. “But tell you what? How about you give dad and me a performance after dinner and we'll decide if a tutu suits you.” She seemed to think that was witty as she started to put away his tights and leotards. “Oh, there is one other thing I wanted to talk to you about.”

“What's that?" Today had been rough enough. The last thing he expected was for Mom to pull some sort of really short tank top out of the clean laundry basket. “What's that?”

“Well, you're starting to grow up and I think it's time, sweetie.”

“For?”

“For you to start wearing a training bra.” Spencer felt like his blood had been replaced with ice.

“A what?”

“Surely you've noticed a few of your classmates wearing them?”

“Not really?” And if I did, it would only be the girls!

“Well, it's a part of growing up. You start wearing different things. You used to wear diapers, now you wear underwear. Now you're going to start wearing a training bra.” Spencer stammered. What was going on? This didn't make any sense! He was a boy! A boy! Mom had even said so.

“But…”

“I know it's a little awkward, but me and your dad are here for you. I'll just gently remind you to wear it. No pressure." She smiled. “I got you a few different colors. They're already in your panties drawer.”

“Mom! I don't wear panties!”

“Boxers, undies, panties, whatever you kids call them these days.” She walked toward the door. “Dinner's in thirty minutes. I want you to put a bra on before then, just to try it for tonight.” She seemed unaware of her son's horrified expression. “And don't think I forgot that you're doing a little ballet for us after dinner.”

“What is going on?” Spencer asked the ceiling before rolling over and burying his face once again in the pillow.

“Spencer! Dinner!” Spencer hurried downstairs, giving Dad a pat on the shoulder as he passed him. Mom gave him a lookover and Spencer knew what she was looking for. He ran a hand self-consciously over his own shoulder, almost jumping as he felt a strap on his shoulder. Suddenly, he was entirely aware that he had a bra on. When did that happen?

“See? Not so bad.” Mom said.

“How was ballet?” Dad asked.

“We worked really hard.” Spencer said. “I was out of breath a couple times.”

“Well, tell that to anyone who doesn't think it's a sport.” Dad laughed. “I took a little bit of it in college.”

“You've told us.” Spencer and Mom said in unison, laughing.

“I'm just saying. We're a ballet family.”

“I don't think we can go on tour.” Mom replied. Spencer relaxed. Bra or no bra, ballerina or not, things felt normal again. “Oh, Spencer. A girl named Lisa?”

“Uh, yeah?”

“Her mom called and said she wants to invite you over this Friday for a sleepover.” Mom took a bite of pasta to punctuate her statement. “That sounds fun.” The classic Mom method of probing for more information with an innocent comment.

“Well, uh, I was thinking about asking Zach if I could sleep over there.” his parents exchanged a look.

“I think Lisa would be a better choice, bud.” Dad said.

“You're getting older and, well…” Mom trailed off. “Yes, I think Lisa would be better.”

“What? Why?”

“And you don't need to sleep over if you don't want to.” Mom said, sensing enough to know there was something. “I told Lisa's mom you'll give her an answer in ballet. Or school. Do you go to school with Lisa?” What was going on?

“She's in another class.” Spencer replied, staring down at his rigatoni. This was getting more and more confusing. He shoveled food into his mouth to avoid any further questions.

“That was delicious, dear.” Dad said, leaning back as he always did. “Dinner and now a show.”

“Uh, actually, I still have homework to do.”

“What subject?”

“Math.”

“The math homework I saw done on your desk earlier?” Mom asked.

“I wanted to look it over.”

“You can. After you show us your stuff.”

Spencer tried to get out of it, but the next thing he knew, he

was heading to his room to get dressed. He lunged for his bed, but he felt the same strange sensation wash over him that he got when he walked into the ballet studio. He felt dimly aware of getting dressed and doing his ballerina walk toward his bedroom door, little more than a passenger in his body.

All at once, he found himself in the living room, tutu and all, performing a few pas de chats. The window behind his parents showed his performance to anyone walking by outside. Ballet in a tutu, training bras in his underwear drawer, a girl sleepover in just a few days, what was going on? And would he be able to stop it before he woke up as a girl in every way? Spencer smiled as he curtsied, his parents applauding. He knew he had to figure something out, but he couldn't very well interrupt his performance, could he?