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MARVIN REDPOST: Is He a Girl?

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 Marvin Redpost, is he a girl?

When Marvin's lips touch his elbow, he suddenly finds himself acting very strange. Wishing he had pigtails like his sister, Linzy. Asking to play hopscotch at recess. Even dotting his *i*'s with little hearts in class! Sure, he may have figured out the secret difference between girls and boys . . . but will Marvin Redpost ever return to *normal*?

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Marvin Redpost: Why Pick on Me? is "a tour de force of the genre, a trim tome of energy, hilarity, and wisdom."

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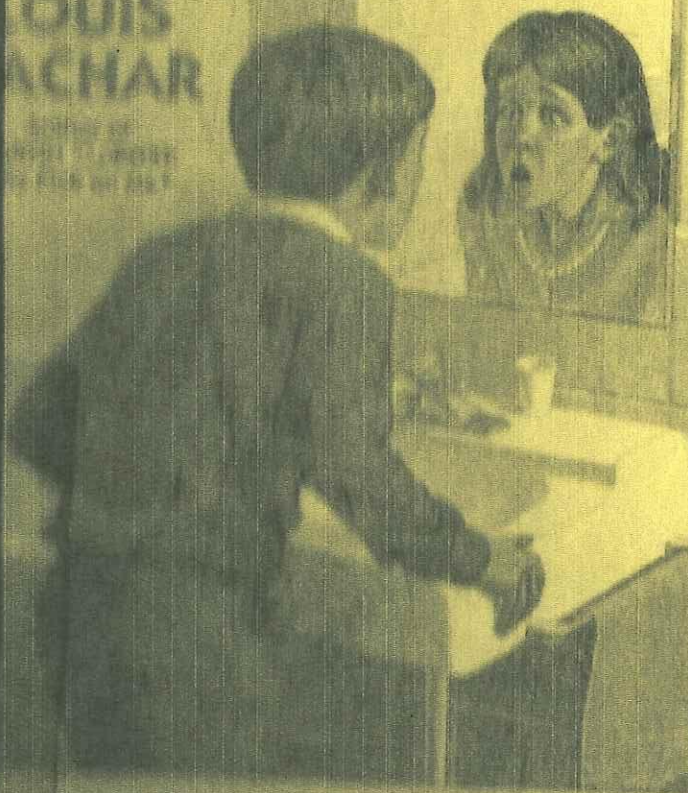
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A FIRST STEPPING STONE BOOK

MARVIN REDPOST:
Is He a Girl?





1

A Weird Girl

Casey Happleton said, "If you kiss yourself on the elbow, you'll turn into a girl."

Marvin Redpost looked at her.

They sat next to each other in Mrs. North's class.

Casey had a ponytail that stuck out of the side of her head, instead of the back.

"It's true," said Casey. "If a boy kisses his elbow, he'll turn into a girl. And if a girl kisses her elbow, she'll turn into a boy."

"Can you change back?" asked Marvin.

"Sure," said Casey. "You just have to kiss your elbow again."

As he looked at it from every angle, he became more and more sure of it.

"Oh my gosh," he said. He bit his finger.

"Hi, Marvin," Linzy said sleepily as she entered the bathroom.

Marvin could see her in the mirror. "Linzy, can I ask you something?" he said.

"Okay," said Linzy. She yawned.

"Okay, look at me," said Marvin. "This is real important."

He knelt down and put his hand on her shoulder. One thing good about little kids—they always told the truth.

"Look at my face," said Marvin. "Do I look like a girl?"

Linzy looked hard into his face. She touched his cheek. Then his ear. "Yes," she said.

"What?" exclaimed Marvin. "You're crazy, Linzy! That's stupid! You're just a stupid little kid!"



A frown slowly formed on Linzy's face.

"I'm sorry," said Marvin. "I'm sorry, Linzy."

But it was too late. She was crying.

"I'm sorry," Marvin said again. He sighed.

"Okay. Why do you think I look like a girl?"

"You look like a boy," Linzy sobbed.

"Then why'd you say I looked like a girl?"

"I don't know," she said, still crying.

"You must have had a reason," said Marvin.

"Just tell me. I won't get mad."

"I have to go potty," said Linzy.

Marvin waited while his sister used the bathroom. At least in that way, he knew he was still a boy.

