

OLYMPIC LINKING RINGS

Continuing the adventures of Faustus the Great and friends, last seen in the Zodiac contest story, Practice Targets.

Faustus shuffles across the stage towards the sheet covered apparatus, the spotlight shining on it. He grips the sheet, taking long breaths, and pulls. The cloth pulls away, pooling on the floor as the spotlight shines on a dark wood pillar, a set of five metallic rings piercing it, forming a column on one side, gleaming in the light. "Und now, for my next trick, need help of pretty young assistant, yes?" the crowd cheers their agreement and a red scarf flies out of the wings and onto the stage. "This is not assistant, yes?" he sighs, draping the scarf over the rings, the spotlight following him as he shuffles towards the wings, muttering. A flash of scarlet explodes from the rings, crimson smoke boiling up within the column. The smoke clears, the spotlight swivelling back, to reveal Anne inside the rings, a scarlet dress slit high on her thigh with a neckline best described as plunging covering her, more or less. She smiles across the stage, her hands, wrapped in their evening gloves, pinned to her sides. "Ah, now that is assistant, yes." the audience cheer.

Faustus shuffles back towards the rings, tapping them with his cane, each one clinking. He reaches down and stops. "Ach. Will someone help a poor old magician whose back is going, yes?" Sam walks out onto the stage, her white costume complemented by a nurse's peaked cap, helping Faustus to throw the sheet back over the pillar, and Anne. "Ein, zwei, drei, zug." Both of them pull, the sheet crumpling on the stage, revealing the rings empty, the top ring gleaming a metallic scarlet. "Time for next assistant, yes?"

Jackie twirls onto the stage, her jade dress swirling up around her legs, the audience applauding. She pulls the rings up and shimmies inside, prompting some whispered, and incorrect, conversations about how the trick works as the rings fall back into place. Faustus and Sam unfurl the sheet, throwing it over the rings. When they pull it away, a puff of green smoke emerging from the top of the rings, the second ring gleams like jade.

Faustus claps his hands, and Zilvara skips on stage, the violet catsuit shining as she giggles up to the rings. She squeezes through the rings, eliciting another, incorrect, discussion about how the trick works in the audience. She's still giggling as the sheet is thrown and then, there is silence as the sheet is removed, revealing the third ring now a dark, lustrous amethyst.

Dell walks out next, gum popping as she strides over, her baseball uniform a bright orange, a leaping tiger on the back. She pulls the cap down, reaching up to grab the scarlet ring, pushing the rings down before she steps into them. She gives the scarlet ring a good rap and lets them rise back into place. The gum pops as she vanishes under the sheet. Faustus tugs the set off and scowls. He reaches to the fourth ring, now a pale amber and pulls off a wad of gum. "Is disgusting thing. Can't get staff, yes?" the gum vanishes in a puff of flame from his fingertip.

Petra walks on stage, beaming, waving to the audience, her sky blue bikini getting an enthusiastic response. And this gets even more approval as she bends down to lift the rings up and step inside. She raises one hand out of the top and waves as the sheet is thrown over her. And when the sheet is removed the last ring gleams a sapphire blue.

Faustus walks up to the pole, tapping each of the rings, "Is very pretty rings, yes?" he lifts the red ring off the top of the pole, continuing down until all five rings rest around his arm. "Und we all know what an old magician does with his rings, don't we?" he taps the red and green rings on each other several times and lets go, the green ring hanging from the red. Faustus sets it spinning, to muted applause. He continues, adding purple, orange and finishing by spinning the blue ring around his fingers and bringing it down with a clack on the orange ring. He pulls his arms out, dangling the chain of rings across his chest. "Hmmm. Is not rings." The purple ring rises up to be level with the blue and red ones, "Is Olympics rings, yes?" the audience claps, "But needs a flag." He gestures to Sam, who looks around nervously before walking over to him, eyes darting around, but smiling broadly.

"Yes, boss?"

“Ach, always with the boss when I want something. You think I beat her with a whip everyday.”
“Not everyday. Only on Tuesdays.” the audience laugh quietly, “And every other Thursday.” and finally laugh.

“Ach! What is this lies about a poor, helpless old man?” which makes the audience laugh louder. Faustus' heavy brows knot together as he scowls, and tosses the sheet over her. Faustus reaches up, pressing his fingers onto the top of the sheet and pushes down, the figure under the sheet slowly collapsing until the crumpled pile reaches the stage floor. “That teach her, yes?” He shakes the sheet out, pulling out crumpled rectangle of cloth, mostly white with Sam's face in the centre and a little red cross above her forehead. “Oh, this will not do at all. Can't have flag with face on. What would Olympic Committee say?” he reaches inside his jacket, pulling out a bright pink bottle, prominently labelled 'Bleach'. He drips some onto Sam's face and rubs it in, her face fading away until the flag is a pristine white “Much better.” he holds up the flag, letting it flutter in the air, hanging from nothing as he picks up the rings, fixing them in place. He stands in front the flag and claps his hands. Sparks fly, smoke curls out and the rings sink into the cloth, becoming the Olympic flag, and the curtain comes down.

Later that evening, after the show has been cleaned up, Faustus unfolds the flag. He reaches into the cloth and pulls on the blue ring, tugging Petra out. She blinks, stumbling onto the couch and flopping down, holding her head. “Ow, boss, could you maybe ease up on the spinning next time? I'm still dizzy.”

“Sorry.” he pulls out the amber ring, setting Dell down. She leans in, whispering in his ear. Paul sighs. “Yeah, sure. You going to keep her like that for long?”

“Maybe. I've still got aaaages to go on punishment, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, you do.” he pulls out Zil, who glowers at him, scratching her back.

“Aaaahhhh. That's better. Too long, Boss.”

Paul shrugs apologetically, pulling Jackie out. She jabs her finger into his chest. “Next time you do this, do not hit me so damn hard.” another jab, “I've got a headache that'll last all week now.”

“Aspirin?”

She takes the pills, “Thanks. The headache's still lasting all week as far as you're concerned.”

Paul sighs, reaching into the cloth and pulling out a small red ring, which he hands over to Dell.

“Nice work, boss. Think she suits me?” she slips the ring on.

“Of course.” He shakes the flag, holding Sam by her shoulders. Zil giggles. Sam turns towards him, her skin as white as her outfit.

“You'd better fix this. Now. And if you ever do it again...”



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