

Toy Store Wishes

By: EL_Refresho

I stood in my covert spot near the stuffed toy aisle, watching May as she rang up a mother-daughter pair. May smiled to all the customers with genuine affection, and always with a little twinkle in her eye. God, I wanted her to smile at me like that. We went to school together. We worked together. But we never talked. At least, we never talked more than a casual hello. Which was a shame because her voice had a special lilt to it that made my heart thump a little faster every time I heard it.

I tried not to watch her too carefully, or openly, from my vantage point, and pretended to arrange toys. May watched the customers leave, and waved the little girl good bye with one hand while she put in an earbud with the other. She hit the play button and began bouncing her head and body to a tune I couldn't hear. She turned to me. My heart skipped. She started singing. My heart stopped.

"Everybody, everybody just wanna fall in love." My cheeks burned and I turned back to the toys I didn't care about.

May was a cute girl, barely five feet tall with a lithe body. She framed her face with long blond bangs and kept the rest of her hair in a ponytail. She usually wore a T-shirt and khakis to work, but I longed for the days like today when she traded the pants for a cute skirt and colorful tights.

Why she would see anything in me, I didn't know. I was freakishly tall with arms that reached the floor. And my hair? My hair was a brown mess that could be used as a mop. Oh God, what was I doing here? I turned to go find a hiding place, and ran right into a woman.

"You should tell her how you feel."

I jumped, nearly falling into a pile of toys, but for a slender hand reaching out to me. The woman who spoke to me, startled me, and saved me must have just stepped out of a fashion magazine. She was as tall as me with golden hair twisted into light curls. Her eyes were sky blue and matched her trendy jacket. My eyes lingered a little on her amazing body.

"Eyes up her, junior." The woman snapped her fingers and my head snapped up to her enchanting eyes.

"Do you need help, ma'am?" I asked.

"Don't change the subject, and don't call me ma'am. My name is Genie." She held up a hand to stop me from speaking, "And yes, you do get a wish. But just one wish. Uno."

When she said the word wish, my mind flashed. I wished I had the courage to talk to May. I tried to say something, but my mind and my mouth argued with each other.

"A-wha." It was not my finest sentence, though it was a perfect expression of what I felt at that moment. So I guess it was a good sentence, after all.

"Well said." Genie, or the genie, looked to the shelves of dolls and ran her hands across the toys. "I grant your wish, David." Her voice sent chills through my body.

Then, starting from my gut, I felt a shift. Ticklish, light, and breezy changes inside me. It didn't hurt, and I knew it should. But instead of fear or pain, I felt giddy. Playful energy began to soak into me, coming from all the toys around me. My wish was somehow granted. I looked to where May was, still bouncing, still dancing, but arranging dolls behind the counter. I could talk to her. I gulped and started to walk to the counter.

And then *the* change hit me. It started with a . . . not a pain, but something pressing against my chest. Shiny gold buttons popped into existence down my chest, and my t-shirt turned into a red jacket with blue cuffs and gold epaulets.

I tried to shout, but the sound was somehow squelched.

"No yelling. Indoor voice only," the Genie, still beside me, watchful, said.

The strange magic changing me reached my hands and I watched a white glove cover them. Except the fingers fused into a mitten with a stubby thumb. I pressed one hand into the other and my stomach dropped away. Both were filled with soft stuffing. A black leather belt wrapped around my waist, clicking together with a gold buckle. Then a red stripe ran down the length of my jeans, followed by their transformation into navy blue pants. My shoes plumped as stuffing took over for my feet, and then grew up into black riding boots. Something strapped down across my chin, and I looked up to see a plastic hat brim appear above my brow.

"I'm a toy soldier? A plush toy soldier?" I said.

"Not yet, exactly." The Genie replied.

I felt a wave come down on me, pushing my stuffing body deeper and deeper into the world. I felt a pang of terror as I inhaled and found no oxygen. And then the change pulled away like the tide. It took my fear and my pain, and left me staring into the brilliant sky blue eyes of Genie. She smiled like the sun, and the world felt right.

Except she was huge, and her face was as large as my body. From the corner of my eye I could see teddy bears larger than me. The genie grabbed me around the middle and picked me off the floor. I couldn't keep track of things moving and swaying as she walked, with me a small passenger in the crook of her arm. Then the movement stopped, and I sat on the front counter looking up at May.

The counter girl looked at me and smiled. "That is an adorable doll." She said, "He looks so happy."

