

SHARING IS CARING

By Paul Watson

For and starring Sophie

Sophie doesn't really remember the rest of the show. Partially that's because she was rather more interested in what the actual fuck was happening to her. And partially it was because every time Nat closed the box on her face (whether to prevent someone getting too 'interested in seeing if she's real', or to allow someone to get 'interested' somewhere else, or to keep Sophie from screaming the place down after the absolute sadistic bitch had allowed just that and the guy had taken full advantage), all light and noise just vanished and all she could feel was the part of the box that was open.

Some experimentation had shown that two sides couldn't be opened at a time so if Nat wanted to show off Sophie's chest, purely for example, obviously, definitely not the main thing she let guys, and the occasional girl, paw over, she just had to close the door over her face, what a shame. And every time she protests, Nat just flips the door closed and the argument's over. Sophie stewes in the silent darkness, especially as she feels foreign hands getting too close to areas she'd much rather weren't manhandled in public.

The show ends and Nat closes up her box, putting her back into silence. She can't even feel the box moving but she assumes it is. Nat wouldn't leave her on the table like left luggage. At least Sophie doesn't think she would.

With nothing better to do, she tries to take an inventory of her body, but she's not sure if she's moving her fingers or not when there's nothing to feel against. So...maybe she doesn't exist at all? Which is a very strange and a little frightening thought. Although if she doesn't exist, exactly what and who is thinking the thought? It's all getting a bit metaphysical when the door finally opens onto a low view of Nat's flat. She looks down, yup, wooden table top, then up, then up a bit more to look at Nat directly. Being so small and so low down, well, it has a very definite effect on her.

"What the fuck did you think you were doing back there?!"

"What?"

"Don't you what me! You let them..."

"Hey, hey, one, I didn't let them do anything near what they wanted."

"Oh, well, that's alright, then."

"Two, I was told it was part of the deal you have with..."

"You were told WHAT?!"

"Ow, no need to shout. I was told that being on display was part of the thing."

"I am going to KILL HIM!"

"Well, not for a week you're not, are you?"

"A...I'm stuck like this for a week?"

"Yup."

"That's...how am I going to go to school like..."

"Well, and I quote, 'It's a good thing it's half-term, right?'..."

"Half...?! I have work to do! I am going to fucking KILL HIM!"

"You said that."

"I bloody meant it, too!"

"Was he right?"

"What do you mean, was he right? Right about what?"

"About being displayed being part of what you do this for."

"Of course it's not! Why would I enjoy being like this?! Helpless and available for any pervert to leer over and touch up?!"

"Yup. I can see how much you hate it from how you keep letting it happen."

"I do not!"

"Four weeks in a row of this and he's still got his family jewels attached. From you, that's almost a marriage proposal."

“Oh, shut up.” she tries to fold her arms, but they're in a separate box and so unavailable to make her disgruntlement clear.

“Anyway, as excuses go for getting out of helping with the move, I guess being part of the things to be moved is...”

“Don't you fucking dare!”

“What else am I going to do, huh? I can't leave you here. If I mailed you, you'd...”

“If you WHAT?!!”

“Yeah, exactly that. So I have to take you. Don't worry. I'll put you on the front seat, not in the back of the van.”

Sophie pouts.

“Aw, you look so cute like that.”

“You're enjoying this, aren't you?”

“If I was the one trapped in a box, wouldn't you?”

“I...”

“Be honest, now.”

“I...I...”

“That's what I thought. Now, I'm going to close you up for a bit. I want to see if something works.”

“What?”

“Well, if the box part of you is much, much bigger on the inside, it would make taking my stuff a lot easier...”

“So you're going to use me as a packing box?”

“You'd do the same for me, sweetie.”

“I...” she closes the box and Sophie vanishes once more into the darkness.

The door opens and Sophie exists again. It's a weird thought that until a few moments ago she didn't. I mean she did, but...she didn't? “Well, you'll be pleased to know that worked.”

“Hooray.”

“You're a bottomless well and all I have to do is think of what I want and it will come out.”

“I'm so happy for you.”

“Do I detect someone's in need of wine?”

“You detect...actually, yes. Definitely wine.”

Nat pours her a glass and teasingly places it in front of her.