"I'm sorry I yelled at you," he said when Linzy was through. "It's just—" He stopped. "If I tell you something, do you promise not to tell?"

Linzy promised.

"I think I'm turning into a girl," said Marvin.

Linzy's mouth dropped open. "I always wanted a sister!" she exclaimed, instantly happy. "That's what I wished for on my birthday cake. I blew out all the candles."

Marvin laughed.

"You'll be such a good sister, Marvin!" said Linzy. "We can play dress-up! And comb each other's hair. And you can teach me how to put on lipstick."

Marvin smiled at his sister. "We can have a tea party," he said.

"Yes!" said Linzy. "And no boys allowed!"

Marvin laughed.

Linzy laughed too.

In the middle of the night, Marvin and Linzy sat on the bathroom floor giggling at each other.

6

Off to School

"What happened to you?" Jacob asked when Marvin dragged himself downstairs in the morning.

"I didn't sleep too good," said Marvin.

He had stayed awake all night trying to kiss his elbow.

"More bad dreams?" asked his mother.

"I guess," Marvin muttered. He poured himself a bowl of cereal.

"Your voice sounds funny," said his mother.

"Do you feel all right?"

"I think I'm getting a cold," he said. He hoped that's all it was.

Linzy smiled at him.

He stared down at his bowl of cereal. He had to hold his head up to keep from falling into it.

Ten minutes later Marvin was still staring at his bowl of soggy cereal.

"Pony or piggies?" asked his mother.

She was combing Linzy's hair.

"Piggies," said Linzy.

Marvin watched his mother give Linzy pigtails.

Girls are lucky, he thought. They could wear their hair in lots of fun ways. Pigtails. Ponytails. Bangs.

He liked bangs.

No, I don't! he told himself. *I don't like bangs. I don't want bangs. I don't want to wear my hair like a girl.* He didn't know why he had thought such a thought.

It was just that girls had longer hair, he decided. That was a fact. So they could wear their hair in lots of different ways. That was all there was to it. It didn't mean he wanted bangs.

Like the way girls dress. Boys just wore



pants. But girls were lucky. They could wear anything! Pants or skirts or dresses. And they could wear sparkles on their clothes. Boys didn't get to wear sparkles.

No! I don't want to wear sparkles! I don't want to wear a skirt or a dress! I like wearing pants.

"Mar-vin!" called Jacob. "Stuart and Nick are here."

"Oh my gosh," said Marvin. He bit his finger.

He walked to school with Nick and Stuart. He tried to act normal.

Nick had a loose tooth.

"Watch this," said Nick.

Nick opened his mouth wide. He pushed the tooth forward with his tongue, so that it almost lay down flat.

"Oh, gross!" said Marvin.

Nick and Stuart looked at him.

"I mean . . . cool!" said Marvin.

They got to school before class started.

"Look, there's Patsy Gatsby," said Nick. Stuart laughed.

Patsy Gatsby was sitting alone playing jacks.

She was the weirdest girl in Marvin's class. Even weirder than Casey. Sometimes all you had to do was say her name, Patsy Gatsby, and everyone would laugh.

But Casey was funny-weird, Marvin thought. Patsy Gatsby was sad-weird.

She was always so quiet. Like she was afraid of people.

She didn't have any friends. No one ever talked to her.

Except Clarence. Clarence called her names. Worm-Face. Stupid-Head. Ugly. Double-Ugly. Stink-Girl.

Marvin watched her bounce the red ball, then pick up the little jacks.

He had never played jacks. It looked like a fun game.

"Where's your football?" asked Stuart.

"Huh?" said Marvin.

"Duh," said Nick.

Marvin suddenly remembered. He was supposed to bring his football.

"Now what are we going to do?" asked Stuart. "Play jacks with Patsy Gatsby?"

Nick laughed.

Marvin looked at Patsy.

Maybe she isn't the weirdest girl in class, he thought. Maybe I am.

He tried to think of another game to play. He didn't want to let his friends down.

Then he got a great idea. He didn't know why he had never thought of it before.

"Do you want to play hopscotch?" he asked.

7

It's Fun to Be a Girl

Marvin sat at his desk in Mrs. North's room.