I wanted to blush, and then realized that I was blushing. I could feel red circles on my cheeks; the ones so many toys have.

"The cute stock boy helped me pick him out," the Genie said.

I watched May. Her cheeks burned and she coughed. *What?* I thought. She couldn't . . . it wasn't possible. She composed herself and picked me up with dainty fingers, whooshing me past the scanning laser.

"That's \$14.13, ma'am." She put me back on the counter. I can't tell you how much I wanted her to keep holding me.

"Don't call me ma'am, my name is Genie." The woman said, echoing her words to me. "And, yes, you do get a wish. But just one. Une."

I watched May, and saw her face turn from confusion, and then satisfaction. She smiled, probably about the same way I smiled when I thought of my wish.

"Good wish," the genie said. May's mouth dropped open, and I watched her begin to change

It started when perfect pink circles blossomed on the apples of her cheeks. She must have felt something strange, because she reached up with her left hand and touched her face. A glittering cloud wrapped around her, spreading from her newly dolled cheeks to her hand, making it into an adorable cloth mitten.

She saw the change and jumped, reaching with her other hand, pulling at the cloth her fingers had become. May tugged multiple times, and only stopped when her other hand became a mitten itself.

"Holy crap," she said, eyes rising to look at the genie behind David. "This wasn't my wish."

"Have patience." The gene replied, a smile in her voice. The faint glitter rose around May's hair, making it curl up, and then it went away, leaving her hair made from cloth. Several bangs fell from her head, framing her face on either side, and the rest had been bundled up in a tight bun.

I couldn't read May's face, but she seemed to be handling everything well. She didn't even jump like I would have when a tutu blossomed from the edges of her shirt, plumping into a beautiful pink and sparkling skirt. Her tutu filled to the brim with soft stuffing, thin wires at the edges holding a rounded top.

Stitches began to fill in around her body, one even down the centerline of her face, and her shirt morphed into a strapless teal leotard made from velvet. It would have followed her curves perfectly, even if it had not become her doll skin. Pink thread stitched a flowery V-shape into her top, accentuating her completely stuffed breasts.

"Why a doll? Why not just a normal ballerina?" May asked, reaching forward with her mitten hands and catching the top of the counter as she shrank to a proper toy size. I was stunned by how easy and effortless she was making her change look.

The genie waited a time before answering, watching chuck sneakers grow satin ribbons and turn to plush pointe shoes. May stood demurely, hands folded on her tutu. Her eyes were only appliqued, but still sparkled with life and emotion. She wasn't sad or angry, just curious.

"You are a toy because someone else wished for you to be."

I gulped, somehow breaking my curse of immobility as May's eyes turned to me. I wanted to jump up and run to her. And so I did. I jumped onto wobbly plush feet and took a few marching steps toward the ballerina. I stopped, stunned that I could move at all.

May's eyes flew open, "Oh my gosh, David!" She ran to me on her toes, making my own steps all the more clumsy. How was she doing that? She leaped up and wrapped her arms around my neck. "Are you OK?"

"As OK as you are, I guess." I brushed one of May's cloth bangs from her face. She was warm, even as a doll. I hoped I was warm, too.

"So, what did you wish for?" She said, letting herself down and running her mitten hands along my chest.

"Well, I wished that I . . . that I had courage. To talk to you."

The ballerina smiled and her eyes twinkled.

May touched my red circled cheek, "I gotta tell you, a man in a uniform kinda does it for me."

"Even if he's a doll?" I said, my eyebrow arched.

"Especially if he's a doll." She kissed my cheek, standing on her tiptoes to reach. She whispered into my cotton ear, "A doll just like me."

I wanted to speak again, but my wish seemed to fail me a little. My mouth closed and my legs wobbled, my plush body starting to give out. May wrapped her mitten hand in my own and lowered herself next to me.

My head lolled to the side and I looked into May's eyes. She smiled at me, and I smiled back at her. There wasn't much else a pair of rag dolls could do. A slender hand picked us up, careful not to squeeze too much, and when our hands slipped apart, she knotted them back together.

She dropped us into a gift bag filled with tissue paper, not saying a word. May and I leaned on each other, one keeping the other from falling as the bag jostled and shook. Genie took us to a new home, and to the girl who made a passing wish that a Genie happened to hear. A wish for the most amazing dolls ever made.

She got her wish. And so did we.