



CHAPTER 1

RAVEN

When the new kid walked into maths on Wednesday morning, Kat woke up. Fast.

Tall, slender, with broad shoulders, shoulder-length black hair, piercing blue eyes and a face that was kind of beautiful in a boyish sort of way, the new kid made *everyone* wake up. Even Queen Bee Saskia stopped texting and whispered loudly, ‘Check out the new talent, ladies!’

Mr Moles was less impressed.

‘Young man, you are wearing make-up!’

‘Actually, I’m not....’

‘I can see lipstick,’ Mr Moles insisted. ‘And... is that blusher on your cheeks, boy?’

‘Yes, sir,’ the new kid replied. ‘But I’m not a boy.’

‘Don’t answer me back, young man.’

‘I’m not a young man, either.’

Mr Moles stared at the new kid, his eyelid twitching nervously.

‘This should be interesting,’ Saskia whispered.

‘Are you trying to tell me you’re a *girl*?’ Mr Moles enquired, looking perplexed and rather flustered. ‘Because you’re wearing boys’ uniform, I see.’

‘No,’ the new kid answered evenly. ‘I’m saying I’m not a boy *or* a girl.’

‘What the....’ Jammo sat at the very back of the classroom, his lip curling in disgust.

His mate Gollum gurgled like an oversized baby. ‘How’s that then?’

‘It’s all in my school records, sir,’ the new kid explained politely. ‘I’m “gender-fluid”. Some days I feel more like a boy, other days more like a girl.’

‘Whoa!’ said Saskia. ‘I like it!’

Mr Moles just looked irritated now. ‘Yes, I seem to recall the headmaster mentioning something in briefing....’ He glanced down at the names in his register. ‘You must be....’

‘Raven,’ said the new kid.

‘What kind of a name is Raven?’ scoffed Jammo.

‘A sexy one.’ Saskia shot the new kid one of her famous ‘you-know-you-can’t-resist-me’ looks. Raven ignored it, blue eyes catching Kat’s brown ones – just for a second – across the classroom.

‘OK, OK, everyone settle down,’ Mr Moles muttered crossly. ‘Well – um – Raven, I’m afraid school uniform rules still apply.’

‘But I’ve read the school rules,’ said Raven, winking at Kat then turning back to Mr Moles, all politeness. ‘Girls can wear a small amount of make up so long as it’s discreet.’

‘But you said you’re not....’

‘And since I’m not a boy, the “hair above the shoulder” rule doesn’t apply either,’ Raven continued. ‘Now, may I sit down, sir?’

Mr Moles opened his mouth but was unable to come up with a reply. Raven slid into a chair on the front row, blue eyes twinkling. Saskia giggled, Gollum snickered – even Jammo snorted.

Things were *not* going to be boring with the new kid in town.