

MISMADE MISS JONES

by Paul Watson

For and starring Sophie

Sophie pulls her coat tighter, the collar up. Fortunately, it's London, so there's enough rain to justify it. She keeps her head down, her sparkly dress swishing round her, and her missing pieces comfortably hidden. It's starting to look like she may have made a bad deal. I mean, the dress is nice, no doubt about it. Silky and slippery and clingy but was it really worth her body? She's already thinking of how to hide it. Shirts, blouses, long sleeves no problem. Do they all have collars? Will trousers work? She presses at her waist. It feels like there's something there, but, is that just the dress' doing? Is she going to have to wear the princess dress all week? Would the magician really be that... He left her in half for a week, didn't he? Clearly he's a freak who gets off on causing her embarrassment and hassle.

She pushes the door open and heads quickly to bed. She's not especially sure how she'd explain the dress to Steve, never mind...all the rest of it. "Ok, Mr Magician. Let's see what you've done to me." she peels off the long gloves. Nothing underneath them except her hands, no arms at all, but her hands float obediently as if they're perfectly normal. She reaches up to feel her arms. Something there, but, not quite there. Doesn't feel as firm as... Her fingers close rather more than they should. She bites her lips with a squeak as they move through what should be her arm. She jerks her hand back.

She lowers the dress, staring at the bed behind her in the mirror where she should be seeing her body and starts to explore the rest of her missing body. As always there's ...something there, resisting the push of her fingers, but if she presses a little, not even hard, just firmly, her fingers sink into the invisible body causing those sharp, pleasant feelings.

She takes a deep breath and reaches for her chest, squeezing her missing breast, "Fuuuuuuuuuuck." her legs give way as her fingers sink in there, dropping her onto the bed, her body sinking into the mattress until her still solid pieces arrest her fall. Of course, that leaves her hands and legs sticking up out of the mattress like it's a puddle of quicksand. Her breathing is heavy as the mattress fills her hips, those pleasure sparks getting too intense to think. She struggles free, kicking and thrashing, her remaining pieces glowing with sweat, hands pressing on the mattress leaving dents that her missing hips do not.

She pants, blinking into semi-coherence as there's a firm knocking on the door. "Soph? Are you all right in there?"

Her cheeks flush crimson. "Yes...yes, I'm...I'm fine."

"You're sure?"

"I'm...fine." she pants.

"Do I want to know what you're doing in there?"

She shakes her head firmly at the door, "No, absolutely not."

"Right." there's a sound of footsteps going away.

"Whooo. That was...that was intense! I cannot let that happen at school." she slips fully out of the dress, hanging it and the gloves up carefully, the dress far too nice to let get creased. She looks at herself, turning round to peer over her invisible shoulders for how she looks from behind. It's weird to see so little of herself like this. But probably not as limiting as being headless or in half. "Maybe he's mellowing." she lifts off the glittering tiara, setting it on the dresser. As soon as her fingers leave it, she feels her body filled with the same airy feeling of nothingness she felt inside the box. Tentatively she reaches for her arm and feels absolutely nothing. Her heart feels like it's beating faster but...it's also not there at all. No tingling, no sparks of pleasure, just...nothingness. She grabs the tiara and feels her body returning, kind of, still just about there at a gentle touch. She puts the tiara down and the nothingness returns. "Yeah, real 'mellowed'. I am such an idiot trusting him at all. I can not go into work wearing this thing. For one, it wouldn't stay on for three seconds before someone yanked it off to play princesses. Ugh. That's a problem for tomorrow me. Today me needs to sleep." she leaves the tiara, carefully getting into bed, feeling very weird as the cover sinks

through where her body should be, only rising where her legs are. "One week. I can do this for one..." she yawns and closes her eyes, drifting off to sleep.

Next morning she yawns, stretches and throws back the covers and looks down at the smooth skin on the tops of her legs. She draws in a breath for a scream before she actually wakes up. "Right, right. No body." she sighs heavily and awkwardly pushes herself up off the bed. "Shower, then figure this out." she stumbles to the bathroom. Showering takes considerably less time than usual given how little there is of her to wash, a thought she pushes away. She also finds that her smooth stumps are unusually sensitive as she washes them, biting her lip and cursing the magician under her breath as the soap goes flying from her trembling hands.

