

# Playing Princess

*by andlat*

Jonah will do anything to get away from grandma's photo albums and at least his cousins have imagination.

The Costume Box

2024

*Chapter 1*

## Playing Princess

"No way!" Jonah said, backing away slightly. He should have known it was a mistake to see what the girls were up to. Sure enough, Beth and Anna were wearing princess dresses and wanted him to wear one too.

"You want to play, this is what we're playing." Beth replied.

"But"

"But nothing. Princesses or you go back to whatever grandma's doing." Anna said.

"Only princesses allowed in this room." Beth held out her skirt as if Jonah could not see that she and her sister were each wearing princess dresses and tiaras.

"But" Jonah began, but Anna gave him a look. "Grandma's got out those photo albums." He sighed. "Fine."

"Fine what?" Beth asked.

"I'll play princess with you."

"Great! We're hunting a dragon and three-"

"Beth! He's gotta get dressed before we can tell him our mission. Geez!" Anna grabbed a dress. It was too small for them, but for the younger boy, it would probably fit okay, if a little short. "Here." Jonah sighed again as he took the sparkly blue dress. At least it's blue, he thought as he eyed the puffy

sleeves and the delicate lace details.

"What if I'm a knight?"

"Princesses. Only." Beth repeated.

"What's the big deal?" Anna asked.

"I'm... a boy."

"So?"

"So, boys don't wear dresses."

"It's not really a dress, it's like a costume." Beth replied.

"When you dress up for Halloween, no one thinks you're a monster, right? A dress costume won't make you a girl."

"And" Beth said. "There is a dragon we're gonna slay."

"I want to fight a dragon!"

"But only princesses can fight the dragon." Anna said, knowing they had him now.

"So..."

"Oh, and" Beth dug in the dress-up chest before pulling out a pair of floral panties. Jonah's eyes widened. "You gotta wear them." Beth said at once.

"Why?"

"Cuz it's what princesses wear. You wouldn't wear, I dunno, a pirate hat and a ninja outfit, would you?"

"Fine. I'll" he blushed as he looked at the panties in his

cousin's hand. "Do they have to be pink?" Pink felt like an understatement, given the white and yellow daisies that dotted them.

"I don't think we have any panties that match your dress, Princess Jonah." She giggled. "But I'm glad you're already getting into the princess way of thinking." She pointed to a white tent in the corner. "Go change so we can play! There's a dragon in need of slaying."

"Really sounds like a knight would be better..."

"I see the dragon!" Anna said, looking to the window. "We must hurry."

"Go." Beth ordered.

The girls all but shoved Jonah into the tent, closing the flaps behind him. He listened, but they were not really giggling or whispering like his cousins usually did when they were plotting something. It sounded like they were just waiting for him to get dressed. He sighed again and got started.

"Are you almost done?" Anna called after a couple minutes.

"Almost." Jonah replied. "It's kinda hard to..." he grunted.

"Why do they put the zipper on the back?"

"Cuz that's how they make dresses!" Beth replied as if it was obvious. "Come out and we'll help you with that." They tried their best not to burst into laughter as a red-faced Jonah emerged in the blue dress.

"You look lovely." Anna said, regaining her composure and

zipping him up.

"So, how do we fight-

"Uh-uh-uh. You need a crown first."

"I do?"

"Of course." Beth pointed to her own crown and then Anna's. "We've got a third one, up there. Can you reach it?" Jonah was a few inches taller than her, being a little bit older. Jonah thought nothing of it, walking over to the bookshelf and standing on his toes to grab it, inadvertently treating the girls to a glimpse of his new underwear. So he did put them on!

"What's so funny?" Jonah asked, hearing Beth's barely restrained snicker.

"I think I heard the dragon! We gotta hurry!" Anna took the tiara from Jonah, setting it just so on his head. The combs clung well enough to his short hair. If it fell off, it would be such fun teaching him how to squat daintily and pick it up. It mystified her how much common sense stuff boys did not know when it came to dresses. "Now we have to meet at the magical council table."

