

TUITION
By pwatson1974

Continuing the adventures of Faustus the Great and his assistants, last seen in “Run, Rabbit, Run”, in the Rabbits Contest.

Anne lounges back on the bed, “Ya sure the furball isn’t gettin’ out again?”

“Yeah, sure, boss says this’ll hold him.”

“Didn’t he say that, oh, the last five times, too?”

“Uhm, maybe, yeah.”

“So, ah’d best be ready fer you to rabbit off after him, huh?”

“Oh, ha, ha. So, what are we doing today?”

“Besides watching you try to catch an interdimensional rabbit? Well, let’s see how good ya are at the other stuff ya shoulda been practising’.”

“Yes, Miss.”

“An’ no cheekin’ ya teacher.”

Dell looks a picture of innocence as she opens her hand. Her palm shimmers, the black stone appearing and then fading back into her skin.

“Ok, ah’ll admit, ya’re learnin’ fast.”

“So when do you let me get to the good stuff?”

“When it’s safe. There ain’t no way ah’m lettin’ you near me with anythin’ sharper’n mah cousin Cletus for a good long time.”

“You have a cousin Cletus? For real?”

“No, not really. His name’s Mark and he’s an oncologist. It’s just somethin’ mah family says. What? We’re rednecks, not hicks. An’ ya still ain’t getting’ near me with sharp stuff.”

“Yeah, yeah. I heard you the first time.” Her palm blinks at Anne. Anne bolts upright.

“What?”

“What was that?”

“What was what?”

“Ya didn’t feel anythin’? Ya hand just blinked at me.”

“No, didn’t feel anything.” She turns the hand to look at it.

“Yeah, it...oh. That was you, wasn’t it?”

“What was?”

“The blinkin’. Ah admit, that was good, looked damn real. Better’n ah thought ya were, but ya ain’t foolin’ me no more.”

“I’m not...”

“Yeah, ya are. Norm’ly if somethin’ weird happens, ya freak for awhile ‘fore ya calm on down. So ah’m onta ya. Still, ah got ta admit, ya sure fooled me till ya started tryin’ ta lie. We really need ta get ya better at that bit.” She ignores Dell’s protests of both innocence and competence at lying, “So ah’m guessin’ you been practisin’ somethin’ fierce ta do that? What else ya got?”

Dell murmurs something that sounds familiar but doesn’t quite catch and her clothes change, the faded jeans and crumpled t-shirt replaced by a bright orange prom dress.

“Ok, clearly ah’ve been underestimin’ ya.”

Dell beams.

“So maybe we can move on to somethin’ else.”

“Like what?” the prom dress shimmers back to her regular clothes.

“Ah dunno. Kinda playin’ this whole teachin’ thing by ear.”

“I’d never have noticed.”

"What did ah say about cheekin' yore teacher?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Ok, so what now? Ya got veilin' covered. Ah guess ah could teach ya to expand on that, but ah figure you'll get that yourself soon. Be easier if ya could do somethin' else without usin' that gift'a yours. Ah ain't getting' near that thing till it plays nice."

"I can do other stuff!"

"Oh, yeah? Like what? Everything ya do is with the boss's toys."

"I can move through the van like nothing."

"So can we. That's the van, not you."

"And it's the van's doing when I'm part of it, I suppose?"

"When you're what?"

"You know, part of the van."

"What are ya talkin' about?"

"You rememb...oh, right, you weren't here and I guess no one's said anything about it since."

"Said anythin' about what since when? Ya plannin' on makin' some sorta sense today?"

"Ok, when I...joined, I kind of got put into the van. Not like we're in it now, but where I'm part of it, or it's part of me. When I drive us around, I'm actually part of the van so moving it around's like moving me around. No need for clunky steering wheels or gear sticks. It's like it's my body."

Anne's eyes steadily widen. "Don't think ah didn't notice that pause, which means there's a story there that ya will tell me some time, but you're sayin' ya can possess the van?"