Once dry she tries to get dressed, only to find every item of clothing just falls through her body. "You're going to make me wear it, aren't you? You sadistic bastard." she pulls on the tiara and tries again. This time she manages to get her bra to stay, although several attempts fail as she pulls too hard and yanks it into her chest. The panties prove another matter. She pulls them too hard, giving a yelp of surprised pleasure and lets them go. They remain, floating inside her, looking, and feeling, incredibly strange as she stares at herself in the mirror. "Well, that's fucking weird." She reaches into her stomach, biting her lip at the sensations and pulls them out. "What was that...? Hmmm, I wonder." she reaches up, taking a deep breath and pulls off the tiara. Nothing happens. "Working so far." she lowers it down and slowly pushes it against her stomach. The sensation is much more intense but it passes through and floats in place. "Ha! In your face, Magician! Solved it." She finishes carefully getting dressed, checking to make sure there's no telltale bumps or glows or anything, but no, she looks normal. "Maybe I can do this."

Monday. Steve didn't notice anything, which is a good sign but she can almost hear Nat saying it's hardly conclusive. She scrambles down the bus, jammed between seats but less likely to get bumped so hard something goes where it shouldn't. Of course, getting out again proves the usual challenge but it's not like she can barge her way through in any event.

Nat is waiting for her. "So?"

"So?" she responds innocently, "How's your gran?"

"Moaning about all the attention she's getting and secretly loving it. Like someone else I know. Anyway, you look...normal. Did you finally get out of it?"

"Do we have to do this now?"

"So you didn't."

"When I have five minutes, I'll tell you."

"I'll hold you to that."

And off to class. The children look at her expectantly, but as nothing happens they eventually get on with work until Mrs Clarkson is called away. Shawna raises her hand. "Miss Jones..."

Sophie knows what's coming but can't think of a way to deflect it so just waits.

"...did you get put back together, Miss Jones?"

"Yes, yes, I did."

"Are you back to normal, Miss?"

To lie or...not to. Sophie gives up in defeat. "Not...quite." she pulls the sleeve of her blouse up, exposing her missing arm. The class sit open-mouthed as she turns her hand.

"Miss, where's your arm, Miss?!"

"Beats me. The magician made it vanish." she pulls down her sleeve. "It still works, though."

"Will you be getting it back, Miss?"

"Oh, yes. Just as soon as I see that magician again."

"What if he doesn't, Miss?"

Sophie smiles her 'someone's going to get it' smile that the children rarely see. Those who have shift back in their seats. "I can be very persuasive."

And having been let in on the secret, the children return to normal. Miss Jones is still magic, so all is right with the world.

Nat proves rather harder to convince. She looks across the small table in the staff room as Sophie pulls her sleeve back down. "What else?"

"What do you mean 'what else'?"

Nat peers over her thin glasses at her. Sophie carefully folds her arms, staring defiantly back.

"You know I'll find out eventually."

"Fine." she sulks, looking around and, once she's confirmed it's safe, unbuttons the middle two buttons of her blouse. "There."

"That's more like it." she looks closely, "So, where...aren't you?"

"From about here..." she puts a flat hand at her collar, "....to here." and down to where she can feel her legs properly.

"That's...that's a lot of important things missing."

"I know."

"Can you eat?"

"I guess. I'm not really hungry, but it just goes...wherever my stomach is, I guess."

"Breathing?"

Sophie takes a breath as she buttons up her blouse, "Seems to work normally. Same with my heart, I guess. I've got a pulse."

"Right. And how do you, you know, entertain yourself?"

"Nat!"

"What? I'm legit curious."

"None of your business, you dirty-minded bish."

"So you can't feel the magician..."

"Why would I?"

"Well, where exactly is the rest of you?"

"It's...I...I don't know."

"You see, this is why you need me to keep you safe from all those predatory handsome magicians."

"I never said he was handsome."

"Yeah, yeah. But you've never said he's not. And that's why you need someone to protect you."

"You'd better make is this week then. Oh."

"Oh?"

"He gave me two tickets this time."

"So?"

"So he knows you're going to be there!"

"How would he know that?"

"How does he do anything? He's a fucking magician!" Nat's smile twitches, "Not like that!"

"You said it, Soph, not me."

"You knew what I meant."

"Maybe. So, I've got a comp ticket, huh?"

"Someone has. Right now I'm not sure you can be trusted."

"Awwww, don't you trust me?"

"That sounds like a magician's line."

"And we knooooow how much you don't trust magicians. You just keep on getting up on stage and letting them do...this to you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, Soph, that if you really hated this as much as you claim, you'd have been backstage threatening to do your own vanishing trick involving his family jewels and the door."

"That's...he....I....shut up."

Nat smirks at her.

"And wipe that look off your face before I do."

"See? There's an angry Sophie. So, I'm your plus one as well as roommate? Those rumours are already being written."

“And you're writing how many?”

“Only a couple. The really juicy ones. So?”

