

I WANT DOESN'T GET

By pwatson1974

(Original idea by pwatson1974 and Ms Tiger to You)

“Why not?” a tall, shapely woman asks, almost wailing. Blonde hair spills over her shoulders, curling over the tops of her pert breasts. Pouting lips do what they do best as she snuffles, “I only want to look better. Surely having a beautiful assistant would help you?” she look up at her magician, her blue eyes brimming with tears.

He throws his hands up in the air, “Beautiful? Beautiful? And what are you now when half the men in the audience leave with their tongues hanging around their knees and the other half are trying to hide their bulges from their girlfriends?! When the girls see you, they hate you, and want to be you, immediately! What more do you want, Ardelle? Just want to be beautiful, feh!”

“I want to be beautiful, like my Great Aunt was!” she holds out an old photograph, turning sepia, a saloon hostess, her bosom almost pushing out of the flouncy dress, its frills flaring around her legs, hands on her hips, tucked into her slender waist. “Just tell me why not!”

“Why not? Ok, I’ll tell you why not. One, because you don’t need it done. You’re already beautiful and this won’t help. Two, because she only looks like that because that dress has almost as much whalebone as the original whale pushing her in in some places and out in others, and so it isn’t natural. Three,” he folds down a third finger, “because long-term non-restoration isn’t safe. You remember Amanda? And where is she now? In a bed, in two pieces that don’t get on! You want that?”

“But it’s not a big change.”

“And that makes it alright? That means the police won’t come after me? That means your family won’t come after me? Or SORM? Or...”

“Ok, ok, geez...”

“I haven’t finished yet.” He folds down his little finger, “Four, because I said so!” and with that he turns away on his heel.

“We’ll see about that, Mister High-and-Mighty, Know-It-All, Stick-in-the-Mud Magician.” She mutters.

Several weeks later, she’s ready. It’s cost her quite a bit to get the photo enlarged and even more to make sure that she was the one in the photo, coloured correctly and with her long, shapely legs intact. And finally, to get the picture fitted into the door of the illusion, which had taken more patience, to make sure she wasn’t found out. She chuckles to herself, “Paul won’t notice until we’re on stage. Then it’ll be too late.”

That night, as the performance draws to a close, a tall cabinet is wheeled out, its sides painted a deep, midnight black with silver edgings. The front door is missing, revealing the black interior. Ardelle stands beside the door in a tight silver swimsuit that seems to be held in place by the pressure wave of bulging eyeballs in the audience. She leans against it, raising one long leg up against the box’s side, her arms extended. “And now, to finish our show in style,” Paul explains, clad in a black shirt and trousers, striding around the stage, “I am going to make Ardelle vanish.” A concerned look passes across Ardelle’s face.

She tugs on his sleeve. Paul sighs theatrically, “And bring her back again.” A ripple of laughter runs through the small audience as Ardelle breaks out her professional smile, before shimmying back into the box. “Of course, I can hardly make her vanish while you’re watching, can I?” He and a stagehand pull a board with a life-sized picture of Ardelle in her swimsuit on it, fastening it to the front of the box and swinging it closed, hiding her from view. “Of course, I could hardly just do a simple vanish, could I?”

A muffled “What?!” is heard from the box.

“So I shall be vanishing the lovely Ardelle a bit at a time. I know Copperfield does it with dry wipe, but I prefer this way.” He takes hold of the edge of the picture, at just above knee level and pulls. The paper rips, tearing through the picture’s knees, revealing the black board beneath. A scream rips from the box. “That didn’t sound good. Let’s see how she’s doing.” He swings the door open, revealing Ardelle from the knees up still there, but only the black back of the box behind her.

“We agreed scissors!”

Paul slaps his forehead, “Oh, of course, how silly of me.” He reaches into his pockets, pulling out a pair of garden shears.

“What the hell do you think you’re going to do with those?!” the door swings shut, “Don’t you dare!”

Paul proceeds to slice up the picture, Ardelle’s arms drifting to the floor. He opens the door, showing that her real arms have also gone.

“Oh, just get it over with, will you?” The door closes and the shears snip through her neck. Paul pulls the head off and the box goes quiet. He opens the door to show what remains, then closes the door and pulls the rest of the picture away. The door falls open on its own accord, revealing the box empty. The back and sides swing out, proving that Ardelle is nowhere inside. Paul takes his bow, as the stage hand clears away the scraps of paper.

“And now, I did promise to restore her, I suppose.” He walks around behind the back of the box, pulling out the next picture without looking at it. He places the picture on the box, pressing it into place. Someone in the crowd whistles and Paul turns to look at the photo. His eyebrows rise out of sight of the audience as he looks at the saloon hostess, with her pronounced, corset-enhanced hourglass figure and Ardelle’s beaming face. He slaps himself on the forehead, “Ladies and gentlemen, I do apologise. There’s been a mix-up with the photos. This wasn’t supposed to be in there until we’d got the Western show finalised.”

“Leave it in!” someone shouts out.

“No, no, I insist on doing this properly. It wouldn’t be fair to Ardelle to expect her to appear in that costume seeing as we haven’t bought it yet. I’ll fix the picture.” He opens the door wide and closes it, replacing the picture of Ardelle with one of a small grey elephant, its tusks barely grown, trunk raised. “There. That’s better.”

“Bring the other one back!”

Paul ignores the heckle, opening the door, revealing a baby elephant crammed into the box. It uncoils its trunk and bleats at him. Paul leads it down onto the stage and bows.

“Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, from myself and Ardelle. Good night!”

He leads the elephant off stage.

“You know, I really shouldn’t turn you back after you tried to trick me like that.” He shakes his head, “Honestly, Ardelle, didn’t your mother never teach you not to try to kid a kiddier? Well, that goes triple

for magicians.”

Of course, Paul did restore Ardelle and she seems completely normal. Apart from a new craving for peanuts, still in their shells, but nobody’s perfect.