

From Best Selling Authors

T.G. Cooper

&

Anonymous



# Just Dance!

The boy who became a ballerina.

## Just Dance!

T.G. Cooper and Anonymous

Riley idly munched on a hunk of string cheese, his glassy eyes plastered on the 60-inch- flat screen mounted on the wall, where Seth Rogan and James Franco lit up a joint. “This is such preeeeeeemium weed!” Rogan said, smoke coming out of his nostrils. Riley burst out laughing, a chunk of rubbery cheese flying across the room. “How do they come up with this stuff?” He wondered, thinking it would be fun to do comedy. He could think of so many things to say after lighting up---

Then, the front door flew open, and his sister, Marti, came bounding in like she was performing Swan Lacked at her stupid dance school, and he parents came bounding in behind her, all of them smiling, laughing, excited.

Riley felt a darkness in him at the sight of the three of them all happy and obviously in on some big secret.

Marti raised her arms and then, one leg crossed in front of the other, did one of her dramatic ballet bows. Then she stood, a big smile on her face. “Guess who you are looking at?”

“Um, a tard?”

“Riley!” Mom said, shaking her head.

“Wrong, Mister Grumpy pants! You are looking at Le Académie Ballet’s prima ballerina!” As she said ballerina, she shrieked and did a little twirl.

Riley just stared at her, annoyed that she wasn’t annoyed by him.

Mom gave Dad a look, and he nodded. “Congratulate your sister.”

Riley glared at him, but then sighed and mumbled, “Okay. Fine. Congratulations.”

“Thank you.... Thank you.... Thank you!!!!” Marti said, doing little twirls with each “thank you.”

“I need to do study,” Riley said, standing. His sister crushed him in a

hug, and then he sulked off. Riley's room was mostly piles—piles of clothes, magazines, iPad, old and new, skateboards, a dusty electric guitar, empty wrappers—Hostess Pies, Little Debbie snacks, and empty cans of Monster Energy drink. He'd plastered his walls with vintage black velvet posters-- Alice Cooper, Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin. And in the corner, of course, his prized black light, which caused the neon colored posters to glow vividly when he turned it on. To everyone else the room smelled like sweaty boy, but Riley couldn't smell anything. To him it was just normal.

He threw himself on his bed, and as he thought about Mart and his parents his anger just grew and grew. They never seemed to notice him or anything he did—like when he built a model airplane that one time—or almost finished it, at least. What was the point, anyway? All they cared about was Marti and her stupid dance classes.

“Come down! Come down!” His parents yelled. “Riley come down!”

“I'm busy!”

“Come down!” His Dad shouted, and it was the voice, the one that meant come down or I will come up, and you will not like the end result. Riley rolled off his bed, plunking onto a pile of dirty clothes, and then got to his feet, making his way downstairs where he—

Wow, he thought.

Marti was all dressed up like she was about to perform—a gold and white leotard, stiff, full tutu, a tiara sparkling in her tightly coiled hair, and her face was made up and Riley was shocked to see her there, standing on her tip toes in her ballet shoes, because she did look so pretty, and awesome.

Dad was circling around with his big, clunky camera that looked like it came from the 1950s, with a huge lens and a big flash, which was now popping off again and again, like this was a fashion shoot. Marti had a smile frozen on her face, but was doing different poses, standing on one leg, the other outstretched, putting her hands above her head in a kind of arch. Meanwhile, Mom was taking video with her phone, recording Dad taking pictures of Marti.

It was too much, and so Riley crossed his arms and said, “You are so

lame.”

Mom and Dad stopped, looking back at him.

“Look at me! Look at me!” He called out in a cartoon mockery of his sister’s voice. “I always have to be the center of attention!” He then started flailing his arms around, hopping on one leg. “I’m such a priss! Look at me stand on my toes until my feet ache!”

“You getting all this?” Dad said, wryly.

“Oh, yeah,” Mom answered.

Riley stopped dead, realizing his mother had been taping the whole thing.

“You need to apologize to your sister, or I post this to Facebook.”

Riley felt sick, but just crossed his arms and said, “Fine. Go ahead and destroy my life. It’s not like you haven’t already. And you?” He turned to Riley. “I hate you. I hope you break your legs and can never dance again!”

“Riley!” Both of his parents said in unison.

Marti let the plastic smile drop, but it was replaced by a real smile, and a soft, caring look in her eyes. “I just wish you could experience the pure joy of being a dancer. I really wish you would come dance with me sometime.”

“Can’t you even be—like—normal once?” Riley said, turning and stomping up the stairs. He stopped halfway up. “You’re supposed to say—I hate you, too—or shut up—or you’re a jerk!”

“I won’t,” Marti said. “And I’ve told you before. I think there is a great dancer in you just waiting to be free. I just wish you would stop fighting it!”

“And you are grounded. “You can stay in your room until dinner tomorrow.”