He didn't see what was so bad about hopscotch. He didn't know why Nick and Stuart had laughed at him.

It takes a lot of skill to play hopscotch, he thought. *Boys are just stupid!*

No, I don't mean that! he quickly told himself.

But girls were smarter than boys. That was a fact. Everybody knew that.

Or did they?

He couldn't remember if he used to think girls were smarter. Before he kissed his elbow.

He concentrated on his work.

He had been learning cursive writing.

He had the worst handwriting in the class. It was usually so bad, even he couldn't read it.

That was because he always wrote so fast.

But now, instead of rushing, he wrote each letter slowly and carefully.

Mrs. North walked past his desk. "Very nice, Marvin," she said.

Marvin smiled. It wasn't so hard to write neatly, he realized. If you just took your time.

He wrote each letter just the way he had been taught.

Except he didn't dot his i's. Instead, over each letter i he drew a tiny heart.

He yawned.

He wished he could close his eyes for just a few seconds.

"Go to sleep, Marvin," said a voice inside his head.

It was a girl's voice.

"Close your eyes," the voice said softly.

"You're halfway there."

He rubbed his eyes.

"What's wrong with turning into a girl?" asked the voice. "Girls are better than boys. Girls are smarter. Prettier. Braver. Girls can have ponytails. Pigtails. Bangs. Girls can wear sparkles on their clothes."

Marvin's eyes shut for a second, but he quickly opened them.

"Girls can do somersaults, Marvin. Your four-year-old sister can do a somersault, and you can't.

"Girls can hang from the monkey bars upside down by their knees."

Marvin had always wished he could do that.

"Girls can go into the girls' bathroom," said the voice. "Don't you want to go into the girls' bathroom? And hear all the secrets girls tell in there?"

Marvin wondered what girls talked about inside the girls' bathroom. They always came out giggling.

"They tell the most amazing secrets," said the voice. "No boy would ever understand."

His eyes closed.

He dreamed he was hanging from the monkey bars by his knees. A warm breeze blew in his face. Birds were singing.

He had long hair. It brushed against the ground.

He swung high off the monkey bars, did a somersault in midair, and landed on his feet.

His hair was shiny and silky. It hung over

his shoulders.

He shook his head. His hair swished from side to side.

He shook his head really fast. His hair whipped around.

He giggled.

It was fun to be a girl!

Out of the corner of his mouth he blew a few strands of hair off his face.

8

. . . A Little Different

He awoke to a loud cheer.

Casey Hapleton was staring at him. "Oh my gosh," she said. She bit her finger.

"What?" asked Marvin.

"You fell asleep in class!" said Casey. Then she laughed.

Marvin shrugged.

He wondered how long he'd been asleep. And if he had changed at all.

He looked around. The other kids were all excited about something.

"Settle down," said Mrs. North, "or I'll have to change my mind."

"What happened?" asked Marvin.

"We get to go to Lake Park!" said Casey.

"Oh, goody!" said Marvin. He clapped his hands.

Casey looked at him funny. Her ponytail stuck out of the side of her head.

Marvin wondered what it would be like to have hair like that.

"What are you staring at?" asked Casey.

"Your ponytail," he said.

"What about it?" she demanded.

"It's cute," he told her. "But you always wear your hair the same way. If I had long hair, I think I'd wear pigtails sometimes. Or maybe a French braid."

Casey stared at him. "What's with you?" she asked.

"Nothing," said Marvin.

"And your voice sounds so funny," said Casey. "What'd you do? Kiss your elbow?"

He stared at her.

She stared back.

She knew.

He knew she knew.

She knew he knew she knew.

He knew she knew he knew she knew.

"No!" he said. "What do you think I am? Weird?"

Casey bit her finger.

The class had to pair up for the walk to Lake Park.

Lake Park was three blocks from school. It had a great playground.

Mrs. North sometimes took the class there on Friday if they'd been good all week. "Everyone find a partner," she said.

Marvin ducked under his desk. He pretended to tie his shoe. He was afraid to be partners with Nick or Stuart.

Warren sang:

"Marvin and Patsy,
Sitting in a tree,
Kay-I-Ess-Ess-
I-En-Gee

Marvin looked at Patsy. She was blushing.

"Boys are so immature," said Marvin.

Patsy looked up and smiled at him.

