Astral Projection

by andlat

For the past few nights, Max had been practicing astral projection and he felt like he was getting pretty good at it. Just the night before, he had made it to the end of the block before feeling the draw to return back…

The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

Astral Projection - Chapter 1

For the past few nights, Max had been practicing astral projection and he felt like he was getting pretty good at it. Just the night before, he had made it to the end of the block before feeling the draw to return back home and tonight, he resolved as he brushed his teeth, he would make it even farther.

Lying down on his bed, he began to focus on his breathing, bringing it to a calm, slow rhythm. He slowly began to ease his consciousness out beyond the confines of himself and began to slowly move farther and farther away. As easy as could be, he slipped out through the front door and began to move down the street. It was not walking, per se, almost like a floating sensation. He saw the end of the street coming. This was it, he was going to make it farther today. At the back of his mind, he could feel a light tug, but every book he had read told him that that tug could be stretched out through practice. He passed the stop sign at the end of the street and kept going, the strain rapidly becoming more and more. Where he had started out moving freely, it now felt like he swam through molasses. Just a little bit farther, a little bit

With a snap, he felt himself being yanked violently back to his house. His eyes flew open and he gasped. What had happened? He always felt a little off at the end of an attempt, but he felt lighter, smaller, somehow. The ceiling of his bedroom looked different, like there was a soft fabric above

him. He blinked and realized that he was staring at the pink canopy over his little sister's bed.

"What? Why am I in Cassie's bed? Why do I have Cassie's voice?" He kicked off the white and pink polka dot bedspread and dashed to the mirror. He stared at the little girl in the nightgown that met his gaze in the mirror. "Holy shit! I'm Cassie!" He turned as he heard the door creak up and stared at his own bare chest. Looking up, he saw his face in a big smile.

"Hello there, little sister." He heard his voice say.

"Cassie?"

"Looks like I'm Max now." She said with a chuckle. "But don't worry, I'm going to be a much different big brother than you ever were. You barely acknowledged me, but I'll be a much more active big brother."

"What's that mean?" Max asked nervously.

"Shh." Cassie shepherded him back to his bed, snickering as he stumbled over the hem of his nightie. "Go back to sleep, little girl. You need your rest." She tucked him in and smiled. "You've got a big day of modeling all of my, I mean your prettiest dresses so you can really get into that little girl mindset." She kissed his forehead. "Oh, and don't forget you're starting ballet on Tuesday. My former big brother will make just the cutest little ballerina!"

Chapter 2

Astral Projection 2 - Chapter 2

True to her word – his word? – the new Max spent the entirety of Monday forcing the old Max into dress after dress, making him pout, prance, and blow kisses. She almost delighted more in showing him the lacey little panties he wore now instead of the boxer briefs she'd found in his underwear drawer. Of course, that wasn't the only thing she found in there.

"Don't even think about trying to switch us back." Cassie said as Max fought down the fluffy petticoats of his tenth or twelfth dress. "Cuz if you do, I show Mom and Dad" she leaned down and whispered into his ear. "And I moved it so you can't find it." She smiled. "But they'll never know as long as you're a good girl." How could this get any worse, he thought as Mom dressed him in a nightgown before tucking him in at Cassie's bedtime.

Tuesday began with Max and Cassie once again dressing Max in dress after dress, with him playing princess and tea party and any other game Cassie could think of. It was strange how Cassie looked like him, but acted like her, but it was far weirder – and deeply concerning – how often she sounded and acted just like him. Max had hoped that it would be obvious to Mom and Dad that something had happened, but so far, they remained oblivious. Mom gave him a bath last night and had not said a word. Even when he told Mom he hated peanut butter and jelly – Cassie's absolute favorite – at

lunch, she had just smiled and told him to stop being a fussy little fuss. How could this get any worse?

"What are you so excited about?" Max asked as she watched him twirl in his latest dress after lunch. Mom had threatened him with a nap if he did not eat and he could still taste the cloyingly sweet grape jelly.

"Didya forget?" Cassie asked, clearing her throat as she realized that sounded more like a Cassie question than a Max question. "At three o'clock, you have your first ballet class!" She filled his head with talk of prancing around in a frilly pink tutu and he wondered if even a shred of his teenage male mind would survive unscathed.

"Are you two playing nicely?" Mom asked, looking from her son to her daughter.

"Sure are!" Cassie said. Mom looked her children over again. She seemed like she was about to say something, but thought better of it.

"Well, I'm pleased you've taken such an interest in your sister, but you, little lady, need to get ready for ballet. Out you go, Mister Man." She kissed the top of Max's head. "It's gonna be just us girls."

The ballet outfit was less pink than Max had feared, but white tights, a baby blue leotard with a flimsy little skirt, and his hair snug in a bun was the last thing he wanted to wear on a Tuesday afternoon. How did neither Mom nor Dad notice the teasing edge in the new Max's voice as he told his 'baby

sister' what a pretty little ballerina she – he – was? How can this get any worse? Max wondered yet again as Mom buckled him into Cassie's booster seat in the car, his white tights almost glowing in the afternoon sunlight that spilled into the back seat.

