

CHAPTER ONE

A VERY Big Year

Hi, Emmy Bolan here and currently I am laying on the dressing room floor, in the boys department, of my daddy's favorite store—Nordstrom's. I am at the store with Ryan and waiting for him to make up his mind and finally pick something. At this point, pick anything. We have been here so long that if he comes out in a dress I will say I absolutely love it just to be able to go home.

I've been doing my best to wait patiently for Ryan to get a grasp of his fashion senses but I have had enough and I'm so hungry right now I actually thought about eating something off the floor. Thought about it, but didn't do it. Just so we're clear.

"Ryan, we've been in this mall since 9:00 this morning and it is almost 5:30! At night! And just to punch that point

home, I'm going to say it again...AT NIGHT! I am honestly begging you here. Please! Please!! Can we go home now? You have successfully killed the shopping need brain cells inside my feminine brain. Which I'm sure is absolutely fabulous for any future boyfriend or potential husband that may come along. Not to mention my stomach is beginning to eat itself. What are you doing in there? Making everything by hand?"

"Emms I am sorry, but you just can't rush me. I am picking out the perfect outfits for the femininas."

"You're...what? Did I just hear you right?"

"Maybe, what'd you hear?"

"I am not going to repeat that."

"Then we'll never know."

"You're a pain."

"Yeah, well, I'm your pain."

"Who happens to be picking out perfection?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Perfection for...?"

"The femininas, the ladies, the babes, the..."

"Okay, Ew! Way too much unwanted information."

"Why'd you ask then?"

"Because I thought you would say something else."

"Why? If it drives you crazy, then that's good enough for me."

"You're trying to kill me aren't you?"

"On the contrary Emms. I want you to be around for a very, very, very, long, long time."

"Oh God take me now."

Ryan started laughing and I was getting desperate.

“Look Ryan, we can come back here tomorrow and pick out some more of that ‘perfection’ you were just talking about for you and your ladies. I swear. Today we’re going to be late, and I’m starving! Oh—and one more thing—don’t EVER say the word ‘outfits’ again.”

“What? We’re not going to be late. We have to call my mom by 6:00 and my alarm is set for ten till. That’s 5:50 for those of us whose brain has turned to mush.”

“Hey!”

“And as for starving, I’m hungry too! And why can’t I say ‘outfits’? What’s wrong with ‘outfits’?”

“Did you even hear my plan about coming back tomorrow or did that idea just pass you by? And are you telling me that we, or rather I, still have another half an hour of this? And don’t say ‘outfits’, ‘outfits’ sound weird, say anything but ‘outfits’.”

“No, guess so, then yes. And you have to give me another word if ‘outfits’ is so weird. Unless of course you want me to take up even more time because I am thinking about a word instead of picking out *perfection*.”

“NO!!! Focus on the task at hand Ryan! I’d like to get out here sometime today. And what I said before was, ‘I swear we can come back tomorrow and then finish doing whatever it is you need to do’, and what about ‘clothes’?”

“You swore to me that we would go shopping together like we always do and we are not doing that. And ‘clothes’ sound too weird too. It’s not smooth enough.”

“Ryan, what are you talking about? We are shopping

right now. Together! Well, technically you are shopping and I am sitting here starving and waiting for you, but same difference right? What about ‘dress’, ‘attire’, ‘apparel’, or ‘ensemble’?”

“It’s not the same. We’re not shopping like we always do. It’s different.”

“I said same difference.”

“Okay *now* who’s being the pain?”

“I can’t help it. I can feel my blood sugar levels dropping as we speak.”

“Forget it. Just go. I will finish up by myself.”

I was suddenly feeling pretty low. I knew if the situation was reversed, he’d sit there all night and day for me and the silence that was now hanging there brought that point home hard core.

“And by the way Emms, have you ever heard a man use the word ‘ensemble’? I’m talking about an actual real live man use the word ‘ensemble’? I don’t think so. And do you really think I would use the word *dress* in regards to something *I* was going to put on my body in any way, shape, or form? Another I don’t think so. Or at least I hope you don’t think I think so.”

