

THE WARDROBE

by Ms Tiger to You and pwatson1974

Somewhere in Las Vegas, a hotel door opens. Two figures stumble through, dumping assorted bags along the way. "What...is that?" she points at the mammoth piece of dark wood furniture standing in the middle of one wall.

"I'm no expert, love, but it looks like a wardrobe."

She scowls, "I know it's a wardrobe! I meant, what is it doing here?"

"Standing there?"

"I can see that! I mean, why is it there? We've got a closet right here!" she waves a hand at the recess in the wall, empty hangers dangling from the rail.

He takes a pace towards the wardrobe looming against the wall, eight feet across at the base, well over 6 feet tall and at least 3 deep. The doors on either side are panelled, art nouveau handles in chrome. A flat screen TV sits in the recess between the doors, power light blinking, a stack of four drawers filling the space below it. He pulls open the nearest door, revealing an ironing board filling half the space, shelves (and an iron) the other half. The farther door reveals empty space, a light in the ceiling for some reason and a set of thick hinges along the doorframe. "I assume it's there for people who don't want to use the closet."

"Or who want to visit friends in Narnia." She pushes past him, knocking on the walls.

"What are you looking for?"

"Secret passageway."

"In a Vegas hotel?! This isn't Scooby Doo. The kindly old groundskeeper is not going to have done it."

"Says you."

"Says me." he shakes his head, going back to unpack the bags. The door slams loudly shut. He walks aback, yanking it open, "What did you..." the empty wardrobe doesn't reply, "...do? Ardelle?" Still silence. He steps gingerly into the wardrobe, ducking down to fit inside. He starts knocking on the walls. The door slams shut, plunging everything into darkness.

"That is a really girly scream you got there, Paul."

He opens his eyes, looking around the well-lit, cavernous building, strip lighting flickering above, rows and rows of grey metal shelving surrounding them. "I do not have a girly scream."

"Sure sounded like you did to me."

"Where are we?"

"How should I know? You're the magic one."

"So that makes this my fault?"

"Obviously."

"Even though you were the one banging away to trigger the whatever it was?"

"Correct."

He sighs, "Yes, dear." He looks around the place, lots of boxes mostly cabinet-sized, or half that, in industrial gothic styling with slits and holes in strategic places throughout. "Well, this is not what I expected Narnia to look like." He looks behind him, a mirror-image of the wardrobe from their room looming silently behind them.

"Maybe this is the one where the Witch won. And was a fan of magic acts."

"Yeah, that makes much more sense than this being someone's prop store."

"That's linked to a hotel wardrobe?!"

"I'm...still working on that part."

"Right." She starts towards the nearest set of shelving.

"What are you doing?"

"Exploring. What else?"

"Exploring."

"Right. I end up unexpectedly in a goodie warehouse and you expect me not to look at things? Puh-lease."

"And you'll stop at looking, of course."

She smiles beatifically, "Maaaaaaybe."

He rolls his eyes and follows her into the shelves.

Ardelle stops at the first shelf, looking at the two light-weight metal edged boxes, a set of steel dividers resting against them, wicked looking stocks on top.

"No."

"I didn't even..."

"You were going to."

"Was not."

"Really?"

A long pause as she rests her hand on the box, "You're no fun."

"No, dear."

"Fine." She moves along the shelves to a larger frame, a folding shelf about half way down its sides, in the same flat metallic colours. A stylised figure is cut out in silver, a hole where its head should be.

"No."

"I never..."

"Of course not."

"You just..." A loud set of beeps echoes from the far end of the shelves. "Was that...?"

A metallic rattling as motors whirr overhead, "Our cue to exit, stage left, through a wardrobe? Yes." The door closes behind them.

Back in the hotel room, as they tumble out of the wardrobe, "What just happened?"

"How should I know? Hotel wardrobes are not supposed to be magical! Why would anyone want to enchant a wardrobe to lead to their storage area?! It doesn't make any...why are you going back inside?!"

"Aren't you the least bit curious?" Ardelle asks, rapping on the back of the cabinet and stumbling straight through.

A scream pierces the walls, followed by, "Uhhhhh....housekeeping? Wrong room. So sorry."

followed again by running feet, a door slamming open and very hasty knocking on the door to their rooms. Paul quickly opens the door and Ardelle rushes in, the sounds of an ironing board clattering to the floor coming from next door, along with muffled incredulity.

Shortly, after some knocking from the other side of the cabinet, and more muffled incredulity, another knock comes to the door. "Pretend we're not in." The knocking comes again.

"I don't think that's going to work. You'd better hide." He pushes her gently towards the open wardrobe door.