She was wearing black suspenders over her pink T-shirt. Marvin thought it was a cute outfit.

Girls are lucky, he thought, as they walked to Lake Park. They can wear anything. Even suspenders.

But if I wore a dress to school, everyone would probably think I was weird or something.

Maybe not? He wasn't sure.

Maybe he should wear a dress to school

tomorrow, he thought. See what the other kids think.

Oh, I'm so silly, he suddenly realized. There's no school tomorrow. Today's Friday.

Patsy Gatsby was quietly humming to herself.

"Do you think it would be weird if I wore a dress to school?" Marvin asked her.

She looked up, then giggled.

Marvin giggled too.

He didn't know why he was giggling. It was fun just to laugh.

"In Scotland men wear skirts," said Patsy.

"Have you been to Scotland?" asked Marvin.

"No," said Patsy. "I read it in a book. The skirts are called kilts."

"You read a lot, don't you?" asked Marvin.

Patsy blushed. "I guess," she whispered. She

class. Well, the only reason he's so big is because he's been left back a hundred times."

Patsy laughed.

"I'm warning you," said Clarence.

A crowd gathered around them.

"Oh, grow up!" said Marvin.

Clarence glared at Marvin.

Marvin looked right back at him. Their faces were inches apart.

"I don't believe it," said Marvin. "You get uglier every day."

A group of girls laughed.

Clarence forced a laugh. He turned away.

"You're not worth it," he said.

"All right, Marvin!" said Nick, slapping him on the back.

"Wow," said Stuart. "You stood up to Clarence."

Casey Happleton stared at him, finger in mouth.

"Weren't you scared?" asked Nick.

"No," said Marvin. "Clarence wouldn't hit—" Marvin stopped.

He was confused.

He was going to say, *Clarence wouldn't hit a girl.*

"Stuart is rude.
Stuart is crude.
Stuart eats dog food!"

"I'm going to get you!" yelled Stuart.
Stuart chased Casey across the swinging bridge.

Nick chased Judy across the bridge from the other side.

The girls were trapped in the middle.

The boys moved in for the kill.

The girls screamed.

The boys stopped.

"Mrs. North!" yelled Judy. "Nick and Stuart keep bothering us."

Mrs. North made Nick and Stuart sit on the bench.

Marvin remembered he used to like to chase the girls too. He always thought the boys were in charge.

Now he knew. The girls *liked* to be chased. It was a game. And the girls made all the rules. The boys could never win.

Boys are so stupid, he thought. He couldn't believe he used to be that stupid, too. It was embarrassing.

Suddenly his foot slipped off the rope. He almost fell, but grabbed a section of the rope just in time.

He pulled himself back up.

He looked around the play area. Clarence, Travis, and Kenny were hanging out. Patsy Gatsby was playing jacks. Casey and Judy were on the swings. Nick and Stuart were on the bench.

Suddenly Marvin understood.

"Oh my gosh!" he said. He bit his finger.

It all became clear to him.

He understood everything.

As Marvin walked to his desk, Clarence shoved him in the back.

"I saw you!" said Casey. "When you fell from the spiderweb. You kissed your elbow!"

"And I'm still a boy," said Marvin. "So that just proves you're weird!"

Casey sang very softly so only Marvin could hear:

"Marvin's rude.

Marvin's crude.

Marvin eats donkey food!"

"I'll get you at recess, Casey!" he said.

"Marvin?" said Mrs. North. "What was that?"

"Marvin won't quit bothering me," Casey complained. "He said he was going to get me at recess."

"Marvin, quit bothering Casey," said Mrs.

North. "I know she's pretty, but you need to keep your eyes on your book. Not on Casey."

Everyone laughed. Marvin turned red.

At recess he headed to the wall-ball court with Nick and Stuart.

"Look, there's Patsy Gatsby," said Nick.

Marvin and Stuart laughed.

Patsy Gatsby was playing jacks by herself.

Of all the weird things he did on Friday, Marvin thought, talking to her was the weirdest.

He shook his head. He remembered his conversation with her. She said he was *nice*.

Patsy looked up from her jacks. "Hi, Marvin," she said.

He walked right past her.

"Hi, Mar-vin," Stuart said with a funny voice as he gently shoved Marvin.

Nick laughed.