A High School Party

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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"Did you get it?" Max asked. He was so excited, Dan thought, that he actually looked away from his computer. He grinned and nodded.

"Course I did. Party's tonight, isn't it?"

"Can I see it?"

"Calm down. Had to pull a lot of strings to even get them to agree to let you come to the party. Don't go ruining it by acting like some dorky little kid."

"I'm not some little kid!"

"But you are a dork? Interesting." He laughed. "Just kidding bro. You're not a little kid, so then start acting like it, dude. It's all juniors and seniors. You're the only ninth grader who was invited, so don't blow this."

"Can I see the costume?"

"It's pretty sophisticated. I'm gonna have to help you put it on, but trust me. It's boss."

"Really?" He grinned from ear to ear.

"But I really think you shouldn't see it until you've got it on." He frowned. That sounded suspicious.

"Well, how am I going to put it on if I can't see it?"

"I'm gonna blindfold you, dude." Yeah. Definitely suspicious.

"Nice try, Dan. There's no way I'm"

"Dude, you wanna go to this party or not?"

"I do."

"Them's my terms. I get to blindfold you until you've got your costume on." The costume in question was, allegedly, the most realistic monster costume possible, short of buying it from a Hollywood creature shop. Max had had to special order it through the costume shop in town and even then, he had been worried it would not get here in time. Since Dan worked right next door, he had picked it up on his way home. And now? Now it waited in Dan's room, right down the hall.

"Fine." Max said, still excited despite the downright bizarre circumstances.

"Get undressed."

"What?"

"Dude, you know how hot it's gonna be? You need to be in as little as possible. Don't get naked though! Just your underwear." Max nodded, but hesitated. "Come on, Max. We're brothers. I've seen your underwear before. Tighty whities."

"They are not." If he had remembered which pair he was wearing, he never would have dropped his jeans.

"Oh, my god! Pokémon! You've got freaking Pikachu and

Charmander on your ass!"

"Shuddup." Max blushed a deep crimson.

"Seriously, man. You skipped from seventh to ninth grade. Why the fuck are you still wearing third grader underwear?"

"Mom still buys my clothes." He muttered, stung. "You know that."

"Well, seriously. Tell her you're gonna die a virgin if she keeps that up."

"Look, you gonna blindfold me or whatever?"

"Yep. Got one of dad's weird sleep masks right here." He slid it over Max's head and his world became pitch black. "Alright, coming behind you." He felt his brother's rough hands on his shoulder. The left one vanished for a second, but then snapped the waistband of his briefs.

"Ow!"

"Seriously. Tighty whities would be better than this."

"I have those too." Max muttered, more to himself than to Dan.

"I'm dead serious, dude. You're going to a party with senior girls and you're rocking the skivvies of a Pokémon trainer."

"They're not gonna see."

"You never know." Dan pushed his brother's shoulders forward. "Do you know where we are?"

"Follow the smell of dirty gym socks and I'll be at your room."

"Shuddup." Dan said with a laugh. "Maybe you are related to me after all."

Safely reaching Dan's room, he got to work, gathering up the costume. It was mostly one piece, which made it easy, but he liked the idea of his brother standing there obediently blindfolded and wearing nothing but his dorky underwear. Could he somehow get him to the party like this? He would be a hit, though certainly not in the way Max expected to be. He smiled and shook his head. That was too mean.

"Kay, bud. Lift your left foot." Max complied and Dan moved the costume into place. "Down. And now for your right foot."

"Ow!" Max protested as Dan snapped his underwear again.

"Sorry, once it's buried under all this stuff, I won't get to do it." He stood, lifting the costume and pulling it over his brother's body. "Arms now. Left first. Left, Max!"

"Oops." Dan snorted and guided his brother's hands down the sleeves of the costume. He grinned, wondering if Max even had any idea what was happening to him.

"Are these mittens at the end?"