“Arrrghhhhhhh!” Riley shouted, and then stomped back to his room. He pulled the curtains, turned on his black light, and staring into the eyes of Alice Cooper, he drifted off to sleep.

“Bro, let’s go,” he heard one his skater friends yell.

“I have to get my slippers on,” he called back as he wrapped the pink laces around his ankle, then crossing his other leg over, he stated to slip the ballet slipper on that foot as well, but then he stopped, shaking his head. Ballet slippers?

Looking down he saw he was wearing a leotard, tights, a tutu...he felt himself panic. He had to go, run, before his friends saw him. He grabbed his skateboard, which was pink and white with a tatted-up picture of a punk rock Cinderella, and he dropped it, but it was too late. He heard all the guys laughing, and he turned and they were pointing and snickering. “Dude, you’re a girl!”

“No,” Riley said, trying to push down the stiff sides of his tutu. “I’m, like, such a total, um, bro and stuff?”

“Hahahaha! You sound just like my little sister!”

Turning, flush with shame, he put one foot on his skateboard and got it rolling, immediately falling into an arabesque, which just caused all the guys to laugh even louder.

Then he found himself standing at the barre, one hand raised elegantly above his head, while he went through his positions with the other girls. His racing heart calmed, and he smiled, feeling a sense of comfort and relief come over him. Glancing at himself in the mirror he saw his long, graceful neck, his small, perky breasts—

The door opened and Marti came in—the prima ballerina! He and the other girls moved, making space for her at the center of the bar, and one of the other girls smiled at him and said, “Your sister is so amazing.”

“I know, right?” He said, looking at her with sisterly admiration.

And then he was on stage in costume—a pretty, white, dress with a flouncy red skirt that flowed and moved with him as he danced, and he spun and leapt into the air, and a boy dance caught him, his hands on Riley’s hips, and lifted him into the air, twirling him, and Riley felt so light and pretty, and he felt a thrill through his whole body, because there was nothing in the world so great as being a dancer!

There is nothing so great as being a dancer.... Being a dancer... I want to be a ballerina...

NO! Riley sat up, bathed in a cold sweat. He looked down at himself to see his same flat chest-- no breasts. He wasn't a girl, a dancer. What kind of screwed up dream was that? He wondered, looking at his black light poster of Justin Bieber.

He sat up, rubbing his eyes. He'd been grounded to his room, but he was hungry, and he knew his parents wouldn't want him to starve. He also didn't want to get in any more trouble, so he cracked open his door and said, "Can I come down and grab some food?"

"Sure," his Dad called.

Pulling on a pair of flannel pants, he smelled a tank top. It passed the test, so he pulled it over his head and headed downstairs. His dad was in the living room sitting with a cup of coffee, watching the college football pregame show. Riley went into the kitchen, poured a bowl of Special K. He started to grab the milk carton, but on impulse grabbed the coconut milk instead, munching it all down in his usual fashion, then headed back towards his room.

"Hey," his Dad called.

Riley sighed and walked over, waiting for the lecture.

"You need to cool it with your sister."

"I know," Riley said.

Then, his dad surprised him. "Your mom and I love you just as much."

The sentiment caught Riley off guard, so he just grunted, "Okay."

"Nice shirt, by the way," his Dad said, snorting.

"What?" Riley looked down at his tank top. It was white, but on the front was a pink silhouette of a ballerina and the words "Just Dance!" He felt his cheeks flush, and memories of his dream came back to him. "Haha." He crossed his arms over the image. "I must have gotten one of Marti's by accident!"

He made his way back to his room, shaking his head, pulling the tank top off as soon as he entered and tossing it on the ground but then--- he froze. What the?

His room was pink. So pink. All the walls, and beneath the piles of debris-- pink carpet. Even the ceiling was now a soft, Easter pink color, while the curtains on his windows were thin and white, with pink hearts on them. He shook his head, looked back out the hall. This was his room, but it was not his room.

He put a hand on his hip and bit down on the end of his thumb. *Maybe I should call dad?* He thought, but what could he say that wouldn't sound insane? Um, how come my room suddenly turned all pink?

His dad would probably think he'd done it himself, somehow. Or, something. He closed the door, terrified anyone would see his room, and then he sat down on his bed, knees together, looking at all his pink.... And he felt a growing sense of fear and unease. Something was happening to him, to his world, something...

He looked around his room. What a mess. He had the sudden urge to tidy up, but wouldn't that make even more of his hideous pink carpet visible? Besides when had he ever cared about being neat?

Then, his eyes fell on IT. In the corner, along with jeans and -shirts—a lacy, pink bra. He started to scan the room, and he saw them now, mixed in with his stuff—panties, bras, tights, leotards, skirts...

No. No. No!

