

STUPID CUPID

PINKS= ALEX. REDS= CARLTON THE CUPID. GREENS= ANYONE ELSE.

ALEXANDRA JEAN WARD is 15 years old.

She's CREATIVE and *bright*.

Intuitive and **Bold**.

She's an ORIGINAL spirit,

But like so many YOUNG are,

Alex is **lost**,

LONELY,

Always feeling **sub-par**.

Today would be much WORSE than Alex's usual school day.

It's *Valentine's*,

When the **lonely** are...well, LONELY.

And the "LOVED" are on **display**.

Alex **faked** the flu,

But of course, Mom knew.

So she DRESSED,

Grabbed some **toast**,

Her SKETCH pad,

Back pack,

And **off** she flew.

Her **faded blue** high-tops scuffed along as she went,

On her way to her CHEERY, **dreaded** school.

Alex hopped a **wide** puddle,

Then PAUSED in her steps-

There was SOMETHING STRANGE in that pool...

At the PUDDLED water's **edge**,

Alex **gazed** down at her *face*.

BORED eyes.

Messy hair,

Her bland and MISMATCHED fashion taste.

The *water*, dull and STILL,
 Shone back bare, **spindly** trees.
 Beyond the branches, a **GREY** and **moody** sky...
 There's a bird...
 No, a plane...
 A **balloon**? Something strange...
 Like a **fat** baby...
 But wait...
IT FLIES!

“**WHOA**” **Alex** heaves,
 and she **turns** on her heel.
Breathe in deep...
in through your nose...
out THROUGH your mouth...
 “**OK, THIS CAN'T BE REAL.**”

She trots on.
EYES ahead.
 Then she **spots** it from afar,
 That odd **fat** (baby?) bird,
 It's staring **right** at her,
 Perched atop the neighbor's **NEW** car.

It's **ROLY** and **poly**,
 With **GLEAMING** black, plaited hair.
 It has **dark** skin,
 A **BRIGHT** pink tunic,
 And **little**, fat feet,
 Round and **BARE**.

With it's **WIDE** twinkling eyes set **firmly** on **Alex**,
 It **spreads** it's wings and *loop-de-loops* through the air.
 Amid the **3RD** loop,
 It **slams** straight into a lamp post!
Yikes!
 I **GUESS** he didn't **see** THE pole there?

Alex ran **OVER** to help,
 Though **unsure** what to **SAY**...
 She stared down at the **crashed**...cupid?
 “**UMM...ARE YOU OK?**”

He HOPPED to his feet,
 spritely and proud,
 A smirk set in HIS dimpled, CLEVER chin.
 From the thin air he pulled a glowing, *golden* SCROLL.
 It unrolled and THERE he'd begin.

“HMM... UH HU... I SEE... I SEE...”

His eyes SHOT like darts over the script.
 THEN in one fell swoop,
 The script is rolled and VANISHES,
 All that's left of it,
 A poofy, shimmering blip.

“ALEXANDRA JEAN WARD!” He declares with a **blast**,

**“I AM CARLTON,
 A CUPID,
 AND LUCKY YOU,
 TODAY I'M YOURS!”**

“WHAT?”

**“FEAR NOT!
 FOR IN MATTERS OF THE HEART,
 THIS RENEGADE IS FEARLESS AND PURE!”**

“OH NO, NOT ME...”

**“NOW, OFF ON OUR JOURNEY... VICTORY AWAITS! WE SHALL
 SOON STAND UPON TRUE LOVE'S VAST SHORES!”**

“LOOK...UM, CUPID... CARLTON... SIR,”

This DAY would be HARD enough without this flying baby;
 Of that Alex was SURE.