I laughed.

We have been in the mall now for somewhere in the neighborhood of about 8 plus hours and Ryan has chosen two things—ONLY two things—though he has been in a dressing room about four million times.

I can now identify different dressing room floors by carpet color, thread count, and unfortunately smell. Not a

good or wanted talent, but an ability I have recently acquired all the same. Oh and by the way, if you tell anybody I told you that? I will deny it explicitly.

Anyway, school starts next week and though wardrobe wise I am totally ready, Ryan has decided that everything he owns doesn't fit right anymore. Or at least doesn't fit right for his femininas.

"I'm sorry Ryan. I'll wait patiently for your perfection—Honest Promise. And if you want to, you can go back to saying 'outfits'. Though so you know, it still sounds weird."

"Well, pull up some carpet baby, because I am not done. And you're right, 'outfits' does sound weird, and 'clothes' does sound better. 'I'm buying *clothes* for the ladies'. Hear that? Smooth sounding right?"

"Oh yeah...smooth, right."

"I know it."

"Okay. And did you also know Mr. Ryan that GQ men use the word 'attire'?"

"And how do we know this Miss Emmy?"

"I read it. It's good to keep up on things."

"Why? Are you going to start dressing like a man?"

"What? Ryan, you are so lucky there is a door between us right now."

"Can I still call you Emmy? Or will Emmett be your new name?"

"You better watch it Ryan or I'll bring you down!"

"I'd like to see you try."

"Don't make me come in there Ryan Michael Cavanaugh."

He laughed so hard he started choking, making me laugh so hard I almost peed my pants!

“Ryan, knock it off! If I wet my pants, you and I are changing pants!”

“Ewww! No way!”

“Then stop laughing.”

“Then you stop making me laugh!”

“What? Ryan, how am *I* making *you* laugh?”

“Oh...you know.”

There was a period of silence while I thought about what to say next. If I keep this going he will take even longer in the dressing room and the lack of food and fresh air was obviously affecting both of us.

“Fine Ryan, I...will stop making...you laugh.”

Wow, not having the last GOOD word in any kind of thing with Ryan was killing me. And Ryan knew it because just then he started giggling.

“Forget it!! I am going to have to find a bathroom or I am going to have an accident.”

“No Emms Wait. Don’t leave. I’m almost done I swear.”

“Changing or laughing?”

“Both.”

“Fine.”

I had just laid my head back down on the carpet when Ryan started singing loud enough that people walking by smiled at me.

“You *love* me. Can’t live life *without* me.”

“Did you have to sing it?”

“Yep.”

“You’re so weird.”

“Yeah well, you still love me.”

“Whatever. Hurry up.”

He was right though. I couldn’t even imagine my life without Ryan. Ryan and I have been together longer than we have not. No one else could understand us, keep up with our two or more conversations at once, or deal with our habitual quirks but each other.

We met in preschool and now we are on the cuff of being seventh graders. Can you believe it?! Seventh Graders! We are practically grown up! I mean think about it, we are practically high schoolers. High Schoolers! I can barely say it without goose bumps!!

This year is going to be a big year for us. It marks the last year that we can really get away with things in school, well, wait, stop, back-up, and let me re-phrase that. Get away with the “little” things in school like occasional late homework, passing notes, or talking because you absolutely cannot contain this absolutely fabulous information you just found out anymore—those sort of get away with things.

Next year though we really have to set the example because we will be the TOP of the school chain. Eighth graders! Soon to be moving on to swim with the big fish—HIGH SCHOOLERS! Again with the goose bumps! Okay so we’ll be at the bottom of the tank, but we will still be in the same swimming pool. So, needless to say we have to live this year for all it’s worth.

Plus speaking even more about this year, this year Ryan

and I become, dare I say it? TEENAGERS!! AAAAAAAAAAAh—Did you hear the angel choir singing? That in itself is a monumental turn of events! Never again will we be called “little” kids. We will be from that point on called...“BIGGER” kids! It almost brings a tear to my eye.