"What do you mean possess?"

"Like when we first met an' ah got stuck in that stupid doll'a yours."

"Which you stuffed me into and stole my body."

"Yeah, like that."

"I guess. I wasn't really paying attention to it at the time."

"No, too busy cussin' up a storm at poor, sweet, innocent little ol' me. Should've known that was too smooth. Never mind. We got us a startin' point."

"To do what?"

"Don't worry. Ah ain't planning on stealin' ya again. An' 'fore ya get ideas, ah ain't gonna let ya steal me, either. Possessin' people's generally a struggle, anyways. Souls tend ta hold on damn tight ta their body."

"So what are you planning on teaching me, oh wise one?"

"Well, ah think ah've given up on manners so we might as well see how ya do possessin' somethin' that ain't set up fer it."

"Like what?"

"Well, what we got around here? Ah'm guessin' ya ain't ready ta be edible..."

"Not you, too! I get enough 'hints' from Jaks!"

"Heh. Yeah, ah like her. She's bad."

"Yeah...so, what do you want me to 'possess'?"

"Tell ya what. You go get one of your dolls an' we c'n use that t' start with."

"And what if I get stuck?"

"Ya cain't get stuck. Ya're providin' the push. All ya have ta do is stop pushin'."

"I couldn't do that when you stuck me in."

"That's 'cause ah was doin' the pushin'."

"But..."

Anne holds up her hand, "If ya get stuck, ah'll get'cha out. No charge."

"This time."

"This time. Ya're learnin'."

"Yeah. I've got a good, well, really, really bad teacher."

"An' don' ya ferget it."

"Yes, Miss. Be right back." she grins impishly as the floor swallows her up. Anne sighs.

"Man, this teachin' thing is exhaustin'." she looks up at the ceilin', "An', Gramma, if ya're listenin' up there, ah'd like t' say sorry fer bein' such a brat when ya was doin' this wi' me. How ya managed not ta spell me, ah just don't know." The floor bulges as Dell emerges, holding a stuffed Raggedy Anne doll, red woolen hair falling over the head, button eyes looking out. "How come ya cain't just use the damn walls like normal people?"

"Normal? Around here? Besides, you want me to become a doll. Normal is not really in this neighbourhood."

"Well, ah...ok, point taken. That's what ya'll be usin'?"

Dell looks down at the doll flopping in her hand. "Yeah. Uhm, it won't break her, will it?"

"Nah. She'll be fine 'n' dandy once we're done."

"Ok."

"Now, how we goin' do this thing?" Anne murmurs. "Ok, ah'll teach ya the spellin'. Should be fairly easy for ya. Just pretend that doll's the van."

A tiring fifteen minutes later, "This isn't working."

"Yeah, yeah, ah heard ya the first fifteen times. Ya wanna try again, or are ya for callin' it quits for today?"

"Quit? Not a chance." she lifts up the doll and takes a deep breath. "Ok, let's go again." She closes her eyes, letting the lilting words flow through her. She feels a gentle tugging on her hands and repeats the words again and again. "I think something's..." and she vanishes, pouring into the doll. For a moment, it hangs suspended in the air, and then it drops down, falling with a soft flumpf and "Ooof." to the floor.

Anne walks over to the doll, lifting it up, absently rubbing the back.

"Hey!"

Ann jumps back, the doll flying from her hand, bouncing on the floor.

"Owwwww! What did you do that for?"

"Dell?"

"Duh! Who else is going to be stuffed into my doll?"

"Ok, that's a fair point. Guess it worked."

"Yeah. Now how am I supposed to get out of here?!"

"Ah think ah'll save that till yore next lesson." she walks over to the doll, carefully picking it up and placing it on the bed, ignoring the stream of curses coming from the cute plush doll,

"See ya."

"You said you'd get me out!!"

"Ah did. Ah never said when, though."



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