Ballet turned out to be more about playing games than actually doing the sort of sissy dance Cassie had convinced him he was in for. He remembered Cassie as being so gullible, it unnerved him to realize how quickly he had believed every word. Despite having more fun than he had expected, he tried his best to hide it at the dinner table, but Mom had not gotten the memo. As he stared down at his green beans, he could almost feel Cassie in his body staring at him in utter delight. Screw the consequences, he thought, I have to figure out a way to switch back!

The rest of the evening brought a bath, despite his protests he had had one yesterday. Mom told him she showered every day, so little girls like him needed to bathe daily. He fumed and shivered in the tub, Mom only getting concerned when he continued to shiver after he was dressed. She piled extra blankets on him and Max fell asleep before he could even really think of trying to astral project.

Wednesday morning, Max made it to the breakfast table, blanket wrapped around him. He was barely even aware of the smiling unicorn on the blanket. Mom took one look at him and sent him back to bed.

"There's a bug going around." He heard her tell Dad. Or was

it Max? No, he was Max. Cassie! In his body. He blinked, trying to get his eyes to focus. "So she'll be getting lots of bedrest. Can you bring the TV in here?" Max remembered being sick and getting to sit in bed playing his video games all day long. That did not sound so bad.

"Here we go, doodlebug." Dad said. "Mommy said you'd want to watch Princess Parade, right?" Max tried to speak, to tell Dad that he was Max, not Cassie, but Dad just chuckled. "I'll take that as a yes, angel. You enjoy your quarantine and you'll be feeling better in no time."

"Quaran- no, dad. I'm Max." His head fell back down onto the pillow. That took so much energy, there was no longer any doubt in his mind. He was sick!

"Sorry." Dad said gently. "You're too sick to play with Max, but we'll see if he can come read you a story later on. Enjoy your movie for now."

The next few days, Max spent fading in and out of sleep. He could hardly move and more than once, he swore the dolls on Cassie's bedroom wall were dancing along to the music of the constant stream of princess movies. The only real measure of the passage of time was that the TV would have a slightly different princess on it singing a slightly different song. Every now and again, he would be in a different nightgown than the one he remembered wearing last time he had been awake. He knew he needed to get out of Cassie's body, but all he could do was lie there. With the way he was feeling, it felt almost cruel to make her swap back. Not that I even can, he

thought.

Max was pretty sure it was Saturday or Sunday when he felt healthy. He got out of bed and was halfway through putting on a dress before he realized what he was doing. He shook his head as if clearing cobwebs from it. The house seemed quiet, almost entirely so except he could hear someone singing softly. He started as he realized it was him, singing one of the princess songs he had heard during the flu or whatever it had been.

Princess spin, princess twirl, I'm a pretty princess girl. He made a face, hating how stuck in his head it was. Whatever. He had had enough of living Cassie's life. It was time to switch back. But how? No one was home, it sounded like, but that did not add up. They would never leave him home alone and bedridden. He wanted to investigate, but Max held firm.

How did I do it before? He thought as he got back into Cassie's bed, adjusting his skirt without even realizing he was doing it. Now I look like Sleeping Beauty. He thought before dismissing the thought. Princess spin, princess twirl. He growled and tried to push that song away, but it kept playing in his head.* I'm a pretty princess girl!* How was he supposed to focus with that in his head? He tried to clear his mind and it nearly worked, except for that horrible song.

The door opened and Max sat up with a start.

"Well!" Mom said. "I see someone's feeling like herself again." You have no idea how wrong you are, Max thought. "Feeling good enough for some lunch?"

"No, I... want to stay in bed." Mom came over and lifted him out of the bed. Her nose wrinkled.

"You've spent enough time in bed, missy. I see you got yourself dressed and everything, so let's go get some food in you and then I'll give you a bath before ballet."

"What? Mom, no, listen. I... I... I need to focus so I can switch back with Cassie, the real Cassie! She's in my body and I'm in hers! I'm Max!"

"That sounds like a lovely dream."

"What? You're not even-" he frowned. "Where's Max? He'll, well, she'll, cuz she's actually Cassie, will help me explain."

"Clearly you're feeling better." Mom said wryly. "Listen to you! A mile a minute. It's like you're making up for lost time." She smiled. "Well, you missed quite a bit while you were sick, sweetheart. Max left for camp yesterday."

"What?"

"He was going to say goodbye, but I didn't want him taking whatever bug you had to camp. You two can play when he gets back."

"No! Mom, we need to get her, him, back!"

"Shh, inside voice." She smiled and set a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in front of him. "This will get you the last little bit back to your old self." I wish, Max thought. "I know you miss your big brother, but you'll see. Between ballet and playdates with your friends, a month will fly by!" Mom kept

going on, talking about someone named Annabeth who had a princess birthday party coming and how they would need to get him a new dress, but all Max could think was that he had another month as a little girl. Princess spin, princess twirl. How could this get any worse?