“Very funny.”

Nat smiles and lifts the glass up to Sophie's lips. “Shall I get you a sippy cup?”

Sophie glowers. “Depends on if you want me to stuff you in here when I'm let out.”

Nat smiles and yawns. “Oh, wow, it's later than I thought. Do you want to be closed up? Or sleep with the door open?”

“Door open!”

“See you in the morning, sweetie.” she turns out the light, leaving Sophie in a different, less absolute kind of darkness.

“Wakey wakey.”

“Ugh.” Sophie blinks, raising her head, “Of course, you're a morning person.”

“Cheer up, grumpy.”

Sophie says nothing, stretching her neck.

“Sleep well.”

“I guess but I don't recommend sleeping like this. My neck is killing me!”

Nat stops, “Do you want me to close the box and see if that helps?”

Sophie pauses, “I guess it can't hurt. But not for too long.”

“I'll get breakfast ready and be right back.” she replies far too happily and closes the door.

A few minutes later, the door opens, Nat holding a bowl of cereal in one hand. “Ready for

breakfast?"

"I guess. Pass it..."

"No hands, remember?"

"How am I going to..."

Nat's grin, somehow, gets wider, "Neeeeeoooooooo. Here comes the aeroplane. Open wide."

Sophie keeps her mouth scowling shut.

"Don't pout, sweetie. If the wind changes..."

"You're an arse."

"I'm your best friend. What does that say about you?"

"That I need better friends." she mutters, opening her mouth anyway and Nat feeds her her breakfast.

The next few days don't get any better for Sophie. She 'sleeps' with the box closed, which helps her neck, but leads to very weird dreams of floating in pieces in an endless void...and enjoying it. Steve drops his keys round and Nat hides her under the table until he's gone, the box closed up so she can't even hear what they're saying. Nat also 'proves' that time passes normally when she's not around, as its euphemistically put, leaving a watch there that still reports the correct time, even though Sophie swears it's not been that long.

Then comes moving day, where she's shut up around the movers, marked fragile and left on the front seat of the rental van, the seat belt around her for "safety". Nat carries her over the threshold, as she puts it, but it's lost a lot of the romance when the box is still closed at the time. And after the movers have finished, Nat leaves her closed, opening the top of the box to extract her possessions. Eventually, Sophie's box opens and she gets to see her own flat, albeit from an angle even she's not used to.

"Home, sweet home." Nat cheerily says, still sorting through her stuff. "Now, where do you keep the food?"

"What time is it?"

"Wine o'clock!"

Sophie rolls her eyes. "Foods in the fridge and freezer like a normal person."

"Thanks." She comes back quickly, "Sweetie, ready meals do not count as food. No wonder you're getting a little..."

"A little what?"

"I'll show you." she closes the door on Sophie's face and opens another, pinching her tummy. The doors close and open, her fingers held part, "Almost an inch. Better watch yourself or you might not fit in the magician's magic box next time."

Apart from a few incidents where Nat uses her box as a footrest, the week passes. Sophie even manages to get some work in, as much as Nat complains about her dictation app.

And then it's time for the show, and Sophie's restoration. She and Nat frequently argue over whether the word "temporary" needs to be added to that. Nat gets dressed up and Sophie immediately panics about what to wear. About what she even can wear. After much work, more cursing, and a few attempts at rewriting physics, Sophie's more or less, she'd definitely say less, dressed in her boxes, Nat closes her up and carries her to their seats, opening her box on the table and shooing off every curious patron. For their own safety.

Eventually, the magician calls Nat onto stage with her box. Sophie scowls at being reduced to just an object, but there's not much she can do as Nat carries her up. The magician opens the door to her face and shows her to the audience. He repeats all the way down her body, turning the box each time to show her off. "Of course, having Sophie in four parts really isn't that useful."

"Or safe." Nat adds.

"Or that. So let's get her back." he lifts up the box and opens the base, letting it swing out. He quickly puts the box on the stage and slowly lifts it up, revealing more and more of Sophie until he pulls it all the way away and reveals her back in one piece. Sophie pats her self down to make sure everything, especially her clothes, are where they should be.

"You couldn't have told Nat she could do that last week?!"

"I suppose I *could* have done..."