Sophie rolls her eyes. “Yes, yes, you're my plus one. Now leave me alone!”

Things go well, all things considered. Steve manages to find a place and starts preparing to move out. Nat starts preparing to move in. Everything's under control. Until Thursday.

“Miss Jones, Miss Jones, come quick. Billy's fallen over and...” he grabs her hand to lead her off at full child emergency speed. He succeeds in leading her hand away as it comes clean of her arm. Her sleeve collapses, flopping against her side.

“Miss!”

Stephen stops, looking from the hand in his grip to the armless adult and back, poor Billy forgotten.

“It's ok. I'm ok.” she says, not quite sure about that fact but slipping into reassuring adult mode before anyone can panic. Except her. She walks up to Stephen who's shaking now, unable to let go of the hand. Sophie gently takes it from him and puts it on her sleeve, the empty cloth filling up again “See? Good as new. Now, what did Billy do?”

Later, in the nearest pub to the school, “So if I pulled your head off...”

“Don't you fucking dare!”

“Come on, what's the worst that could...”

Sophie glowers at her. “The worst is that it doesn't work and I lose my body for good.”

“Really? I'd think it doesn't work, you bleed out and I get done for a really weird murder is worse.”

“Yeah, but that way you suffer, too, so it's marginally better.”

“Harsh.”

“But fair.”

“I didn't say that.”

“Still true.”

“Still harsh.”

“Still want to be my plus one?”

“Of course. Wouldn't miss your embarrassment for the world.”

“Maybe I'll get him to use you, too.”

“Nah. You're clearly his favourite. Besides, how would I move in if we're both...” she waves her hands in Sophie's general direction, red wine sloshing around her glass.

“So, I'll be fine and you can be victim is what you're saying?”

“Bish, please, he clearly only has saws for you.”

“Bah. Funny but bah.”

“Come on, Grumpy, almost half term when we get a break from the parents.”

“I'll drink to that.” she takes a sip.

“I'd still love to see where stuff goes when you eat it.”

“Tough.”

Saturday comes, Sophie gets dressed up. Might as well show off a bit, putting on the princess dress and tiara in its proper place rather than poking her in the non-existent guts. A coat thrown on hides her 'condition' and raises Nat's eyebrows past her tumbling hairline as a bonus.

“Don't start.”

“Wouldn't dream of it.” she looks over at Sophie's sceptical stare, “Please, I have much better things to dream of.”

“Riiiiiiight.”

“Anyway, let's go see your magician.”

“He's not my...”

“Yeah, yeah...”

At the club, Nat looks around. “Nice place. Ooooooh, bar's only steep not mortgage my soul to get a

drink. And we've got good seats, of course."

"Of course."

"Come on, Grumpy. First round's on me."

"I'm not having much."

"That's ok. I'll have your share."

"Of course you will."

The lights eventually dim and the show begins. "I can see why you like him. He's pretty easy on the eye."

"Shut up."

"I'm just..."

"Well, don't."

"Fine, Grumpy." she mimes zipping her lips shut.

At the finale, the spotlight finds their table, "Sophie! Such a pleasure to see...most of you again."

Nat laughs. Sophie glowers.

"And who's your friend?"

"This is Nat. She's another assistant so if you want to use her instead of me..."

"Hey!"

"Unfortunately, the box isn't sized for her. She's much too tall."

"Hah!"

"Come back with her next week and we'll see what I can do."

"Hah!" Sophie retorts before realising she's just agreed to come back next week.

"Would you like to join me on stage?"

"Not especially, but I would like to be back in one piece."

"However, temporarily."

"Stop 'helping', you."

"Never."

Sophie walks up to the stage with Nat's encouragement following behind her.

"I like her."

"You would."

He grins as he leads her to what looks like four children's blocks stacked together, numbered 1 to 4 from top to bottom.

"Let me guess, I get in there?"

"You do."

Sophie sighs deeply and waits as the four doors are opened for her. She backs in and the magician closes the doors.

"Now that she can't get out..."

"And kill you."

"Exactly, thank you, Nat. So, now that she can't get out and kill me for this, I think we should take some steps to protect that lovely dress I gave her."

A muffled but distinct "WHAT?!" emerges from the box. The magician opens the side of the second box down and reaches in. There's a brief struggle before he pulls out a pair of white opera gloves, only getting a little slapped for his trouble. "Whew! She's a wildcat, isn't she?"

"You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

"I hope she dressed more appropriately under the dress this week."

"Oh, really?"

"Hey! You made me that outfit!! Don't you go blaming..." he opens the third box and whips the dress out, "...meeeeeeeeeee!!!!!"

