Sugar Plum Fairy

by andlat

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The Costume Box
2023

Chapter 1

Sugar Plum Fairy - Chapter 1

Jason lounged on his bed, groaning as he heard his sister moving around. Charlotte was so excited for this stupid ballet! It wasn't even going to be fun. Dad had tried to convince him it was like going to the movies, but Jason was too shrewd for that. Movies had superheroes in them, not fairies and ballerinas and whatever else this dumb Nutcracker had. He lifted his legs into the air and brought them down onto his mattress. It made him feel a little better. Could he fake being sick? No, Mom had told him she would check his temperature rectally if he tried that. He shuddered at the thought.

"Get out!" He yelled the second the doorknob turned. Charlotte never listened. She stood there in her red dress, a hair bow atop her head.

"Ew! You're not wearing pants!"

"Yeah, that's why I had the door closed."

"But we need to go. Now."

"We do not." He looked at the clock by his bed. Sure, it was later than he thought, but he still had time.

"Dad! Jason's naked!" She yelled, smirking as he scrambled off the bed and pulled on pants. Even though he even had his shirt tucked in by the time Dad came up, he still had to endure a lecture about procrastination as Dad helped him

with his bow tie.

"Why's it gotta match her?"

"Because you're brother and sister and we like fooling the world into thinking we're a happy, loving family."

"You could wear a dress like me." Charlotte said teasingly. Jason stuck his tongue out at her.

"Tongues in mouth, kids out to the car." Mom said.

Jason sighed and groaned the whole way to the theater about how his bow tie was too tight, his shirt itched, his feet hurt in his shoes. Charlotte was getting fed up. The Nutcracker had been her idea, she had a great new dress, and her lousy brother seemed determined to ruin it!

"Jason, sweetie, that's enough." Mom said as Charlotte smirked. Thank goodness for mom ESP. Jason resumed muttering under his breath as they made their way to their seats.

"These are great!" Dad said.

"We'll see everything!" Charlotte exclaimed excitedly.

"Great." Jason muttered beside her. She spun around. Enough was enough!

"Can't you just try to have fun? You know there's fighting in this!"

"It's a ballet. I want to be at home-"

"It’s like a Christmas tradition!"

"But-"

"But nothing." She cut him off again. "Look. Do you really, truly not want to watch the Nutcracker?"

"Yes!" She could not understand how someone would want to miss something as magical as this, but she knew just the way to get her brother to have a new appreciation for it.

"Maybe you'll enjoy being in it more." She wiggled her nose, crossed her eyes, and Jason was gone. She knew exactly where he had gone, though.

Backstage, Jason stared at himself. More specifically, he stared as his foot. How was it at eye level? And why was it in a pink shoe? And was he wearing... tights? He gave his foot a yank, but rather than falling down to the floor like he had expected, it descended smoothly down. He watched his leg until it vanished out of sight behind…

Oh, my god! I'm wearing a tutu, he said, or tried to say. He could not seem to get his mouth to move. He looked all over himself, growing more horrified as he realized he had a leotard, a tutu, tights, ballet shoes, he was dressed like a ballerina! He jumped as a few people ran past, paying him no mind. He was clearly backstage, he realized, his heart racing in his chest. Is this a dream? He stared at his reflection.

He brought a trembling hand, grimacing at its shiny pink nails, to his face as if to confirm it was him. With the horror of the tutu, he had not even noticed his face until just now.

Even through all the eyeshadow, lipstick, and whatever else was all over his face, he could tell it was still his. Great, he thought sarcastically. I've got to get out of here!

Jason could still not speak, but he found he was able to move. He'd never moved like this though, fluttering and floating along like a fairy, his manicured hands out to each side, hovering just above his tutu. He spied a glowing red exit sign and made the fastest beeline he could in his horrifying outfit, dodging around myriad ballerinas. God, how can they stand to wear these things? Jason thought. He felt himself blush as he spied a guy standing a short distance away. His bulge was just out in the open! The guys don't have it much better. All the more reason to get out – and fast!

"Where are you going?" A ballerina said. She was looking right at him, but Jason pretended he did not hear her. She strode confidently in front of him. "You're looking green."

"Are you feeling ok?"

"Oh, I bet you have first night jitters." The first ballerina touched his arm. "Don't worry! You'll do great!"