He couldn't have this stuff in his room, couldn't let his parents see it. He threw on another tank top—making sure It had nosily pictures on it, and in a panic, he leapt to his feet, frantically grabbing up the clothes, tossing them into his hamper, desperate to hide away all the girl things in his room. Bras, panties, tights—

When he grabbed the white tights, it felt like an electric current passed from them into his body. Not a shock like from static electricity, but a charge of energy that made his whole body tremble and caused the hair on his arm to stand up. The material felt so... cool in his fingertips, and he rubbed them against it, a sweet tingling sensation rising up his arm that made him shiver.

How good would these feel on my legs? He thought. How cute would my legs look ...”

“No!” He said out loud, throwing the tights across the room, terrified at what he’d been thinking. But there they were—those tights, just sprawled out on his pink carpeted floor, so bright and white. He grabbed a pair of his jeans, and using them like oven mitts, he picked up the tights and tossed them into the hamper, sighing with relief as the top slammed shut and the compulsion to put on the tights drained out of him. He put his hands on his hips, blew the bangs out of his eyes, and then got back to cleaning.

The floor cleared, and he quickly made his bed, then he looked around, feeling more calm now that his room was nice and neat, and all the girl’s clothes had been hidden away.

His eyes drifted to the door to his closet. Slightly ajar. Hooking a few stray strands of hair behind his ear, he stood and walked over, boldly throwing open the door.

Oh, no.

He walked in and started to look through the clothes. Blouses. Skirts. Dresses. Sweaters.

All girl stuff.

ALL girl stuff!

Turning, he marched back into his room. As he walked, he noticed with irritation that his hands kept brushing against his hips. Looking down, he saw—did he have hips? Like, as in girl hips? He went back to the closet. There was a mirror on the inside of the door. He looked at himself and made a small, high pitched yelping sound.

His had round hips now. Like a girl. And a tiny waist. Like a girl. Turning to the side, he saw that his behind swelled out, plump and pretty, rising from the sway in his back--- like a girl. Looking closely, it seemed his face had changed a little as well. His eyes looked bigger, and his lips more puffy. His hair looked thicker, and it now hung down past his jawline, and he had thick, glossy bangs sweeping across his forehead down right to his eyebrows.



“Okay,” he thought. “Okay. This is weird. I seem to be changing. The whole world seems to be changing. This is like something from Harry Potter. Magic.” But what to do? How to fight it? He thought about going to his dad, but the thought of going down there now with his curvy figure and saying, “Dad, I think I’m turning into a girl, got any ideas?” Didn’t seem very appealing. Besides. His father was an insurance salesman.

Internet. There had to be something on the Internet.

He’d found his laptop buried under a pile of clothes, so he knew it was now sitting neatly on his desk. He noted ruefully that it was now plastered with stickers for One Direction, Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga.

Flipping it open, he went to Google, but then decided he needed to check his twitter first, so he jumped over there and then his jaw dropped. His twitter feed had gone insane. It was loaded with tweets from teen-age girls going nuts over Taylor Swifts new song—Look What You Made Me Do. Girls are so dumb, he thought, even as he tapped on a link to the video, figuring he might as well see what all the fuss was about. The video started. Taylor started to sing, and Riley bit his lip and said, “Oh my God! This is everything!” He listened and listened, meanwhile tapping away on his keyboard, posting comments, responding to comments, jumping on Twitter and Tumblr and Snapchat and posting and responding and reading and reading and listening and checking out videos people made commenting on the song and Kanye and Kim and Katy... He felt giddy with excitement and each time he thought okay, enough, he would see a new thread, a new comment, and then he would be off again, buzzing with excitement over TAYLOR!!!!

Eyes bleary, he sat back, brushing his hair back from his face, and stared at the screen, where the video was playing for the umpteenth time, and he glanced over and saw his black light Taylor Swift poster—if was her dressed in her ballet outfit from the Shake It Off video, and he loved that outfit on her so much, and thinking about her saying *that* Taylor was dead? It was so unreal, and he suddenly felt like crying because she meant so much to him, and—

“Wait, what?” He said, shaking his head. “Taylor Swift? Um, like, since never.” He stared at the poster. No. That wasn’t his. It was supposed

to be.... He struggled to remember. Led Zeppelin? Maybe? But wasn't that just dad rock that was like, lame or something?

He looked around the room and his poster collection. Misty Copeland? Um, just no. Taylor Swift? Not even. Pink Floyd? Totes, yah! But even as he stared at the Pink Floyd poster it morphed into Pink. There were boy bands, and Justin Bieber, and a Twilight Poster.

Riley felt panic and rage growing in him. If anyone saw this he would be finished. His sister would never stop mocking him. He got up, grabbed the Taylor Swift poster with every intention of ripping it down from the wall, but as his fingers hooked behind the edges, he stopped, staring at Taylor in her tutu, looking right into her eyes. He loved. He wanted to be like her, ever since he'd been a little girl. He couldn't....