**“AT SCHOOL THERE'LL BE HUGGING AND LAUGHING AND SELFIES.
 NONE OF WHICH WILL INCLUDE ME.
 THE DRAMA KIDS WILL ENACT SCENES.
 THE GLEE CLUB WILL SING SONGS TO LUCKY GIRLS FROM CUTE BOYS.
 I MEAN GROSS...NOT LUCKY...DID I SAY LUCKY?”**

NO, I TOTALLY DON'T WANT THAT.
 NOT THE CARDS OR THE CANDIES,
 THE FLOWERS, WELL THEY JUST DIE ANYWAY.
 SO WHAT WILL I DO?
 I'LL JUST ROLL MY EYES AND IGNORE IT ALL AND PRETEND LIKE IT'S A NORMAL DAY.
 SO YOU CAN GO,"

And Alex moved to do just that.

"THANKS ANYWAY..."

With a *whirl* and a **pop**

Suddenly **Carlton** was **armed**
 With a **full** quill on his **BACK**
 and a tiny, **GOLDEN** bow under **arm**.

"**YOU CAN TRY TO IGNORE ME,**" he winked deviously.

"**I'LL BE HERE WITH YOU. ALL. DAY.**"

"**BUT AT SCHOOL THEY'LL ALL...**"

"**SEE ME?**"

"**WELL, YEAH...**"

"**NOPE! ONLY YOU CAN SEE AND HEAR WHAT I SAY.**"

"**ONLY I CAN SEE YOU?**" Alex reassures what she heard him say.

"**AND HEAR ME,**" **Carlton** adds with a nod.

"**JUST TODAY?**"

"**YEP.**"

"**HM, OKAY.**"

And **JUST** like that the **duo** are turned and **ON** their way.

Alex tramped on down the **STREET**,
 Now **EVEN** more **burdened** than before.
Carlton sang loudly following along,
 Over **TRASH** bins, around **tree** trunks,
 occasionally getting **TANGLED**,
 unfettered he **sang**, and **soared**.

“AH YESS!” He EXCLAIMED with a hiss,
 As they rounded the corner to school.
 With a WINK, **Carlton** strings his glamorous bow,
 His *cherubic* face DETERMINED.
 COOL.

Alex followed his gaze to Mrs. Bulb AND Mr. Hayes,
 The ever-bickering cross GUARDS for the street.
 The arrows are off!

“WHERE THERE IS RAGE, LOVE WILL ENGAGE!”
 And both arrows plant in POOR Mrs. Bulb’s feet.

Her eyes become WIDE,

Adoring!

BEHOLD!

She’s never seen her own feet this way!
 Meanwhile Mr. Hayes is BAFLED by this change,
 And NERVOUSLY backing away.

“OOPS! OH WELL. ON TO THE NEXT!”

Carlton sings and swoops through the air.
 He swings around the flag POLE,
 Joyfully re-arming,
 THEN shoots again,
 Striking Pearl, the Janitor’s grumpy, OLD pitbull,
 and French teacher, Ms. Lila St. Claire.

They ROLL in the mud,
 Ms. Lila and Pearl,
 Suddenly BESTIES,
 Janitor Lee mystified.

MEANWHILE more arrows find their defenseless victims,
 This time at least both are HUMAN;
 PRINCIPAL Jane and Life Skills teacher, Mrs. Debrye.

Usually at ODDS because Principal Jane is so “MODERN,”
 And Mrs. Debrye’s teachings...well they’re not.
 Now they’re strolling arm-and-arm up the walk to the SCHOOL,
 Discussing recipes for Principal Jane’s new RICE STEAMER/crock pot.

Alex stalls at HER locker, finally INSIDE.

Carlton swoops ABOVE.

A HERD of students has CAUGHT his searching eyes.

The **herd** moves IDLY down the hall,
 Texting...
 HEADPHONES....
 Scrolling...
 Bored!... DISTRACTED!...
 DISCONNECTED.....

Together, and yet NOT at all.

In a *whirl* of motion,

Carlton targets THE crowd.

With a twang,

His **arrows** are shot.

THIS time he's **struck** music-LOVER Josh Gabbot,

Osama Abidi,

And the PREPPY track star, **David** Michael Knot.

For reasons they can't fathom,

JOSH pushes his **head**-phones back,

Osama **looks** up from the SCREEN of his phone,

And DAVID wanders from his posse from **track**.

