

# PRETTY **boy**

## Growing Pains

by KALYANI PANDYA

She sits across from me in the chilly seminar room one September morning. Her chocolate burgundy hair is collected, loosely, in a simple gold clasp, revealing the nape of her neck, milky and enticing. A small brown mole just above her lip, decorates her elegant mouth. Her lips are painted an alluring red and her soft camel sweater falls over her breasts. I am imagining, as I've done a thousand times, peeling that garment from her body, beholding the beauty I'm positive lies beneath. She lifts her eyes from her book and meets mine. I blush hotly in the underheated room. Her brown eyes softening, the mole above her lip rises with the slow, cautious smile she offers. Bewildered, I grin back at her, feeling foolish. I am a baby butch, new at everything, certain of nothing except that I'm terrified.

It takes a particular kind of courage to be young and queer. It takes an extraordi-

nary kind of courage to be young, queer, and in love for the very first time. The weeks pass and as her slow smile grows to an easy grin, I grow less timid. One blessed morning, I sit next to her around the crowded seminar table. Her hair, still damp from the autumn rain, falls about her shoulders. As I inhale the scent of her shampoo and perfume eagerly, I make a secret promise to myself: I will make this woman my lover.

Unlike their heterosexual counterparts, queer youngsters lack the benefit of a ready-made road map, and must hack out their destinies from the overwhelming weeds of expectations and thorns of impending adulthood. Too often, this mammoth task must be accomplished entirely alone. With only a steady diet of Bollywood movies and American television to go on, I devise my strategy to seduce the most beautiful creature I'd ever seen. I picture candlelit din-



ners, peacocks roaming grassy hills, a chorus of singers, dancing as we embrace. Bolts of a silk sari flow behind her as she runs, in slow motion, into my awaiting arms. Except I live with my parents in Winnipeg where there are no peacocks and I can't cook.

Without revealing too many of my tricks here, I will divulge that I concocted a more simple plan that involved yellow roses and a box of chocolate biscuits. One week to the day that I made that promise to myself, I was peeling the soft cloth of a silk sweater off my first love. Her beauty gleamed before me, as spectacular as I'd dreamed it. I collected her chocolate burgundy hair in my hands and as I brought my mouth down on her splendid nakedness, that slow, cautious, smile graced her lips again ...

*For all the baby butches out there who dare to dream.* ▼

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