"I have to!" He said, ripping the poster down, shredding it into pieces and then running from poster to poster, tearing them all down, ripping them to pieces, hurling their shredded remains all over that stupid pink carpet.

"You can't change me!" He shouted toward the sky, toward whatever weird force had been doing this to him, to his life. "I won't allow it!"

The world seemed to wobble, and he rubbed his eyes, staring at his walls, which were once again covered with those same girly posters. Riley's mouth fell open. "No."

He walked over and tore down the Misty Copeland poster again, this time balling it up and throwing it into his closet. When he turned around, it was back on the wall, Misty smiling down at him.

He tore it down again. And again. And again. But each time, the poster just reappeared. Finally, he sat down on his bed, struggling to hold back the tears. It wasn't possible. It couldn't be happening. And yet, it was, and there didn't seem to be anything he could do about it.

Or, maybe, Dad? He'd dismissed the idea earlier, but now it just seemed like he had to at least try. Let his dad see his room. There would be no way he'd be able to deny something insane was happening, and maybe he would at least have some ideas? Or, maybe Dad would at least be able to use the Internet without going all crazy and getting sucked into a social media vortex?

He sat up. Yes. He would go and talk to his dad. And then he felt it. A tingling in his chest, like he was being tickled with a thousand little feathers. He looked down and watched as his chest began to swell, puffing out around his nipples and then begin to push out, soft little cone—breasts? He put his hands on them, wanting to push them back into his body, but instead the soft swell of breasts continued, and it felt so weird that he pulled his hands away, and looked down the top of his tank top to see firm little round breasts jiggling on his chest.

“Darn those socks!” He said, making small fists and pounding them into his bed, causing his new breasts to bounce and shake. “This is so fudged up!” *Now what?* He thought. I can’t even curse? But lots of girls say swears!

Yes, he answered himself, *but Miss Levoux at Académie Dance forbids it from her girls.*

“I am not one of her fudging girls!” He shrieked.

He stood, his breasts swaying, his sensitive nipples rubbing against the nubby material of his tank top. He flushed at the strange sensations, and paused in his plan to go see his father. It, maybe, made more sense than ever, but he felt sick at the thought of his father seeing him with boobs. I’m his only son, Riley thought, idly toying with an earring. He’ll be so disgusted with me, and it will be only one more reason for him to like Marti more. Still, he crept toward the door, taking tiny steps, fighting against the fear, the voice that wanted to hold him back. He was losing this fight, and he needed help.

He got to the door, stealing his nerve, building up the confidence to see his father, to walk up to him with this new, curvy body, and ask for help no matter how ashamed he felt. He reached for the handle, and as he reached he felt his arm pressing against his boob, and he backed away. He couldn’t do it. Couldn’t go out and see his father.

Not without a bra on. It just wasn’t decent.

*I’m a boy. I don’t wear bras.* He thought, but the weight of his breasts pulling on his sternum, the feeling of them jiggling and bouncing, crushed those thoughts, and were overridden by a new imperative, one it seemed his

mother had been drilling into him since he'd first gotten his boobs--- you don't go out in public with your breasts hanging out. It sends the wrong message!

He couldn't do it: Walk out of his room with nothing between his breasts and the world but a thin piece of tank top material stretched tight across his girls, and that was doing nothing to hide his plump nipples. No. He needed a bra *now*, and he would put one on and then strut down there to ask his Daddy for help!

He went to the top drawer on his dresser and pulled it open, revealing bras and panties, just as he'd known it would. He sighed, terrified and relieved, and he ran his fingers over the bras, wondering which one to wear. There were so many different styles and colors, but since he was going to talk to his Dad it would be weird and gross to wear anything sexy, so he finally grabbed a bra that seemed almost like a little t-shirt—it was gray cotton, with a white strap along the bottom that read Jockey, and thin black straps.

He pulled it on over his head, then tugged it down over his bouncy new breasts, adjusting the straps on his shoulders and shifting his boobs around until they rested in his bra just right, the material pulled tight against them. Taking a deep breath, he then pulled the tank top back on, and looking in the mirror he shook his head, burning with shame at the idea of facing his father like this—with boobs. But he had to do something before it was all too late, so he worked up his courage and walked out his room, daintily making his way down the stairs, craning his neck, trying to sneak up on his father, not wanting him to see him before he had a chance to warn him.

His Dad was sitting on the couch, a beer in his hand. On the television, the Clemson Tigers were playing the Oregon Ducks. Riley smiled. The Ducks mascot was so cute! Then, he walked up behind the couch and said, "Daddy?"

His Dad raised his hand, his long-time universal signal for "wait a sec." The Ducks', um. – guy who threw the ball? Riley couldn't remember what he was called—the other players knocked him down, and Riley's Dad shouted "Yes!" Then, the kicker guy came out to kick the ball away-- it all seemed so dumb to Riley. He couldn't understand why boys loved watching it so much, though he did think the player's butts looked cute in their tight

little pants--

NO! He stomped his foot, furious at himself for checking out guy's butts. "Daddy?" He repeated, though the as the Broadcast had gotten ready to shift to commercial, they'd focused on the smiling, dancing cheerleaders, and Riley found himself smiling, thinking about how pretty they were, and when one did a backflip he actually silently clapped, impressed with her skills.