Ryan turns first. He becomes one in a few months from now. I still have several months to go but it will still happen this year for me all the same.

And on top of all that, this year, are you sensing the pattern of how big this school year is going to be for us? THIS YEAR will be the first year that Ryan and I will hear the big speech in gym class. You know “*THE SPEECH.*” The one your teacher kind of tells you a little bit about before the actual speech but not really everything because everyone is still together? Well, hold on to your hats boys and girls. This year we will be separated and the boys will hear about boy stuff and the girls will hear about girl stuff...Our Bodies, Our Period, Our...Stuff. And I heard there is even a movie. This is the whole enchilada ladies!

Mom has technically already talked to me about it, but now I will hear it from my friends and a complete stranger so you know they will fill in all the blanks everyone blanks out on when their mom starts talking about all that embarrassing stuff. I mean you are looking right at her but your eyes have glazed over from the sheer embarrassment of the conversation. A conversation she is technically having with herself because mentally you have totally left the building.

I totally tuned out when my mom started to talk about all

the changes my body will be undertaking soon, and something about becoming a woman, or being a woman, or something about a woman, anyway, I'm sure I heard the word woman.

Honestly, I can barely remember a thing except that mom had become so emotional that she kept wiping her eyes with her hand and smearing her mascara all down the sides of her face. After that, I lost everything. I was too busy staring at her face. She had made a complete circle on her face by the time we were done. So technically it's her fault. She should have washed her face first and I would have only blanked out on the really really weird parts. I think. Well, that's what I am going to go with if ever asked.

"Hey Ryan, did you know there are exactly thirty eight black tiles in the ceiling from the left side of the cash register to the wall next to the front door?"

"Look I'm sorry Emms, but I have to have everything just right. This is a big year for me. This could be MY first kiss from or to someone I'm really crushing on."

"Oh come on Ryan."

"Nope, I cannot leave anything to chance. Okay, are you ready? I think I found a winner."

"Well alright!"

I sat up totally excited.

"Come on out and let me see you."

Ryan opened the door and I have to tell you, my jaw dropped!

"WOW! Ryan you look..."

But before I could finish my sentence came the word:

“Hot.”

Did I say that? No I didn't say that. Would I really say that? He does look good. Maybe I did say that. No, it's Ryan. I wouldn't say that. Did I really just say that? I turned around and there she was...in her khaki mini, white Tommy tee, light blue *Juicy Girl* Couture bag, and perfectly white Keds—BUFFY HARRIS! My arch foe—Snake Woman!! Though I have to admit, her bag is totally cute.

“You think Buffy?”

“Oh yeah Ryan, I think. You look HOT.”

“Thanks Buffy.”

“Don't mention it Ryan. See you around.”

“Later.”

“Emmy.”

“Buffy.”

And with that she slithered away the same way she slithered in.

She's such a...AGHHHHH! And she makes me want to ERRRRRRR! And then she AHHHHHH! Thank goodness you totally get what I'm saying because to fill in the blanks right now would change this conversation into one Shoo would wash my mouth out for—no doubt.

“Wow Emmy! Did you hear that? The most popular girl in school just called me 'hot'!”

“What?!”

“Well, popular next to you that is.”

“That's bet...wait. That didn't sound so good either. What do you mean by that?”

“I mean the next girl...who's almost as popular as you

are...but not really...I mean, not at all...as popular...girl, called me hot...that girl."

"Oh, okay...I think."

"Emms, why do you always get your panties in a bunch when it comes to Buffy Harris?"

"Oh you know why. Because she does things to me on purpose and just for the heck of it. And for your information she does not get my panties in a bunch! She's just a wedgie that needs to be removed is all!"

"Okay, okay, wedgie girl."

He smiled at me for a couple seconds like he knows me all too well, in which case I stuck my tongue out at him making him laugh. Finally after a few more seconds of staring at each other he said, "I'm hot though right?"

So typically Ryan, though I had to admit, Buffy was right, he did look great. So I smiled back and said, "Stay away from Buffy, she'll eat you alive."