"Guess so? They look like claws from the outside." Dan said, grinning from ear to ear. He could react openly as long as he was not too noisy. Max had not even noticed him waving his hand an inch from his face back in his room. "Kay, looks like

we need to zip this up and then flip the hoo- uh, headpiece up." He jumped back as Max tried to move his arm. "Careful, dude. Those claws look dangerous!"

"Sorry." Dan snorted and zipped the costume up his brother's scrawny chest. He grinned. This zipper seemed almost dainty when you considered that the wearer had giant plush mitts covering his hands. There was no way he could get out without help. That probably explained the weird zips in the crotch, so the wearer could conveniently use the bathroom without having to take the whole thing off.

"Almost done. Turn." He had to help his brother turn, just so happening to point him toward the full length mirror that would be crucial for the reveal in a moment. "And up comes the hood." There was no harm in calling it that now, he thought. With deftness that surprised him, he took off the sleep mask at the same moment he trapped Max's head in the hood. Max's eyes took the briefest second to adapt and then he stared at his reflection, agape.

"What the hell?" Staring back at him was not the ferocious monster he had expected. His reflection was monstrous for a very different reason. Standing there was an enormous teddy bear with a baby blue and white polka dot bow tie and, worse, his face. The plush of the suit made him round and chubby and eminently huggable, the exact opposite of what Max had wanted. "What the? The costume shop screwed up!"

"Naw, I told them to order this instead." Dan said. Max took a swing at him, but the plush mitt did nothing to his brother.

There were no claws at all, another lie Dan had told him.

"Why? What the fuck, man?"

"Settle down. You've still got a costume to wear to the party and I bet you'll be popular."

"I look ridiculous! Take this off me!"

"There's no way you can get it off, try as you might, and there's even more no way I'm taking it off you. We gotta get to the party."

"Where's your costume?"

"Up your butt, six miles down."

"What?"

"Right here." Dan patted a pile of clothes on his bed.

"What? Those are just your clothes."

"Well, how else does a high school zombie dress?" Max glared at his brother.

"So you're going to be a zombie and I'm a..."

"Teddy bear. Yep. Come on, let's go eat before we have to leave."

"No! Take this off me!"

"I'm not going to do that and clearly," he watched Max paw at the front of his costume. The zipper had sunk into the plush fur of the teddy bear's chest, so it was impossible for his

awkward paw to grab it. "You can't take it off either." He headed toward his door. "Come on, Max. You could use some practice navigating the stairs like that anyway."

"Dan! Seriously, listen!"

"No, you listen." Dan said. "I am not unzipping you until after the party. You can either stay home like that or come and be the hit of the party."

"Hit of the party?"

"Dude, think about it. You're a cuddly teddy bear and what do girls love more than a cuddly teddy bear? Nothing." Dan shook his head. "Honestly, try to do something nice for your brother and" Max sighed loudly and stomped his foot.

"Fine."

"Awesome. And keep that pouty face, man. Bet the girls will eat that right up." Max glared at Dan, but what he had said kept knocking around in his mind. Could Dan be telling the truth? Was this all some favor to get him attention from girls, older girls? A prank seemed more likely, but who went this far for a prank? He shifted in the plush suit and groaned. "So, gonna come to the party?"

"Ok."

"And yeah, definitely keep up the pout, dude." He slapped Max on the back and laughed as his hand sank in a bit. "Did you even feel that?"

Max soon discovered just how hard it was to get down the

stairs. He had to carefully ease his way down them, but had a feeling that, even if he did fall, the ridiculous costume would protect him. Finally, he made it downstairs. It was a good thing he was in nothing but his underwear, he thought. The suit was warm!

"We've still got a bit before we have to go, so you hungry?"

"Yeah." Dan smiled and disappeared into the kitchen.

"To make it up to you," he called. "I'll make your favorite." Max did not admit it, but that did make him feel a bit better as he waddled – and it really was a waddle with how he had to swing his legs out so wide with every step– over to the couch. He sat down and immediately realized his mistake. He tried to rock back and forth to get the momentum to get back up, but it proved impossible. What did he do? Did he ask Dan for help? Inspiration struck. He fell onto his side and rolled off the couch. Once again, his error became immediately obvious as he lay on the floor.