After a **series** of awkward "HEY MAN'S",

These LONG time strangers are **suddenly** new.

DIFFERENT hobbies, **cultures**, ethnicities...DIFFERENT **everything**;

And yet they'll soon discover how they're so very alike too!

On into **Geometry**,

Alex is the FIRST one into class.

She plops down in the very BACK,

Carlton swooping about,

a CROONING, jiving MASS.

"WHY ARE YOU SITTING BACK HERE?" Carlton asks,

"THERE'S A WHOLE ROW OF EMPTY SEATS UP THERE."

Then HE floats to the front on his IRIDESCENT wings.

And PERCHES on the back of a chair.

Alex glares at the CUPID and he glares right BACK.

If she ignored him, what WOULD HE do?

HE's loud and OBNOXIOUS and hard to shut out.

"UGH!" Alex grunts.

"FINE! FOR JUST ONE DAY, I'LL DO WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO!"

AS KIDS filtered IN,
 There was obvious **surprise** to see **Alex J. Ward** in the front row.
 And **SHOCK** from Mr. **Ramos**,
 and **even Alex** herself,
 at ALL the answers she'd FIND that she **knows**.

In **Chemistry** and **HISTORY**,
 it was more of the **same**,
Carlton **JEERING** poor **Alex** to **MOVE**.
 To **sit** next to this **kid** or that **kid**,
 To **raise** her hand,
 To **ANSWER** questions **HE knew** that she **KNEW**.

And in between his **pestering**,
Carlton would **RIDE** on the fans, **round** and **ROUND** he'd go,
SHOOTING his bow.
 Like a **Fair** game...
SOMETIMES he'd hit **his** targets,
 But **most** of the time....**NO**.

He **STRUCK** Tamara Turner **and** the **AQUARIUM** nearby,
 She **couldn't** stop **GAZING** at the fish.
THEN he struck the **tall**, lanky boy in the back of the **CLASS**,
 And **another** kid's petri **DISH**.

In **HISTORY** he caught Mr. Jenkin's **world** globe and Samantha Rogers,
 She **couldn't** stop **SPINNING** it.
 Then by **CHANCE**, he struck **Janitor Lee** passing by, and the **TRASH** bin.
Instead of collecting trash, he **threw HIMSELF** right in it!

In **English**, Mrs. Pewter **DRONED** on and on,
Alex could **finally** just relax.
 But **THEN** as the period was nearing **an end**,
"SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT THEY'RE DOING THIS WEEKEND," Mrs. P asked the bored class.

"ALEXANDRA...." **Carlton** sings.
Alex ignores him,
 eyes the clock,
 wiggles down deeper in her chair.
"SHOW THEM YOUR SKETCH BOOK. SHARE WHAT YOU LIKE!"
My work is personal, Alex thinks to herself.
Besides, no one cares.

She **RESISTS** until **Carlton's** right **IN** her **face**,
 “**DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT MY ARROWS AT YOU...**
BE BRAVE.
IT'S JUST ONE DAY.
REMEMBER?
FOR ONE DAY YOU'LL DO WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO?!”

Alex reaches in **HER** bag,
 She **pulls** her sketch **pad** out,
 And for a **MOMENT**, cradles it in **HER** arms.
 Then **she** stands **without** a word,
 They all **STARE** at her blankly,
 A **STARK** contrast to her inner **ALARM**.

“**I LIKE TO DRAW**,” **Alex** began.
 “**I LIKE ANIME**,” she **HEARD** someone **chuckle**.
 Then **SHE** held up her **book**,
 bravely forcing **HERSELF** on.
Terrified.
 She **FELT** her knees **buckle**.

“**SO I'M MAKING ANIME**,” she **meekly** explained,
 as she **DISPLAYED** all these **powerful** characters of **her own**.
 And **while** most of her audience remained **UNMOVED**,
 There **WERE** a few **shining** eyes,
 forward **LEANS**,
 A shared **spark** of passion that, **UNTIL NOW**, **Alex** had **never** known.