Jonah followed Beth and Anna over to a small white table with a plastic tea set in the middle. Was this all a ploy to make him play tea party?

"The dragon-" he began, intending to keep things on topic.

"Sit down and let's join hands." Beth said. "Princess Anna is going to cast a magic shield on us."

"It might not hold if the dragon breathes fire." Anna said. "But if we're fast, it should be okay." Jonah nodded. That made sense to him. He joined them at the table and took the magic wand Beth passed him. The ribbons cascading down from the plastic gem at the top were pink like his panties. Whenever he played pretend with his friends, they just imagined things. They never had to dress up like this. He decided it was okay since both Anna and Beth were dressed up too.

Once Anna declared the shield prepared, Beth looked Jonah over. She almost wished they had a wig for him, but with the addition of the magic wand, the tiara and especially the dress made him look enough like a princess that she felt like he could keep playing with them. She gasped and put a hand to her forehead.

"What is it?" Anna asked. Jonah could not deny that he was curious too.

"I just had a vision." Beth said. "I know where the dragon's lair is, but we'll have to be very quiet." She looked at her sister and cousin. "We can end this scourge. The might of three princesses will be too much for any old dragon to handle."

"Sounds good." Jonah said, getting into the spirit a little more.

"Follow me, princesses." Beth said, standing up, but keeping hold of Jonah's hand so that he was in the middle of a chain of princesses.

"Where are we going?" Anna asked.

"I can't say." Beth whispered. "If the dragon knows we're coming, it might flee. Or lay a trap for us. Let's go, princesses." She began to lead them out of the girls' playroom. Jonah was so focused on being quiet, he held his breath so that the only sounds were their feet on the floor and the rustle of their dresses as Beth took the group downstairs and out to the backyard.

"Oh, no!" Anna yelled, suddenly pointing up to the sky at the exact moment that Jonah realized they had got him out into the sunlight in a princess dress. "He's coming!"

"Quick!" Beth yelled just as urgently. "If we make it to the slide, there's a force field that protects us from the dragon's fire!" The three of them ran, dresses flapping around their legs. Jonah tugged down on his, wand tumbling from his hand.

"You need your wand, princess!" Anna called. Jonah quickly grabbed it, barely even breaking stride. He could almost hear the dragon overhead!

The trio panted as they reached the sun-bleached plastic slide, scanning the blue sky for anything more threatening than the clouds and birds.

"Did we make it?" Jonah asked.

"Yeah, but the dragon for sure totally knows we're here." Beth said.

"Do your visions tell you what we need to do next?" Anna asked.

"Hmm, it's cloudy. There's something missing."

"What?" Jonah asked. Beth smiled at him.

"Give me a second, Princess Jonah."

"Oh." He fell silent, but then Anna gasped and fell to the ground, clutching at her chest.

"What's going on?"

"The dragon's trying to stop her heart!" Beth said. "We have to break the spell!"

"How?"

"Skip around the slide and Anna three times."

"Me?"

"And me. We'll both do it. And shoot spells at the dragon. He's hovering overhead because you have to be close to stop someone's heart." Beth began to skip. "Come on!" Jonah joined in, figuring it wasn't that embarrassing if he wasn't the only one skipping in a princess dress. He just hoped Mom, Dad, and Aunt Becca weren't back from errands yet. Besides, this was the most fun he had had with his cousins in forever!

"Twice more!" Beth said, skipping along and waving her wand overhead. Jonah followed suit. Finally, Anna got back to her feet, a confident smirk on her face.

"Thank you, princesses." She said. She curtsied. Beth curtsied back and they both shared a smile as Jonah awkwardly did the same without even being told to. "The dragon's not beaten yet, but when he was hexing me, I was able to see his plan."

"What is it?"

"He's gone to the" Anna glanced up at the sun before pointing toward the house. "Western Temple to try and get the ancient scroll. We'll need to go there and stop him."

"Inside?"

"No, Princess Jonah, the front yard." Beth said. "It could be a trick, Princess Anna."

"You're right." Anna said. "How about two of us go there and one stays here in case he circles back?"