"Uh, Dan? Dan!"

"What happened, Max?"

"I tried to get up." he laughed. "It didn't go well." Dan shook his head.

"Alright, make a note. Don't let you sit down without someone else around." He laughed again and tugged Max back to his feet. "If you plan it right, you might be able to get a hot girl to help you up." He winked at his brother.

"Uh, by the way... how do I, uh?" His cheeks turned red.

"What?"

"Y'know, pee."

"Oh! Don't worry, I think there's some flap or something down there."

"But I can't really" he waved his paws around. Dan laughed.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, I guess. Just hmm" he thought for a moment. "Raise your left hand, mitt, paw when you need to go."

"Kay." Max said, planning to try and hold it the best he could.

"Speaking of things you can't do by yourself" Dan led Max over to the table. "I think I'm going to have to feed you."

"What? Can't you let me out of this... thing while I eat? And pee?"

"It's your costume and we had a shitty time getting it on you in the first place."

"Come on, dude."

"It's either let me feed you or you'll skip the party."

"Party's not worth it." Max muttered.

"You sure?" Dan looked his brother right in the eyes. "Jenny Medina's gonna be there and I bet she'd love a cuddly teddy bear boyfriend."

"She's not that hot"

"Are you hearing yourself, dude? She's the hottest girl in school. Even getting her to talk to you would be the best moment of your life and you know it." Max sighed.

"I"

"You're honestly going to tell me that letting me feed you isn't worth a shot with Jenny Medina? Honestly?"

"Well, you're not the one in the bear suit!"

"Yeah, kinda regretting it now."

"We can go change."

"We're cutting it close as it is, Max. Sit down and let me feed you." Max groaned, but he was too hungry to argue.

To Max's relief, Dan did not press the issue. Once he worked up a good rhythm, the food disappeared quickly.

"Here, let's get your chin." Dan wiped it. "Better that than you wiping it with your teddy paw."

"Shuddup."

"Get used to it, man. You're in that costume all night long."

"But you promise you'll let me out tonight?"

"Yep."

"Promise."

"Dude!"

"Promise."

"I promise. Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye!" Max rolled his eyes. "Ok, I need to go get ready. Don't sit anywhere and get yourself stuck again!"

Finally able to process his emotions, Max groaned. How had he let Dan trick him into this? There was no way anyone else was going to be as elaborately dressed as he was. Sure, the same would have been true with his original costume, but it only mattered now that he was dressed like a fucking giant teddy bear! He tried in vain to get the zipper, but all he could feel was the plush of the mittens. He could probably slap a cactus and feel nothing, he thought glumly as he looked at his paw. He wiggled his fingers and the mitten barely even moved. He was screwed.

"What do you think?" Dan asked, holding his arms out as soon as he got downstairs. Max shrugged. Sure, Dan had a face full of make-up now, but he still looked normal.

"You look fine."

"You're gonna steal all the attention. Bet you anything you have the best costume there."

"That's kinda what I'm afraid of." Max muttered.

"Afraid? Of what?"

"Of everyone thinking I'm some dork because I dressed up."

"I'm in costume too. We all will be. Dude, haven't you noticed how seriously girls take Halloween?" He smirked

conspiratorially. "And how they dress?" He gestured at his chest to clear up any confusion Max might have. "Come on, let's go. I'll drive."

"Like I even can." Max muttered.

"On the plus side, you don't gotta worry about a coat. You should be nice and toasty warm in that."

"Great." Max rolled his eyes.

The drive there was uneventful, but Max felt anxiety grip him as they pulled up. He could see a few guys about Dan's age hanging out on the porch. They were not in costumes at all, as far as he could tell. This had all been a bad idea.

"Settle down." Dan said, dismissing his concern. "We're both in costume. You're not showing up alone. Plus Kurt and those guys are assholes." Max nodded, feeling a bit mollified. "Let's go."