When the **BELL** finally rings,
Alex sinks **BACK** in her chair,
 Feeling **shaken...**
EMBARRASSED...
 Stupid...
 Mad...
 And **INCREDIBLY** **bare**.

But **amidst** all these **BAD** feelings
 There's **SOMETHING** new there too.
Maybe excitement? **Maybe** **Inspiration**?
 Whatever the **FEELING**, this one for **Alex** is **DEFINITELY** new.

“HEY I LIKE YOUR DRAWINGS,”

Poppy Jackson is SUDDENLY there.

“SO WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE? ANIME THAT IS.”

Where did Andy Leonard come from?

“YOUR CHARACTERS ARE RAD,”

A NEW girl joins in and shares.

BEFORE Alex could ANSWER,

Mrs. Pewter, who was puttering near,

SHOO-ed them ALONG.

“GET ON TO THE RALLY. YOU DON’T WANT TO BE LATE,”

She CHIMED with entirely too much CHEER.

The FOURSOME chattered all the way to the gym,

They didn’t think her work was BAD!

WHO knew there were kids like her here all the time?!

And then it hit HER.

Carlton had.

Their SURROUNDINGS were peaceful.

WHERE was Carlton ?

Something was DEFINITELY wrong.

Then they entered the gym;

The PLACE was a frenzy!

CHAOS!

A HUGGING, loving, back-patting throng!

And ZOOMING about,

All sweaty and stressed,

Poor Carlton plucked arrows from the air!

And then Alex realized,

He’d SPILLED them all!

As if having minds of their own,

the ARROWS raced in EVERY direction,

Striking everyone. EVERYWHERE!

TEACHERS and aides.

Misfits and achievers.

The CLUBS of every faith aside the FERVENT non-believers.

The scientific minds banter with the MORE musically-inclined.

And the cheer LEADERS are teaching the chess team to dance,

CLAPPING loudly to KEEP time.

“CHAOS! CHAOS! THIS IS BEDLAM!” Carlton flails and SCREAMS,
Clearing LOSING his composure amidst this WILD, happy scene.

“I’VE FAILED!” Carlton wails,
As Alex pulls HIMs aside.

“NO, YOU DIDN’T!” She assures him with a SQUEEZE.

“LOOK AROUND!” Alex says AND she motions to the ROOM.

“THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT LOVE’S SUPPOSED TO BE!”

“LOVE IS NOT JUST ROMANCE.

IT’S NOT CARDS.

IT’S NOT CANDY.

IT’S NOT ABOUT SONGS OR GESTURES OR POETRY.

LOVE IS ABOUT SELF-RESPECT.

IT’S ABOUT KINDNESS.

IT’S ABOUT BRAVERY.

ALL THE THINGS THAT TODAY YOU MADE ME BE!

LOVE IS...BEING TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE, EVEN WHEN NO ONE SEES.

IT’S TRUSTING THAT SOMEWHERE YOU BELONG.

LOVE IS INCLUSIVE.

ACCEPTING.

IT’S KNOWING WE’RE MORE ALIKE THAN NOT,

IT’S CELEBRATING BOTH LIKENESS AND DIVERSITY.

LOVE CONNECTS US, INSIDE AND OUT.

IT’S WHAT MAKES US STRONG.”

**“WELL IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF,
THAT WAS QUITE NICE,”**

SUDDENLY calm,

Carlton winks.

“OUR JOURNEY HAS BEEN A GRAND SUCCESS!

I’D SAY MY MISSION IS COMPLETE!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?”

Alex stuttered in SHOCK,
Unsure what to say.
She'd been PLAYED,
This was his plan all along!
WITH her hands on her hips,
she couldn't help but laugh,
as her brilliant, stupid CUPID flew off.

“WHO YOU TALKING TOO?” Her new friends sought her out.
“OH NO ONE, JUST ME,” Alex LAUGHED and sighed.
Then realizing that she's not alone as she'd always believed,
Alex felt a wave of GRATITUDE.
And we all know gratitude is just love in disguise.

Happy Valentine's Day
...stay tuned...