"Almost there." He opens box number one, to reveal Sophie's bright red face, a mixture of embarrassment and rage. "Let me just remove this." he plucks off the tiara and closes the door before Sophie can properly respond. He walks to the edge of the stage. "Come up, Nat. You're the

guardian of the clothes.”

“And?”

“And the witness that I'm not cheating.”

“And?”

“And you might need to help Sophie home, but I promise you I'll restrict my mayhem to her.”

“Hey!!”

“You promise?”

“Magician's honour.” he crosses his heart.

“Hah!!!”

“Good enough, I guess.” she walks up and takes the clothes, standing behind and to the right of the box, close enough to 'observe' and, hopefully, far enough away not to get caught.

The magician proceeds to insert six blades of metal that look only a little narrower than the boxes through the gaps between the four boxes and, presumably, through her best friend. He raps on the first box, opening the door.. “Still ok in there?”

Sophie glares at him, still beet red, “I will kill you for this! Slowly and painfully.”

“Yup, she's fine.” Nat calls.

“Traitor!”

The magician closes the door and begins to unstack the boxes. Nat stares. It's one thing to kind of accept that its possible, but...seeing it in action takes more believing. Her brain insists it must be a trick, even though she's sure it's not.

“Hey, Nat. Come over here and help me reassure people that this is really Sophie.”

He walks over the unstacked boxes, opening the doors revealing Sophie's scattered body clad, if that's the right word, in a shiny metallic blue bikini made from the barest amount of cloth possible. Sophie's blush extends almost to her knees which goes a fair way to convincing Nat at least. “Is Sophie ticklish?”

“Oh, no, no, no! Don't you dare! Nat! Don't you...” she breaks into laughter as Nat runs her fingers along her exposed side, dodging the flailing arms trying to stop her.

“Apparently.”

“I am....going to....kill you!...Both of you!...Twice!!...At least!!” Sophie gasps between bouts of crying and laughing.

“Definitely sounds like her.”

“Put me back together!”

“As you wish. You'd better stand back, Nat.”

“Wait, wait, I know this trick.” she glares up from the floor, “Put me back together properly!”

“Maybe.” he kicks the door to her head box closed. “Now, Sophie's right. Usually the magician would 'accidentally' stack their poor assistant wrong at least once. And obviously I can't do something so expected to dear Sophie.”

He closes the box containing her feet and lifts up the box containing her hips. He closes the door and places it on top of the other box, rotated ninety degrees.

“Hey, I think you put it on...”

He raises his finger to his lips in an exaggerated shhhh and lifts up her chest, fitting it on top another ninety degrees around.

“What are you doing?”

“Trust me.”

“Tall order.” Nat replies as he lifts up the still protesting box for Sophie's head and places it on top of the stack, another ninety degrees out of line.

“Oh, it's about to be a short order.”

“It's a what?!” Sophie rages from inside the box.

“Yeah, the s-word is a bit of a sore spot.”

“Ooops. My bad.” He raps on the top of the box. Nat and the audience shriek, jumping back as the tower of boxes collapses inwards, the boxes impossibly falling straight down, one into the other despite being the same size. Even more concerningly the shouting from inside has stopped. “Oh,

dear. Let's see if Sophie's all right." he opens the front of the box marked 4 and reveals Sophie's wriggling feet. "They seem fine." He closes the door and turns the box around. The door marked three opens to reveal her hips.

"How is that..."

"Shhhhh." he closes the door and turns it again, opening on her chest, still blushing fiercely. Her hands stretch out, feeling for the door. As the magician tries to close it, the arms push back. "Will you stop that?"

Sophie's arms shove the door open, catching him in the shins. "Owwwwww! That hurt!" The arms give him the finger and then a Matrix beckon.

"Looks like you're going to have to fight her on this one."

"Thanks for your help, Nat."

"You told me to just guard the clothes, so I'm guarding the clothes."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome."

He returns to fighting with Sophie to close the door, eventually wrestling it shut before turning the box one last time and revealing her face. She looks up at him, then around the box. "You are fucking kidding me!"

"Why?"

"I can't go into work like this!!!"

"Isn't next week half-term?"

"How did you know that?!"

He smiles, "So there's really no problem with Nat looking after you like this for a week."

"What?!"

"Wait, I didn't agree to..."

He closes the door, "Too late now." he lifts up the box.

"How do you think I'm going to carry that as well as all this?!"

He opens the top, revealing an empty box that Nat just stares into. "Problem solved. See you next week."

"But..." he shoos her off the stage. "But...well, Soph, this is another fine mess, and this one isn't even my fault."