"Princess Jonah, you keep watch at the top of this tower." She leaned in and whispered. "I mean the slide."

"I know!" Jonah said.

"Keep your wand prepared and watch for the dragon." Jonah climbed the short ladder to the top of the slide, pushing down on his dress as he realized the girls could see his panties. "We will go to the Western Temple and try to drive him back here." They raised their wands up to touch his and then ran off, leaving Jonah to wonder if this was some trick. Now, if Mom or Dad looked out back, they would see him standing on top of the slide in a princess outfit, all alone.

"I'll give them five minutes." He said, not quite sure how he would be able to tell when-

"Hi." Jonah froze as he heard an unfamiliar voice. The dragon? No, that did not sound like a dragon. He turned and saw a boy standing by a gate in the fence that separated Anna and Beth's house from the neighbors'.

"Uh"

"I heard Anna and Beth's voices. Are they your friends?"

"Cousins." The boy nodded. Just my luck, Jonah thought. He looks cool and I'm dressed like a princess. This had to have been the girls' plan. He froze as the boy stepped into the backyard, closing the gate behind him. His shorts and Mario t-shirt could not have been more of a contrast to Jonah's blue princess dress and tiara.

"I'm Tommy, by the way."

"Oh, I'm uh..." Tommy came closer and Jonah realized that it was one thing for his cousins to see his panties. If this boy saw them and realized Jonah wasn't just wearing a dress and princess crown... he didn't even want to think about it. He quickly slid down before realizing what a mistake that was. The boy did not seem like he had seen anything, but how could he have missed Jonah flashing him?

"Sorry, what's your name?" Tommy asked. Did he seem suspicious? He had to be wondering why Jonah was all alone out here in a full-blown princess outfit. He had to think of something and fast!

"My name's Jo-" Joanie? Josie? Come clean and admit he was a boy? "Josie." He winced inwardly, but it was better than the alternative.

"Nice to meet you, Josie. Do you think I can play with you guys?"

"Uh" He heard Beth and Anna coming back and felt relieved. Surely they would send this boy away.

"The dragon's flying toward you, Princess mmph!" Anna's hand covered Beth's mouth as they saw Tommy standing there.

"Oh, Sir Tommy." Anna said. "How good of you to come." She and Beth both curtsied and Tommy bowed, clearly no stranger to this game. "And I see you've met our new princess?" She looked curiously at Jonah.

"Yep, she was just saying I could play. I can, right?"

"Of course you can." Anna came over and elbowed Jonah, giving him a look. "Princess, meet Sir Tommy, the bravest knight in all the kingdom."

"This must be what my vision meant when I felt like something was missing!" Beth exclaimed. "Three princesses and a knight? That dragon doesn't stand a chance!"

"Let me go get my sword." Tommy was about to run off when he remembered his manners. "Princess Anna." He bowed. "Princess Beth." He bowed again. "Princess Josie." He dashed off right from the third bow, so he missed the girls'

surprised faces.

"How come he gets to be a knight?" Jonah muttered, the embarrassment and unease of the last few minutes turning into a strong sense of betrayal. It was a fight to even keep his voice down so Tommy could not overhear.

"Cuz he's a boy, duh." Beth said.

"Unlike you, Princess Josie." Anna said knowingly.

"Well, I didn't know what else to do. I'm all-"

"It's okay." Anna rubbed his arm. "It's all pretend. A princess name makes sense for playing princess."

"We really should've thought of it for you."

"And known Tommy would probably poke his head in." The boy came running back with a foam sword that looked so impressive, Jonah hid his sissy wand behind his back.

"Cool sword!" Jonah said as Tommy swung it back and forth.

"Thanks! It's magic like your fairy wand since the dragon's scales are too thick to stab."

"Well, maybe we can find a weak spot or something." Anna said.

"Where did we see it last?"

"Well, we thought it was coming back to this watchtower." Beth scanned the yard. "Maybe it's in that cave?" She pointed to the garden shed.

"It can change size?" Tommy asked.