"What is it, pumpkin?" Dad finally said.

"I need your help," Riley said in a small voice.

"What is it?" Dad said, still watching the screen, where a bunch of girls in bikinis were dancing on a giant beer can in the snow.

"Um, maybe if you just look at me? You'll see? It's weird."

Dad turned in his seat, looking up at Riley, concerned. Riley did a little shoulder shrug, blushing, feeling sick with humiliation, fighting the urge to turn and run back to his room. Dad shook his head. "Um, I don't know what you're asking me."

"What?" Riley shook his head. "You don't? I mean, look at me, Daddy!" He held his hands under his breasts. "And my room is pink!"

"I know. I painted it that way for you."

"Father! I am turning into a girl?!"

Dad just kind of blanched, a helpless, terrified look coming into his eyes. "Maybe this is something you need to talk to your Mom about?"

"Mom?"

"She's really better at handling these kinds of female issues."

"Ugh!" Riley said, twirling away from his father. He started toward the stairs, planted his foot and spun back, the reality hitting him. "You don't notice anything different?"

"I'm really sorry, honey..."

"You just see your..." the word caught in his throat, but he finally spat it out. "Daughter?"

Dad nodded. “Can you help me out? Because you look—did you get your hair cut?”

Riley sighed, his breasts rising and falling. *Omigod*, he realized. Not only was he turning into a girl, but his father thought he’d always been a girl. “Never mind,” Riley huffed, crossing his arms over his annoyingly bouncy boobs and running up the stairs, back to his room, where he slammed the door and tossed himself dramatically onto his bed. Pulling his pillow to his face, he curled up into a ball and groaned. “Why does everything always have to happen to me?” He mumbled. “It’s not fair!”

He lay that way for a time, just curled up, feeling sorry for himself. What the *hades* was he supposed to do now? It *scotched* enough being him as a he, but the girl him? Who would he hang out with? He never could talk to girls, and he sure didn’t want to hang out with guys, not with this hot little body. They’d be constantly feeling him up, trying to kiss him. He squirmed uncomfortably as his body tingled at the thought of a boy wanting to kiss him.

And then a new idea popped into his confused little brain, almost as if it had always been there: Dance! Of course. He’d always loved to dance, and he had a lot of friends at La Académie Ballet! It wouldn’t be so bad, because he had a very lithe, dancer’s body, and he was a good dancer!

He sat up. “Shut up!” He whispered to himself. “Stupid brain. Dancing is dumb girl stuff.” Then he saw them, dangling half out of his hamper—those white tights! They seemed to glow and call to him-- his legs tingled as he imagined the pleasure he’d feel slipping those pretty tights over his toes and then pulling them up his slender calves and round, dancer’s thighs. He shivered, bounding off his bed and opening his hamper, kicking the tights inside, slamming it shut, breathing hard with the excitement and fear he felt at the sight of those tights, and the compulsion he felt to wear them.

“Time to man up!” He decided. He sat down at his computer and logged into his Netflix account, continuing the movie he’d paused earlier. Seth Rogan was talking to the high-school girl he was dating, lying to her about wanting to meet her parents. Riley shook his head, crinkling his nose in disgust. Seth was fat and sloppy, and he was a liar! Plus, it was sooooo

creepy that he wrote the script where he was dating a teen-ager? Talk about a perv!

Then he and James Franco—who was pretty cute—were driving around, smoking more weed, crashing their car and running from this female cop with really big boobs. *She could never be a ballet dancer*, Riley thought, nervously adjusting his bra straps. *Not with boobs like that. I hope mine never get that big*, he thought. *Because I totally could never do ballet, then, and I really don't love modern dance*. His breasts were pretty much perfect for a ballerina, he thought, looking down proudly, raising his shoulders and sending a little jiggle through them.

On the screen Franco and Rogen were once again smoking weed, this time some kind of three pronged joint. “Ahhhhhh...” Rogen said. “I’m so high I can’t even feel my eyeballs!”

Riley raised his eyebrows and let his mouth drop open. “Um, this is, like, so lame,” he said, rolling his eyes. “I can’t believe anyone finds this funny.”

He turned it off, glancing over to see the tights, dangling halfway out of the hamper. Once more, his whole body trembled with desire, even as he slit his eyes and shook his head. *I know I put them all the way in the hamper*, he thought. *There is no way!*

Grabbing a silver baton from the corner, he crept toward the tights, flipping the hamper open and once more pushing them back in, slamming it shut. “I am so not ever!” He squealed at the tights. “Stay in there this time.”

