



*The Ring, the Wand
and the
The Bimbo*

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**place holder cover art*

1.

The Bet

The tension in the room was palpable. With a minute left on the clock, the cliché football cliffhanger was the deciding factor on one of Nathan and Jiles 'world famous' bets. It had been a night of escalating stakes, fueled by ego, booze, and years of a friendship with a bad habit of bravado-driven ball bustin'. And now it was at its zenith. "You know they aren't gonna pull this off." Nathan through an empty can at his friend. He was still in disbelief at the bet he had agreed to. Granted, neither of them had ever turned down a challenge. There would be some great cosmic shame to the one that finally broke the years-long streak. It had called upon the duo to do everything from jumping off the cliffs at the quarry into the lake below to running naked through the college football game. No dare was off-limits, and they had been getting dangerously close to having real, law-based repercussions. But this last bet... this last fucking bet.

"Holy shit! He's going for it! He's going for it!" Jiles screamed. The quarterback from Jiles' favorite team looked doomed in his backfield, the defensive line closing in like wolves on a lamb, but he had just escaped their reach and was now running down the field, attempting a 75-yard touchdown. Nathan began to sweat. If he lost this bet, he was going to their jobs office party as Jiles' date. But Nathan wasn't really Jiles' type, after all, neither of them was gay. No, he would be forced to go as 'Natasha' in drag, the ugliest woman impersonator to ever exist. One minute earlier it had just been a drunken ridiculous proposition, but as the quarterback crossed into the endzone with zero seconds left on the clock, it became a horrifying possibility. "FUCK YES! HAHA in your face Nathan!" Nathan's only hope now was that Jiles would let him out of the deal, after all, he was new to the company, and Jiles was an up-and-comer there. This kind of thing could ruin both their standings at the marketing firm. "Alright, follow me!" Jiles giggled like a middle schoolboy.

"Follow you where?" Nathan nervously watched his friend walk into the hallway and pull down the trap door in the ceiling, and unfold the ladder to the attic.

"To get you your dress, of course."

Up in Jiles' attic was the oddest collection of old antiques and mysterious trunks Nathan had ever seen, all left to his friend by their grandfather. "Pop was a magician for decades, he probably has all sorts of glitzy costumes and dresses."

"More likely a magician's assistant leotard." Nathan stumbled behind his friend

drunkenly.

“Well, that could be a great thing for my date to wear to the party” Jiles giggled.

‘Damn he’s really riding this bet.’ Nathan squirmed at the idea of walking into the party in a glittery magician’s assistant costume. “I said yes to being your date, not wearing ridiculous costumes.”

“You’re right. It’s a fancy party. Gonna need to be a gown or something.” Jiles winked at Nathan who just simmered in his blushing face. A gown was fine with Nathan because they’d never find one that would zip over his large, manly frame. And he wasn’t going to buy a dress, nor would Jiles, which would be the end of this wager gone wrong. “Okay Nathan, time to open the trunks.

The steamer drunks were old and covered with stickers from world travel. Each heavy piece of luggage revealed weirder and weirder ‘treasures’ as Jiles’ grandfather used to call them. There were props for magic tricks, a silk top hat, and even a notebook detailing how his illusions were pulled off. Luckily for Nathan, the closest thing to costumes they found were a small pair of glittery silver stilettos, and a feathered boa, which Nathan wrapped around his neck. “I could always go as Sir Elton John to our party.” Jiles just shook his head, now digging through the props. They made more drunken jokes about the hokey pieces of the long-forgotten magic show, until Nathan has had enough humoring his friend, and sat in a dusty red relic of a chair to read the Magical notebook while Jiles continued to fail at finding a “date-night” outfit.

Outside the wind began to pick up. Thunder rumbled in the distance, and a small pitter-patter of rain danced on the window pane. “Aren’t you gonna help?” Jiles grunted as he tried to lift some heavy scenery pieces out of the way.

“If you expect me to walk around in a dress and heels at our company’s after-hours party, that’s more than enough work on my end. You can do this on your own.” Nathan smirked. He turned to the back of the notebook to a section called “real magic.” In it were a bunch of diagrams, receipts, and historical notes on a few of the treasures. “The Sculpter’s Wand” Nate read allowed, ignoring the cursing accompanying his friend’s labor and the growing ferocity of the storm. “After a terrible chain of events with people transformed against their will and beyond recognition, the council of Batriarch subdued the mad wizard Herthon and subjected him to a punishment befitting of his crimes. Hey, Jiles. It looks like your grandfather added a bunch of cooky lore to make his act seem more legit.”

“Yeah, he was crazy like that.” Jiles pulled out a wand from one of the trunks and waved it around. “I wish he had real magic, I could put all this stuff back with a simple wave. Abracadabra” I chimed and swung the wand, to no avail. “Damn, it’s a dud. Unless that book says how to turn it on.” He laughed.

“It doesn’t work on objects apparently. Here, listen to this. The council, unable to destroy the wand or deprive it of its powers, attached it to a ring. It would only work on the person who wore it, and while only they could put it on, the wand wielder was the only one who could take it off. This decision sought to ensure only a pair who trusted each other would be able to use the wand’s gifts, for they never assumed it would fall out of their hands. If one had the wand and not the ring, both items would be useless, and the power inert.” Nathan looked down at the string that was the notebook's bookmark. On the end was a simple golden ring. On a tippy whim, he untied it from the string and put it on his finger. “Huh, perfect fit!”

“So what IS this wand supposed to do then?” Jiles asked. A bolt of lightning flashed through the window distracting him for a moment.

“Um, it looks like it ‘reshapes the flesh’ whatever that means.” Nathan shrugged. He went to remove the ring, but it was stuck. He couldn’t get it past his thick knuckle.

“Like shape-shifting? Now that would be lucky. I could really make you the perfect date for the office party then, couldn’t I. Maybe we should give it another try!” He walked towards Nathan wand in hand, stumbling over some of the props and set dressing he had strewn about the attic.

“Yeah, go for it,” Nathan said sarcastically. The ring felt oddly warm on his finger. He began to tug at it harder.

“If you say so. Wand, hear my plea and grant my desires.” Jiles raised it above his head like a conductor.

“It’s a wand, not a genie. You probably need to learn some spells or some-” the ring went from warm to hot, and Nathan trembled a little as he saw it glow in the dark. Lightning crackled and thunder shook the house. It could not be a more “stop messing with forbidden magic” cliché. This was getting freaky, Nathan gulped. He needed this thing off. Then he heard his friend’s words, and his eyes bugged out of his head.

“Give my friend the body of a dream girl. One that will stun everyone at the party at our marketing firm.”

“Dude don’t-” it was too late. The wand glowed purple, and the ring glowed pink. A huge explosion of thunder and flash of lightning and the power went out.