"Um" Max pawed at the door handle and Dan laughed.

"Right. I won't be able to leave you alone for a sec, so there you go." He jogged around the car and opened Max's door. "Your majesty!"

"What is wrong with you?" Max muttered. He got to his feet, leaning on the car door to steady himself before beginning his ungainly trek to the front door.

To his combined relief and surprise, Dan stayed with him the whole trip in, his brother's minimal costume making Max feel at least a teensy bit better about his over the top ensemble.

All the same, he realized that he was easily the shortest person there and being dressed like a babyish teddy bear only made him feel tiny, like someone's annoying little brother.

"What do we do?" He asked. Dan chuckled.

"Mingle or at least go sit somewhere. Hey, Zeke!"

"Dan! No, don't leave me!" He reached out a mittened hand, but Dan had already gone off to see Zeke. Did he chase after him or try to find something else to do? "Well, you wanted to go to a high school party." He muttered to himself.

Max wandered around the room, listening to conversations, trying to find a place to hang out where he was not right by the thumping stereo. He eyed everyone around him critically. Most of them were not even in costumes. Wasn't this supposed to be a costume party, he thought.

"What are you doing?" Dan asked when he appeared next to Max. "Just standing here like a weirdo?"

"Well, I didn't know what else to do." Max said with a shrug.

"Do you need to pee?" Dan was practically yelling.

"No!"

"Well, the snacks are over on that table. Why don't you go sit on the couch?"

"Dan, if I sit down, I"

"Remember our hand signal? You just do that and I'll come help you up, kay?" Max sighed as Dan all but shoved him

onto the couch. He had no idea what he thought this party would be like, but this was not it.

With his hands covered by the plush mittens, he could not grip any of the snacks even if he wanted to. Worse, he had sunk deep enough into the couch he had been pushed into that he knew he could not stand. Remembering his attempt to roll off earlier, he knew he was stuck. He had to stay here, sitting on the couch, dressed like a giant teddy bear until his brother remembered him and came to his aid.

The realization suddenly hit him that if he had worn the costume he wanted to, he would have stuck out like a sore thumb. Still, better to be a monster from a movie than a teddy bear with a baby blue bow tie, he thought sullenly. It would have been awesome.

Frustrated, he tried again to grip the zipper, but his paws only pushed it deeper into the fur of his chest. He tried to find solace in the fact that he would have been in his underwear at this high school party if he had gotten it off, but the knowledge that he didn't even have the option made him feel trapped, almost claustrophobic. He rocked back and forth, hoping to launch himself off the couch. He almost shouted in excitement as, with the help of the armrest, he managed to launch himself up, steadying himself on the coffee table. He did it! Now what?

"Hey, cutie!" Max froze and looked at the girl walking over. She was talking about someone else, right? She looked like a senior. "Adorable costume."

"Uh, thanks. I like yours too." She was dressed in a blue and white dress and had her hair in braids that rested on her shoulders.

"Thanks. It's supposed to be Dorothy, but no one's really getting it." She shrugged. "But you are clearly the cutest little teddy bear! Are you Dan's little brother?" Max took a small step back, nervous that she was about to pinch his cheek.

"Yeah, my name's Max. I"m in 9th grade." She smiled and nodded.

"I see! Well, my name's Lucy. Lucy Medina." Max's eyes widened. Lucy? As in Jenny's sister? "I see you've heard of me."

"Yeah." He said breathlessly.

"Oh, you're just the cutest!" She cooed. "Come on, how about we sit down?"

Max was still too taken by this girl talking to him to be able to tell her he'd rather not. He had only just stood up. She took him by the mitten, his heart racing. He was holding hands with Lucy Medina, Jenny's sister! That had to be worth something right, even if it was just through the thick mitten.

She flopped down on the couch, dragging him down with her. He wiggled a bit, but she kept him close, their thighs touching. He looked at her, unsure of what to say. He needed some sort of cool line to immediately win her over.

"So you're who again?"

