Christmas Card

by andlat

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The Costume Box
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Chapter 1

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It was time for the family's annual Christmas card photo and David was in a sour mood. Every year, he and his sisters were forced to dress up in pajamas bought especially for the occasion and take what their parents called "a nice photo". As David grew older, he thought of the photoshoot as more and more of an imposition. He did not even wear pajamas to bed anymore. Try as he might though, he could not dissuade his parents.

"It's tradition, Davey." His dad said. "Sorry, David."

"Or is it Dave this week?" His mom asked, smiling.

"It's still not fair. How come they get to pick?" The 'they' in question were his sisters.

"Oh, I dunno." Daisy said. "You picked last year?"

"Daisy, be nice to your brother. His idea was cute." Last year's card had seen the three of them barefoot in red union suits with Davey turning his back to the camera so everyone could see the Danger: Blasting Zone sign on his buttflap.

"It was a fart joke!" Daisy said in disgust. "Only little kids find those funny."

"It was cute." Their mom repeated. "Besides, you're barely a year older than Davey. Dave. David. Shoot!"

"Well, I'm not coming with to shop."

"That's for the best." Mom said, surprising him. "It'll be hard enough keeping an eye on Daisy"

"Mom!" She gave Daisy a look and continued.

"And Delilah. You can stay here and help dad salt the walk."

"Ugh." David had just assumed he could play video games while his mom and sisters fought the holiday rush.

"Mind's made up." Mom said.

David felt frozen solid by the time he was allowed to go inside, the walkway cleared of snow and suitably salted. He took a quick shower to warm up and got dressed again by the time he heard mom's car in the drive.

"God, what did they get me?" He muttered. Still, whatever they got him, they would have to wear themselves, so it couldn't be so bad. Daisy was so obsessed with fashion, after all. The only reason they had left for the mall so late was because she had to do her hair like a bajillion times and change her outfit three times. Girls were weird.

David shuffled out to the living room. Let’s get this over with, he thought glumly. How bad could it be?

"Finally! Daisy and Delilah are already getting dressed. This bag is yours." He took it and tried to look inside.

"No, scoot!" Dad said. "I want some photos with natural light. Go, go, go." He practically pushed David all the way to his bedroom.

David looked into the bag. There had to be some kind of mistake. It looked like there was a giant stuffed animal in the bag. He pulled it out, making a face at how glaringly pink it was. This was what they had picked? Was it even pajamas? It looked more like a bright pink teddy bear costume. If he wore this, the only thing that would be visible would be his face! He checked the tag. It said girl's pajamas. There had to be some mix-up. These had to be Delilah's or something.

Leaving it on the floor by his bed, right on top of a half inflated ball he kept meaning to move to the garage, he walked to his door, yelping in surprise to find someone waiting for him there.

"Hurry up." Daisy said, though she was also not in her pajamas yet. "Dad wants to get started and he told me you're probably dragging your feet."

"I got Delilah's by accident." He said, hoping against hope that that was true.

"Nope. We bagged yours separately." Daisy shoved David into his room, kicking the door closed behind her. "Here, let me help you."

“Daisy! No”

"Come on, dude." Daisy said. "I'm not thrilled about it either, but Delilah has her heart set on us wearing this stuff." David searched his sister's face, but it seemed like she was being sincere. Having grown up together, he could always tell when she was lying, just like she could with him. It was that

moment of hesitation that spelled his downfall.

Before David could fight her off, her fingers had found his sides and she had begun to mercilessly tickle him. He had not been tickled like this since he had nearly wet his pants last summer, but he remained just as ticklish, squealing and squirming as he tried to escape. He fell onto his bed and Daisy pounced, holding him down as she quite literally tickled him into submission.

David tried to get control or to even catch his breath as Daisy systematically tickled him while also undressing him, a trick she had learned from babysitting. Thanks to his habit of wearing loose-fitting shorts around the house, in no time, she had David down to his underwear.

"Now we just need your lovely new jammies." She picked them up off of the floor.

"No! Those can't be mine!"

"They're just for the photo." She said dismissively. "All three of us will be in pajamas." She snapped her fingers in inspiration. "Here's an idea! You can go down in just your undies!"

"What? No!"

"Hear me out!" She teased. "You'll go over the back of the couch so your white cotton butt is front and center."

"No way."

"C'mon, you had your butt to the camera last year."

"Daisy, no."

"Alright then, Davey. Let's get your jammies on. Leg through here."

Through a system of tickling and pure coercion, she wrapped her brother in pink plush fabric. As she zipped it up, she wondered if he realized the mittens that now covered his hands left him with too little dexterity to handle the zipper. In short, he would need help to get out of it.

"Oh, you look adorable." She gushed as David glared at her. "This is worth it."

"Worth what?"

"Wearing the same outfit, duh." She laughed before taking his hands and tugging him all the way to their waiting parents.

"Oh. Oh, wow." Dad said in disbelief.

"Hush, Charlie. He looks great." Mom said, trying and failing to hide her own amused bewilderment. "Daisy, go get dressed. Help Delilah!" The deviousness of their plan sunk in as David realized that there was very little chance his sisters would be emerging in pajamas that matched his. That was why Daisy had tugged him all the way out here to their parents, where he had zero chance of escape.

His suspicions were confirmed as the girls emerged in matching plain blue footies. Delilah squealed with delight as she saw David sitting there like an enormous plush toy.

"Davey? Is that you?" David nodded bashfully.

"You look so cozy!" He glared at Delilah. She was all too capable of putting on the air of an innocent little girl, but he knew she was just as active a conspirator as Daisy.

"So the theme is Christmas morning and the girls have a new toy, which is you, Davey." Mom said. "Daisy, you go on that side. Delilah over on the other. Perfect." The camera started going off again and again. David felt numb, only coming back to his body for new poses. He forced a smile, wishing more than anything that the earth would swallow him up.

"Oh, that one's great." Dad said.

"Might just be the one to replace that old photo over the mantle." Mom said. David felt his face pale. The photo over the mantle was huge! This was just for a Christmas card, right?

Finally, the camera stopped flashing. The photoshoot was over. Daisy and Delilah unzipped their footies enough to expose the tank tops they wore underneath. It was warm in footies, after all!

"Aren't you going to unzip, Davey?" Dad asked. David pawed at the zipper, but he could not get a grip. Daisy grinned, watching him, the only one really aware of his struggle as their parents looked through the photos they had taken.

"Oh, that's a great idea, Davey!" Delilah exclaimed all of a sudden.

"What's that?" Mom asked, looking up.

"Davey just suggested that the three of us stay in our pajamas for the rest of the night so we can play games and watch movies and stuff."

"No, I did"

"I heard him too!" Daisy interjected. "Isn't Davey's idea great, mom and dad?"

"Well, if you three are unanimous, I guess we can't really see the problem." Dad said with a laugh. "Way to be a good sport, Davey!"

"I can't do anything in these mittens." He muttered to Daisy, all but snarling.

"Oh?" She reached over and unbuttoned them from the cuffs so that the mittens could slide off his hands, though they still dangled from his sleeves. "Didn't I show you that before? Well, no matter. We're staying in them all night long." The girls looked almost like twins as they grinned their identical grins at David, eager for hours upon hours of their surly brother as a pink teddy bear.