"But you're an asshole so you didn't."

"I'm detecting a little hostility here."

"Oh, really? You might need a better detector because there's a lot here to detect!"

"Right. Well, I'm afraid there could be a problem with you helping out this week anyway."

"Oh, no. What a shame. Did you lose your saw?"

"No, but the cabinet really isn't sized for you." he gestures to the black and gold cabinet. It's just larger than Nat standing next to it and much too tall to fit Sophie comfortably or credibly. "Do you see anyone else who'd fit it better?"

Sophie grins evilly, and focuses her gaze beside the cabinet, "Oh, I think I see the perrrrfect person."

Nat looks around and points at herself when she can't see anyone nearby.

Sophie nods, looking as pleased as the Grinch when he has his wonderful awful idea.

"Natalie, as you're already up on stage, would you mind helping us out?"

"Do I have..."

"Oh, definitely." Sophie nods vigorously. "I wouldn't want to be accused of not sharing the 'fun' around."

Nat sighs.

"Sophie, would you like to help out as well?"

"Oh, very much so."

Nat swallows hard. "You know I didn't mean it, right?"

"Didn't mean what?"

"Whatever's got you all fired up to stick sharp things in me!"

"Apology not accepted. Into the box!"

"But..."

"Box! Box! Box!" the audience take up the chant. The magician opens the front in six alternating panels. Nat reluctantly gets into the cabinet, shifting around to try and get comfortable. Holding her arms up at the magician's direction. The magician closes the panels from the foot upwards and brings out the blades.

"Sophie, would you like..."

"Oh, yes..."

"Oh, no." comes from inside the cabinet as the magician and Sophie take up opposite sides.

"Quiet, you." Sophie raps admonishingly on the cabinet as she lines the long, wide blade up and slams it through Nat's knees.

The scream coming from the cabinet is impressive. The magician lines up the next blade and slides it smoothly in through Nat's thighs, the edge of the blade poking out beside Sophie. Sophie plunges the next blade through her waist, and the magician pushes in the next blade under Nat's ribs. Sophie stretches up to push the final blade through Nat's shoulders.

"Now, this bit does require a bit of practice, so..." he steps behind the cabinet and fiddles with something, pulling a long lever. The six slices pull apart, half going left and the alternating half right, showing a clear gap between them. The Magician opens up the three pieces on his side of things: Head and shoulders, stomach, thighs. Sophie follows his example and unveils Nat's feet, hips and chest.

The audience cheer. Nat looks a little queasy, casting glances across at her other pieces. The magician leads Sophie in a bow as the audience cheer louder as a second, slightly shorter, white and gold cabinet emerges from backstage. Nat's queasy look moves into a sly smile.

"Now, Sophie, you know how you volunteered to help..."

"Yesssssss?" she asks suspiciously.

"...well, we found your cabinet."

Sophie turns slowly like the lead in a horror movie. Nat blows her a kiss as the audience start chanting "Box!"

Reluctantly, Sophie climbs inside. The doors close and the magician repeats his two-hander on Nat solo: Knees, thighs, waist, ribs, shoulders, all sliced across smoothly and easily. She feels a jolt, sliding apart, hearing the audience applaud as her head, stomach and thighs go left and her chest, hips and feet right. The magician takes the bow as he opens the doors. The doors, and Nat's, are then closed again and Sophie feels half of her moving again.

When the doors are open she can see the pieces below Nat's head beside her body and assumes Nat's body is next to her, the audience applauding as the magician finishes the show under their 'expert supervision'.

After a few simple tricks, he announces it's time to get everyone back together. Sophie is, naturally, suspicious, suspicions that are confirmed when she feels her cabinet being pushed sideways, watching as her body is slipped into the gaps in Nat's box in what is presumably a mirror-image of what's happening to her.

"Hey!"

"That's not..."

"I don't want..."

"...not my..."

The magician ignores the shouts from both sides of the stage and the cabinets briefly close, alternating black and white and white and black. The blades pull out, the doors open and Sophie gingerly steps out in Nat's towering heels, her clothes a mismatch of Nat's dress and her shorts and top. Nat seems even less sure of herself, taking tiny steps as the magician brings the show to a close and sends them back to their seats for the curtain call.