"What happened to you being the voice of caution and reason?"

"Desperate times." The knocking comes again as he closes the door. "Coming! Keep your hair on!"

He opens the door to the rooms, finding a young couple standing in the doorway, hand raised to knock for a fourth time. "Can I help you?"

"Uh, this is going to sound crazy, but, did, uh, did someone come out of your closet just now?"

"What?"

"Someone just came crashing out of our wardrobe. And, well, they had to have come from in here, uh, right? I mean, unless she just appeared out of thin air." he laughs a little nervously.

"Do you want to check?" Paul replies, praying fervently and silently for a negative response.

"Thanks." They walk in, much to Paul's internal chagrin and open the door to the wardrobe, revealing the iron and ironing board.

"No one's in there."

He closes the door looking more than a little embarrassed and opens the door to the wardrobe, revealing a very empty space.

"Or there." He tries to keep the relief from his voice.

The man puts his head into the wardrobe. "I guess not. Sorry. It was just, weird. Sorry."

“To be fair, people jumping out of wardrobes isn't the strangest thing I've heard happen in Vegas.”
“Right, yeah, sorry for bothering you.” They both leave, looking puzzled and confused.
Paul closes the door, finally breathing a sigh of relief. He opens the door to the wardrobe. “You can come out now.” Silence. “Ardelle?” More silence, “Great. Where has she gotten herself to now?”
He sighs. A hollow knocking comes from the bottom drawer. “I'm going to regret this, aren't I?” He asks no one in particular and pulls the drawer open, revealing a pair of feet in familiar sneakers. He looks down at the feet, still kicking the front of the drawer. Then at the wardrobe, and back at the feet. “Of course.” he pulls on the drawer above it, to find a pair of shins, knees and half thigh in the one above that and finally a pair of hips in the top drawer. “Well, that's disappointing. Where are you hiding the rest of her?” He pushes the drawers closed and looks around the wardrobe for some sign of the rest of her, occasionally opening the drawers to make sure their contents haven't changed. They haven't. “If you had drawers all the way up, this would be a lot more...straightforward...oh.” He grabs the remote control from its shelf stack and presses the power button. A crisp Ardelle, from the waist up, appears on the screen.
“There you are!” she looks around the blue screen background, “Uhm, where am I?”
“You're on the tv.”
“I'm on the what?! How? Actually, never mind. Just get me out of here!” She looks down, “Where are my legs?!”
“Uhm, they're in the drawers under the tv.”
“They're what?! Get me out of here!!!”
“How?”
“You're the magician! Think of something!!”
“Fine. I'll think of something. Just give me some peace and quiet.” He presses the mute button. And thinks. Ardelle jabs a finger at him as he thinks. “Let's see.” He presses the 'menu' button then 0 for settings and finally gets to 'adjust screen resolution'. He adjusts the screen size, pulling more and more of Ardelle onto the screen, checking the drawers empty as he does so. Eventually, all of her appears on the screen. He unclicks the mute button.
“...sucker, you...”
“I can hear you now.”
“What have you been doing?! I've been getting dizzy just looking at you.”
“Getting you out. Walk to your left. Your other left.” Ardelle flips him the bird and shifts to her left, walking off the edge of the screen, to a thump from behind the wardrobe door. The door opens and a 0.7 scale Ardelle glares up at him.
“Oh, great. What have you done?! Fix this!!!!”
“Or what? You'll savage my ankles?”
“Couple of feet higher. Fix! This!!”
“Yes, dear.” He slams the door closed, opening it on a still fuming but full sized version.
“Great! Now I have a headache as well! Thank you so very much. I'm going to the lobby for some painkillers.” She starts to close the door.
“From in there?”
“Yes. Obviously.”
“Obviously?”
“You didn't notice the buttons on the door when it's closed?”
“What buttons?”
Ardelle rolls her eyes, mutters under her breath and pulls him into the wardrobe.
“This has bad idea all over it, you know.”
“Shut up.” She presses the lobby button on the elevator controls and the wardrobe starts to sink. A couple of floors down, the electronic voice cheerfully announces “13th floor”. The door swings open. “Zoiks!” And they jab the door close button repeatedly until it swings shut again and continues its descent.
“Lobby.” The door swings open deep in one of the side corridors.
They step out, cautiously looking around as they head out into the main lobby area, and from there

to sundries.

They don't talk about what happened on the 13th floor, just buy the medicine and return to their room, via the conventional elevators, where the wardrobe remains a looming presence. For several minutes, neither says anything.

“Check out?”

“Check out!”

“And go where?”

“Anywhere the hotel furniture obeys the laws of physics!”