Satisfied, he twirled and froze. “Omigod!” The tights were now spread out on his bed, right next to a black leotard and a pair of white black ballet slippers. “No!” He said, staring at those bright white tights. “NO!”

But the tights just lay there, smugly, waiting, watching.

Riley backed away, staring at the tights, terrified at how badly he wanted, needed to wear them. He bumped into his computer desk, glancing back and--- but no. His computer desk was gone, replaced by a pink vanity, with a big mirror surrounded by soft white lights. Just like the one in his sister’s room. On the vanity he saw all manner of make-up—eyeliner, mascara, lipstick, blush and foundation. His heart leapt! He loved make-up!

But I don't, he thought angrily, even as his mouth watered at the sight of all the pretty colors of eyeshadow he had. He reached toward a tube of pink lipstick—cotton candy—he knew, somehow, and his hand trembled as he struggled to stop himself, but his fingers kept reaching closer, closer, until with a shriek he pulled himself away, spinning back to the center of the room and – the tights!

No. No. He looked back and forth between the tights, the vanity—his lipstick and his leotard--- eyes wide with terror. He knew that if he couldn't stop himself now, he would be--- it would be over. Sinking to the floor, he covered his face, his shoulder length hair falling over him like a protective hood.

*Come on,* he heard a soft, feminine voice whisper. *There's a great dancer in you. Stop fighting it. Let her be free!*

"I'm not a dancer," he whispered. "I'm not a girl."

*I just wish you could experience the joy of dance,* the voice repeated.

Those words? Where had he heard them before? Riley toyed with his earrings, thinking, thinking, and then he remembered.

His sister! She'd said it to him on Friday, and that's when he'd had his dream, and when he'd started to change, and his room, and—yes! He stood, pirouetting with joy, giggling. It was his sister's wish. Maybe if he could get her to take it back this would all stop? He would be a boy again!

His mom and his sister had gone out to do something-- girly. He couldn't remember what. But all he needed to do was call her, beg her to take back her wish! Now, where was his phone... ? Glancing around the room, he spotted it on his bedspread—it must have fallen out of his pocket when he'd been curled up on his bed, but now it was sitting there, shining brightly, right next to his tights.

"Oh, cruddy fuddy!" Riley said, stomping his foot again. He would have to get close, dangerously close, to those tights. I can do this, he thought. I'm a totally like so strong! I'll just grab my phone, and then I'll like, call my sister and be like—unwish me into a girl, and then I'll be like—so awesome, sis!

He crept toward his bed, the phone and tights. "I'm Rey, he



whispered. I'm Rey and you—" he spoke directly to the tights—"are Kyo Ren, and I'm stronger than you!"

He stepped closer, and closer, and he reached across the tights, toward his phone, and he smiled, a triumphant smile, and then his fingers brushed across that cool, white material and he picked up the tights and rubbed them to his cheek, sighing with relief, pleasure. Need. Clutching the tights with one hand, glancing forlornly at his phone, he decided he would just call his sister later, after. It would just be so much easier to slip into the pretty tights, to stop fighting it.

He wiggled out of his flannel pajama bottoms and his gross boy underwear. It would look all lumpy, so he grabbed a pair of panties from his drawer and slipped into them, then sat down at his vanity table, lifting one leg, where he paused, the tights just centimeters from his tingling toes. Like an addict about to relapse, his mind reeled with hate and disgust, while it also screamed with hunger and need...

"I'm a boy," Riley said, struggling against his need. "I hate dance. Tights are stupid. Girls are...." He slipped the tights over his toes, his foot, then the other foot, and he pulled them up, feeling the silky material sliding up his calves, his thighs, sending of delicious chill of pleasure through his slender little body, and he sighed with the sheer feminine pleasure of it all as he pulled the tights up over his rounded hips and felt the elastic strap at the top pop tight against his tiny little waist.

He did a little knee bend, then some leaps across the room, eager to see how his legs looked in the tights. Seeing them in the mirror, so lithe and round, pretty dancer's legs, glittering in the white tights, he giggled, shaking his head, doing different poses.

Call your sister now, some small little male voice begged from deep within him. Beg her to save you from this! But in what seemed like a strobe lit nightmare he found himself slipping into his leotard, then giddily lacing himself into his pretty black ballet slippers, stepping into a flouncy ballet skirt, and then he was standing there in first position, his arms arched above his head, staring at himself— what looked like a pretty, teen-age girl, her cheeks flush, eyes bright, as she smiled, and moved through her positions, admiring his long legs, lithe little arms, firm little breasts and tiny waist.

The force that had possessed him seemed to fade for a moment, and the smile vanished from his face as he was once more a fifteen-year-old boy, and he was a boy wearing a leotard and tights, a boy with a curvy figure and dancer's legs, a boy who looked like a silly, ridiculous female who was now standing on her toes, making tiny little steps as she slowly turned, glancing over her shoulder at herself, admiring the feminine shape of her firm, dancer's hiney.