"Max, Dan's brother."

"Aw!" She smiled at him. "And you're just the cutest little teddy bear, aren't you?"

"Yeah, I guess" he squirmed as she touched the fur on his belly.

"Oh? Are you ticklish?"

"Not re" his squeal seemed to be louder than the music as she tickled him. "Hey!" He tried to get away from her, but another girl sat down next to him. He turned slowly, taking in her white dress and red hooded cloak before he saw her face. Jenny Medina!

"Who's this cutie patootie?" She asked her sister. Max felt as if he might die. Here he was, wedged between two beautiful girls. Dan was forgiven, absolutely forgiven!

"His name's Maxie. He's Dan's baby brother."

"I'm not" he stammered as they looked at him. It was easy to talk to girls, but not when they looked at him. "I'm in ninth grade."

"Oh, I'm sure you're a big boy." Lucy said reassuringly. "It's just hard to take you seriously when you're dressed like an adorable little teddy!"

"Well, um, maybe I can" he pawed at his hood, figuring that pulling it down would help them see the man under the bear.

"No, leave it. It's cute!" Lucy said. "We have Red Riding

Hood, Dorothy, and their teddy bear friend!" She hugged him close. "Jen, let's take a selfie!"

"Sure thing! Smile, Teddy!" He smiled, but knew that come Monday, everyone would know. Hopefully they would focus on the fact that he was with two hot girls and not on his teddy bear costume.

"Are you thirsty, Teddy?" Jenny asked. Stricken mute, Max nodded. Jenny got up and smiled. "I'll go find you something to drink. You just stay there and keep Lucy company, okay?" Max nodded. Stuck in the middle of the couch, he could not use the couch's arms to push himself off anyway.

Max wracked his brain for something to say to Lucy, but she always seemed to be in some new conversation with someone, not paying him much mind, but keeping an arm around him as if he was her plushie. What am I complaining about, he thought. Everyone can see me here with her. He scanned the crowd for Dan to get some brotherly kudos, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Here we go, teddy!" Jenny said, coming over to him. "I wasn't sure if you're able to hold things with those mitts, so" all the blood drained from Max's face as he saw the baby bottle she held. "Luckily Andrew's mom runs a daycare."

"What? You're joking, right?" Max tried to bat away the bottle, but Jenny was determined.

"Here, Lucy, how about you do it? Our cute little teddy seems to like you." Max tried to get away, but trapped as he was

between the two of them, he could only turn his head so much before the bottle found its mark.

"There you go!" Jenny said with a grin. "And don't worry, we still know you're a big boy." Her wink did nothing to reassure him. He could not have felt any smaller as Lucy rested his head against her shoulder and kept the bottle of water firmly in his mouth. He just hoped they wouldn't try to burp him.

"Drink up, Teddy!" Lucy said with a giggle. "Maybe we can play tea party with him next." The girls laughed in a way that deeply unnerved Max. He tried to suck on the bottle and found it came easily to him, like some long-forgotten instinct. No one seemed to be paying him much mind and he hoped that if someone did look over at him, they would focus on the drop-dead gorgeous girls he was with and not the fact that they were feeding him a baby bottle. No one knows me here anyway, other than... Where was Dan?

He kept trying to look around, though it was difficult with the bottle in his mouth. He knew that if Dan saw him like this, he would never live it down, even if the girls had been in bikinis or something. Worse, the water seemed to have gone right through him. He needed to pee, and soon.

The one benefit of his massive paws was he finally managed to push the bottle away and sit up enough that he might hold a chance of escapes from the girls.

"Oh, is Teddy done?" Lucy asked in a cutesy voice, giggling down at the boy in her arms. Max stammered, but then saw Dan. If there was ever a moment for sibling telepathy, this

was it! To his relief, Dan hurried over as quickly as he could.

"Scuse me, ladies. Can I borrow him?"

"Aw, Dan, is this your teddy bear?"

"He wishes." Dan said with a smirk. What did that even mean? "He's actually my brother."