"It's very magical." Beth replied. "Come on!" She took Anna's hand and they began to run toward the shed. Jonah wondered if he and Tommy were going to stay at the watchtower/slide, but Tommy grabbed his hand without hesitation and began to run after them. Jonah thought he saw one of the kitchen curtains move, but Beth and Anna cried out about the dragon flying back toward them. Tommy and Jonah quickly turned around, Tommy still holding onto Jonah's hand as they ran back toward the slide.

"Oh no!" Anna exclaimed. "Your wand, Princess Josie!" Jonah realized he had dropped it as they spun around.

"I'll protect you, uh, fair maiden!" Tommy said, raising his sword up above them.

"No!" Anna and Beth yelled in unison, stretching their wands out toward the pair.

"It's too late." Beth said. "The dragon's turned Princess Josie to stone!"

"To stone?" Jonah asked in disbelief, but he froze in place all the same.

"What do we do?" Tommy asked. "Can we carry her back to base?"

"It's called the watchtower, Sir Tommy." Anna corrected. "And yeah, let's carry her."

Jonah tried to move as little as possible as they put him on his

back and then carried him, barely juggling their wands and sword, back over to the slide, where he was propped into a seated position against all logic.

"What do we do now?" Tommy asked, still looking for the dragon up above.

"Stone spells are tricky to undo." Anna said. "It's a shame the dragon took Princess Josie's wand, but maybe two princesses are strong enough." She and Beth crossed their wands.

"Magic spin and magic whirl." Beth said.

"Turn Princess Josie back into a girl!" Anna said. They giggled as Jonah rolled his eyes.

"Did it work?" The oblivious Sir Tommy asked.

"No." Anna said as Jonah sighed. "Keep holding still, Princess Josie." She turned to her sister. "Princess Beth, any visions?"

"Not a vision, but remember the Western Temple? Maybe there's an answer there."

"But the dragon might be there again."

"Sir Tommy, will you come with us?"

"What about Princess Josie?"

"We'll make haste. Besides, she's stone. She can't go anywhere. Right, Josie?" Jonah nodded, rolling his eyes again. His nose was itchy!

To his surprise, Tommy knelt down in front of him, holding his sword between his hands. He stared seriously into Jonah's eyes before finally speaking.

"I swear to you, Princess Josie, I will do everything in my power to see your radiant smile again. This is my duty as a knight and my solemn oath."

"You watch too much TV." Beth muttered.

"It was nice!" Anna said. "Let's go. We wouldn't want Sir Tommy to break his oath!" They ran off, Beth still teasing Tommy about how cheesy that oath was.

Just when Jonah was about to get bored enough to go find his cousins, curse or no curse, they came running back around the house. Tommy held his foam sword before him as they stopped in front of Jonah.

"We have the solution!" Beth announced.

"We'll cross our wands."

"You tried that already."

"With the brave Sir Tommy's sword!" Anna added, smirking. They did so, thankfully without a rhyme this time, and Jonah got to his feet, a bit embarrassed by the way the dress almost flashed them.

"It worked!" He said, but Beth shook her head.

"Not quite, it's just weakened enough for our final strategy."

"What's that?"

"Sir Tommy?" Beth looked at the boy, who seemed suddenly nervous.

"It's the only way." Anna said, suddenly morose.

"Yep. Hold still, uh, Josie." Beth and Anna exchanged a look full of anticipation as Tommy walked over to Jonah, getting far too close for his comfort. He took a step back.

"You gotta hold still!" Beth chided, causing Jonah to jump, inadvertently getting closer to Tommy. When did she get behind him?

"For what?" Jonah asked a split second before Tommy showed him, planting a kiss right on his lips.

"The spell's broken!" Anna and Beth exclaimed as Tommy and Jonah both pulled away. It was hard to say whose face was redder. Jonah stammered and ran to the house. This game was over! He had no doubts that the girls had put Tommy up to it. He had been kissed! By a boy!

"Sorry, Tommy. We'll play again soon." Beth said, the girls running after their cousin. Tommy, confused and a little worried, headed back home, unaware that the trio had run right into their parents and a new challenge: explaining exactly why Jonah was dressed like a princess and on the verge of tears.