The phone! He had to call Marti. Now. Still on his toes, he gracefully fluttered over to his bed, grabbing the phone and punching up Marti's number. He bit his lip, twisting his long hair around his fingers as it rang and rang. "Please answer," he whispered. Oh, please, please, please answer! I'm so sorry for all the times I made fun of you! Please, God, let her answer!

"So sorry," he heard Marti say. "But I love you, so leave a message—or text me like a normal person!"

"Marti," Riley said, his voice cracking. "I need to talk to you. Please. This is -- um, I'm Riley."

He hung up, clutching his phone to his breasts. Would Marti remember him as a boy? Would anyone?

He didn't know. Couldn't think of anything to do. His heart was racing, and he felt like he was about to suffer a panic attack. He needed to calm down somehow, and his eyes were drawn to his vanity, toward all those brushes and tubes and powders.

He shook his head. No. Never! I am a guy, a dude. Please don't make me do this.

But then he found himself sliding into the chair at his vanity, crossing his legs, the silky feeling of his thighs sliding together in those smooth, cool tights sending a little thrill through his body. His face was still his face—but prettier. Big eyes ringed with thick, curly lashes, inviting, kissable lips. Before doing his make-up, he wound his hair into a tight little bun, his slender fingers seeming to know just how to do it, leaving a couple curly strands of hair to dangle at his cheeks. The studs in his ears flickered and flashed prettily as he did his hair, and grimaced to think what he'd become,

how he felt like just a pretty little bauble.

Swallowing hard, he struggled to resist as his hands found a tube of foundation, but soon he was gently working the foundation over his perfect skin, then powder, and after he picked up the eyeliner and began to trace pretty black lines under his eyes, desperate to stop but powerless to resist his newfound hunger to be pretty and feminine, and as his hands worked, the boy in him wept, shrinking, dying, while the girl glowed, her smile getting brighter as she drenched her long, pretty lashes in mascara, making them ever longer and fuller, and she brushed soft, pastel colors above her eyes, letting them pop and sparkle, and she brushed just a little blush along her cheekbones, and then to crown it all off, she picked up that tube of wet, pink lipstick. As he sat, poised to do his lips, he felt a tingling below, and a sense that the last little bit of boy was about to shrink, to wither.

Haven't you done enough? Riley asked her, staring out at what was her face now, through her eyes—and she shook her head. “No, silly” she said in her voice. Riley focused all his will, trying to force her delicate hand to drop the lipstick, or to slather it on to create an insane Joker smile, but he found that he was helpless, powerless against his own femininity, and all he could do was watch as she painted her lips with that wet, pink, kissable lipstick, and then lined them with a slightly darker color, the end result being that when he looked at her now, Riley could only think—We are so pretty.

As he has been doing his lips, making them so plump and kissable, he felt a shrinking between his legs, and a spreading, a heat and a wetness, and his he puckered at himself in the mirror, he squirmed, squeezing his legs together, conscious of his new slit, his new lips, and he knew that he was truly a girl now.

Riley did a little shrug, then grabbed her phone and opened up Instagram. “Please,” Riley said. “Not this.”

“You are such a shy little thing,” she answered herself, snapping a couple different shots, choosing one that showed off her pretty smile, the swell of her pretty breasts in her leotard, and the tops of her shimmering, tight clad legs. She tapped in the message, “Just Dance!” And posted it.

Riley felt his heart sink. Then he opened up his iTunes. Soon, his room was filled with the gorgeous ambiance of Tchaikovsky's ballet,

*Sleeping Beauty*, and he found himself dancing, his body flowing with grace and elegance, a feeling of total peace and joy coming over him as he felt himself become one with the music.

The door to his room flew open, and Marti was standing there, mouth agape. “Riley!” She squealed, looking him up and down. “Omigod!”

Riley smiled, still dancing. Marti, unable to control herself, twirled into the room, and the two sisters danced together, Marti taking the part of the Prince while Riley danced the princess. As the finale concluded, he found himself in his sister’s arms, staring up at her, the two of them spinning together slowly, and more slowly, and then stopping as Riley swooned backwards, arms outstretched, supported by his sister’s strong arms.

“Did you, um, get my call?” Riley said, holding his position, helpless and dependent in his sister’s arms.

“I did,” she said, staring down adoringly at her newly shaped little sister.

“Unwish me,” Riley said. “Please.”

Marti lifted her brother uprights, setting him on his feet. “I can’t,” she said.

“What?”

“Riley. I—um—I always wanted a sister?”

“But, I’m a boy. I’m not a dancer. I’m not!”

“You were always a dancer,” Marti said.

The tears started to roll down Riley’s cheeks, his mascara running, his lower lip trembling. He wanted to say-- I hate you! Or, I wish you were dead or something else mean and hurtful. But instead, he just sank to his knees, folded his hands beneath his chin and looking at his sister, so graceful and strong, his prima ballerina, he whispered, “Save me.”