"You brought your baby brother to Andrew's party?"

"C'mon, Jenny. He's a freshman." He tugged Max to his feet, grabbing one of his paws and making him wave. "Bye-bye, ladies!" He said in what must have been his idea of a teddy bear voice.

Max led the way to the bathroom, not even caring how ridiculous he looked as a giant teddy bear charging along. Dan followed him with a chuckle.

"You were having fun." It wasn't a question. "Your head was on Lucy's chest!"

"Like I could even tell. Hurry up and get me out of this thing before I piss myself." Dan nodded and got to work.

"Kay, so the crotch has some weird zipper, but I don't really know how it works. I'll give you the choice. We can either unzip on the front here and strip you down to your undies or we can try the one between your legs and hope we can get it rezipped so you aren't flashing your undies for the rest of the night."

"Um, I guess let's unzip here." Max patted his chest. Dan

nodded. "Oh, and is the door locked?"

"Smart." Dan said, locking it. "Okay, let's get you peeing!" The ease with which he unzipped Max's costume annoyed him. He had been struggling with it all evening! He sighed as he saw his brother's underwear again. "Seriously, dude. Lucy and Jenny catch a glimpse of those and it's all over."

"I think they think I'm like a toy." Max mumbled. At least he did not seem to have noticed the bottle situation.

"And Pokemon on your ass is gonna convince them you aren't?" Dan laughed. "Just piss and let's get back out there."

Max did what he needed to, but they hit a snag. He stood there, waiting for Dan to zip it back up. It had taken him like half a second to unzip it.

"What's taking so long?"

"The zipper's broke."

"Broke? Like stuck?"

"Nope." Dan held up the entire zipper.

"Shit!"

"Shit." Dan agreed. He sighed and scratched his head. He could see his brother panicking just as clearly as he could see his underwear. "Here's what we're going to do."

Dan left the bathroom first. Max stood there, listening to the chatter of the party just outside the bathroom. He had slid the teddy bear costume down so that it wrapped around his waist.

He shivered, but it was better than nothing. His underwear was covered, though he had to hold it up. All he had to do was make it down the front stairs and out to Dan's car where Dan would be waiting.

"Hey, everyone! Ritchie's streaking in the backyard!" There was no Ritchie at the party as far as Max knew, but that was too enticing a declaration for most teens to ignore. He began to hurry out of the bathroom, hearing the sounds of the crowd moving in the other direction. This might just work!

He made it to the front door, but then had to switch to only one hand to open it. The costume nearly slipped and his heart pounded. Why was he so stupid? Why had he worn the worst possible underwear today?

He stepped out into the cold autumn air and shivered. Maybe he could slip the costume back up? He paused to consider it. Dan had loosely tied the arms around his waist, so it seemed like a waste of time. He gave them a tug, but thought better of it. Where was Dan's car? It was darker than he thought out here. As if on cue, he tripped over an uneven bit of sidewalk. He stood back up and realized his costume had slipped down under his butt.

"Pikachu!" An obviously drunk voice yelled. Max yanked the costume up to his belly button and began to run for the car. "Hey! Someone's streaking up here!"

"Shit." Max dashed for the car, hardly even caring now that the costume kept slipping. It was dark enough no one would see his briefs, right? His heart pounded as he found Dan's car.

It was locked! "Hurry up, Dan!" His breath was visible. It really was cold. At least he could stand by the car and keep his costume up. The front lights came on and Max was temporarily blinded.

"Hey, no one's streaking out here." A few voices said.

"Yoink!" Determined to give the party a show, the same drunk guy who had yelled Pikachu had snuck up on Max and now, the freshman's guard down, tugged down his costume. He spun around before anyone could get too good a look at Pikachu and Charmander, but they did get a full view of the front of his white and red briefs. Laughter rained down as he tried to tug his costume back up. Over the raucous cackles, he heard a blessed sound: the unlocking of the door. He dove inside and into cover. No, he didn't think he'd be going to another high school party any time soon.