

SPANKY

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Martyn Ross is a freshman at a small midwestern college, but from his first day he doesn't fit in. Lousy at sports, shy and awkward with girls, he's made no friends except Zack, his slacker roommate and Lottie, the desperate girl who works with him at the furniture warehouse where he earns extra cash at the weekends.

Accepting a flyer for a downtown nightclub, Martyn goes along and meets Spanky, a handsome young man who tells him he is a daemon who has chosen human form, *Spancialosaphus Lachrymosae*, or Spanky for short. He explains that he has the power to change Martyn, to give him everything he ever wanted. He doesn't want to take his soul, he merely wants to help him while he's on earth. In an attempt to convince Martyn who he is, Spanky demonstrates his astonishing powers. He explains that no-one but Martyn can see him. Thinking he's been set up, Martyn walks away.

Martyn worships college beauty Sarah, but she's way out of his league, and has a cool boyfriend. Martyn's older brother Joey died some years earlier, and he has no-one to turn to for advice – so when he sees Spanky again, Martyn changes his mind and asks him for help. But Spanky has taken on another case, a girl called Melanie. He says he'll take Martyn on if she doesn't work out.

Luckily for Martyn, Spanky finishes with Melanie and becomes available. Spanky explains he will transform Martyn. He will never lie to him. No-one else will ever see him. He starts to help out his new client by dressing and grooming him, making him fitter and more socially cool. He shows Martyn how the world looks naked, and encourages the boy to have confidence and style. Spanky can read minds, and gets him laid with a beautiful woman. He also shows Martyn how to thrash Sarah's boyfriend at racketball, nearly blinding the boy in the process.

Spanky takes Martyn up to the roof of a building looking down on the city, and opens his senses to the world – a wild orgasmic rush. He absorbs his body in order to find out what Martyn most wants in the world. Martyn utters one word – Sarah – before he passes out.

Spanky sets out to improve Martyn's standing in the college with a series of stunts that make him the hero of the hour. Spanky shows him how to handle high society, but also how to be strong and fight back when a gang of thugs threaten Sarah. Each time, Spanky gives him a little of his chemical makeup to handle difficult situations. His protégé rises fast through the ranks at college and at work. He also gets to meet some very hot women, but longs for Sarah.

There's one more thing: Martyn needs help with his dysfunctional family, in particular his overweight sister who has not left the house for a year. Spanky says he'll sort them out so long as Martyn avoids communication with them for a month.

But there's a sense that all is not right. Sarah's boyfriend goes blind from his sports injury. One of the thugs who attacked Martyn is found dead. His roommate goes missing. His parents call frantically, but Martyn doesn't answer.

Martyn is oblivious to any problems; he's on a roll. He starts to become arrogant. He is mean to Lottie when she's sweet to him. When Spanky offers to win Sarah over, he tells the daemon he doesn't need his help – he can do it by himself. Martyn goes to his family's house, only to find the place boarded up. No-one knows where they've gone.

Just as Martyn becomes suspicious of Spanky and his new life, his parents turn up from vacationing in Europe. They're able to talk about his brother's death for the first time. His sister finally loses weight. Sarah's boyfriend recovers. A thug is arrested for killing the gang member. Martyn's roommate reappears, having found himself a girl. Martyn stops worrying. He settles into his wonderful new life. And he gets the girl. He spends the night with Sarah. Job done, Spanky takes his leave.

And the next day, Spanky sends Martyn his bill. Itemized in detail to cover his tuition.

Martyn refuses to surrender his soul. 'I don't want your soul,' says Spanky. 'I told you, I never lie. You must invite me into your body.' Spanky needs to inhabit a new form, and time is running out. In one week, Spanky's old body – which he can only step out of for brief periods - will die, stranding him. He gives Martyn a deadline; he needs him to surrender of his own free will.

Martyn is determined to fight back. He goes to see Spanky's last protégée, Melanie, only to find her disfigured and mute. Martyn knows she hurt herself to stop Spanky from taking her body.

Martyn has only six days left, and Spanky now wages a war of nerves against him. He won't harm Martyn's body – but he can take away his wealth and status, poison his friends against him, burn down his college, blow up his apartment, destroy his mind, go after his family one by one...war is declared. Worse, Martyn is blamed for everything that happens.

No-one has ever seen Spanky. Martyn can't prove what is happening. Martyn asks himself; does Spanky really exist, or does everyone have such a daemon inside them, if they'll only give into it? Is he merely mad?

Spanky throws visions of hell at him to drive him insane. Now Martyn is on the run. He has nothing and no-one to turn to. Even Sarah won't speak to him. He seeks out an expert on daemons who has never managed to catch one. But when faced with the reality of the supernatural, the expert turns coward.

Martyn goes to Sarah but she betrays him to the police, forcing him to flee. Only Lottie from the warehouse sticks by him and tries to help. Together they trick Spanky into showing himself as the deadline approaches. Spanky tries to win Lottie over by letting her see how selfish Martyn has become, but she doesn't buy it. It's stalemate. Time is running out for Spanky...

'Spanky is...erotic, intelligent, beautiful, terrifying, a modern Faust' - Time Out