“I already did,” Marti said, turning and walking away.

A broken cry shook Riley’s body, and he folded over into child’s pose, closing his eyes to his new, pink, dancer’s life.

When his parents called for dinner, Riley got up, shaking the stiffness

from his limbs. He sat down at his vanity and quickly fixed his make-up, then went downstairs, still wearing his leotard and tights, his ballet skirt. “Someone’s excited about the big recital,” he heard Mom say as he glided into the dining room.

He plucked at his skirt, blushing, smiling prettily.

“Let me get a picture,” Dad said. “Over by the fireplace!”

“Daddy?!” Riley said, rolling his eyes, feigning reluctance as he made his way over to the mantle, striking a pose and his prettiest smile.

Dad snapped some pictures with his clunky old camera while Mom gushed over how pretty Riley looked, but then Riley, seeing Marti sitting alone at the dinner table looking a little forlorn, called, “Marti! Come be in the picture with me? Pleasepleaseplease?!”

Marti’s face brightened and she dashed over, putting her cheek right against Riley’s smooth, hairless cheek, the two of them grinning like fools while their dorky dad did his fashion shoot routine. Finally, the ordeal ended with mom calling to come to the table before the food got cold.

Marti squeezed Riley’s hand and said, “It’s not so bad, right?”

“I guess,” Riley answered, flush with—love? He’d never felt so loved, so part of the family. He’d never felt so happy.

“Look at you all smiley!” Mom said, pleased.

Riley just grinned and took a little bite of his tuna steak, shrugging.

After dinner, Riley went back to his room--- it was still soooooo pink, and yet now he felt more comfortable in that space, in her space—and his heart swelled a little as he looked at that poster of Misty Copeland. If only he could be as good as her someday, he would be a very happy girl.

Sitting at his vanity, he carefully unwound his bun, letting his long hair cascade down over his shoulders, and then he took his brush and began to brush it and brush it, counting the strokes, knowing he had to do at least a hundred strokes to keep it pretty. He sighed, his breasts rising and falling. It was all part of being a girl, part of being a ballerina.

The next morning the two sisters, Marti and Riley, wearing their tracksuits, their dance duffels slung over their shoulders, piled into their parent's van giggling and laughing as they texted and Instagrammed with the other girls in the show. Riley felt butterflies in his stomach, and he fidgeted constantly with his earrings, his bracelets, his hair. He knew his part, and he was so super confident that he would nail every turn and every pirouette and every move—but he was always nervous before a big dance recital, and more so than ever today because he was also nervous for his awesome big sis, making her debut as the prima ballerina!

“Omigodomigodomigod!” He squealed, hugging her so tight. “I am so so so excited for you!”

“Thanks,” Marti said, truly touched as she squeezed her pretty little sister back. “You’re so sweet!”

Riley felt himself flush with pleasure at the compliment.

The day went by in a blur. Hugging and greeting the other girls. Warming up at the barre in his leotard. Changing into his costume and doing his make-up. Marti helped him do his hair, weaving flowers into his pretty locks, while she of course had a sparkling tiara flashing in her own. The music, the stage lights, and then just being lost in the dances, all the girls moving as one, and Riley practically unconscious, just celebrating his slender, graceful body, his long, lithe limbs, the moving music moving in him and through him and then—suddenly—it was over, and they were all at the edge of the stage bowing, and then separating so that Marti could come forward and take her bow, and the audience leapt to its feet, and Marti started to cry, and then Riley was crying, and all the girls were crying as the applause seemed to go on and on and he saw his parents looking at him, and his Dad gave him a thumbs up while his Mom covered her heart, and he saw that she was crying and then he cried all the more.

As he and the other girls left the stage, Marti grabbed Riley's soft little hands and pulled him over to a corner. Holding his hands in hers, she smiled through her tears and said, “Do you still want me to wish you back to being a boy?”

Riley shook his head, tears still pouring down his cheeks. “No,” he whispered. “Never. You— I-- I can't even---“

Marti pulled him in for a hug, then kissed him on the forehead. “Being a girl is not going to be easy, you know.”

“Easy?” Riley snickered, wiping his tears. “If I wanted it easy I sure as heck wouldn’t be a dancer!”

Marti giggled, and then the two, holding hands, skipped off to find their parents, who stood at the edge of the stage waiting to present each of their wonderful daughters with her own bouquet of roses.

Riley clutched the roses to his chest, pausing to smell them. The camera flashed, and Riley looked up and out into the darkness beyond the edge of the stage. He didn’t know what his future held now. It would all be so different and so strange—being a teen-age girl instead of a boy, but he knew whatever happened, whatever struggles and trials he faced, it would be okay because he had the best family ever, and no matter what, he would always have ballet.

## Apotheoses

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