"We could never do the Nutcracker without you, Jason!" Jason felt like a deer in headlights as he looked at the ballerinas. How did they know his name? He pushed against his ever-present smile, but only managed to part his lips enough to force out a few words.

"Can't do this."

"Sure you can! You've got your tutu, your tiara, you look

majestic!"

"Ravishing, even!"

"Beautiful." They kept heaping praise on him as they gently pushed him away from the exit door and escape.

"Jason's just got a case of the nerves." They explained as cast members turned to watch them float by, a flock of ballerinas with a desperately worried Jason at the center.

"Wow," one ballerina said, her voice pretty even with it dripping with sarcasm. "Perfect, prissy Jason's nervous like the rest of us."

"Shut up, Summer. Come on, Jason. She's just bitter you're the Sugar Plum Fairy." As she led him away by the arm, Jason heard Summer scoff and he could not help but feel it was due to the way he perfectly matched the other ballerinas' feminine strut along the floor. He didn't even know he could move like this!

As the music swelled, Jason found himself standing on stage left, watching the ballet unfold. Thought Charlotte said I didn't have to watch this, he thought acerbically, but he was more concerned about when it would be his turn to be out there, making a fool of himself. They'll know I'm not a- not supposed to be here! Even as he thought it, his posture shifted slightly and he realized how he had had his hands placed just so on the tutu. He managed to jerk them away only for them to return to resting on it. He recoiled in disgust and looked back out at the dancers on stage. A bunch of them were

wearing normal clothes or at least more normal than the ginormous stiff tutu he had on. He shuddered inwardly as a group of girls ran past him, smiling appreciatively at his outfit. *They know my name, *he thought, but do they think I'm a girl or some kind of sissy? Maybe it's better I don't know.

The ballet made no sense to Jason as he stood there. It could be because his heart and mind were still racing, but he refused to believe that it was his fault. All this show was was people bouncing around. He liked when the girl's brother broke the Nutcracker, but then was disappointed to discover the battle he had been promised was just people jumping around like idiots. He did like when the Rat King came out and he heard some kids scream, but that only made him wish Charlotte had made him the Rat King rather than whatever he was supposed to be. The longer it went, the more worried he became for when it was his turn. He had thought ballet was just a bunch of jumping and spinning, but there was no way he could do some of the things the dancers were doing.

He heard a gasp of anticipation from the audience and he suddenly realized he could see the audience as he tiptoed out onto the stage. This was it! He looked down at the front rows and saw Charlotte grinning at him. She even waved, though low enough to avoid their parents, who seemed entirely unaware, noticing. He was about to glare at her when the music began. Jason danced.

It made perfect sense to him that the twinkly music was for him. Given his tutu, he had to be the girliest character in all

of ballet! His tutu bounced slightly as he held his arms out and felt his feet moving with the music. He rose up onto his toes and back down, fully aware of every eye on him as he danced and pirouetted all over the stage. Why was he all alone for this? How long was it going to last? Finally, the crowd erupted into applause.

Jason thought he could dash offstage, but instead, he stood there, curtsying and even raising one slender arm as if to wave to the whole audience, as if they were all there solely to see him. Finally, it was over and he tiptoed backstage to a quiet chorus of congratulations. It's over, he thought even as he returned to watching from backstage. At least, he hoped it was over.

Jason grew more and more frustrated by his inability to sneak away. The few times he was able to even turn away from the dancing on stage, he would nearly run right into a ballerina, who smiled sweetly at him, but would not move. How did I ever complain about my bow tie being too tight? He wondered as he shifted slightly on his toes. His feet hurt, the tights and leotard were constantly squeezing him, and he wished more than anything to rip off his stupid tutu! He had danced! Wasn't he done?

Just when he felt like he might be about to scream, he found himself floating out onto the stage again. This time, he was not alone. The guy with the huge bulge came out too and it was then that Jason noticed that he was wearing the same thing as Jason, but the male version. He better not kiss me! Jason thought as the music began to play. Again, he danced.

This time, however, Jason was definitely not alone. The man stood there as support as Jason took his hand and lifted his leg high before spinning around and around in a circle. Is that all he's gonna do? Jason wondered as the man strode confidently in a circle while Jason did the same thing but daintily tiptoeing. Jason would have frozen if he could as he felt the man's meaty hands on his waist as he spun around in tight circles. Charlotte must be loving this! He thought, unaware of what was to come.

The first time the Chevalier lifted his Sugar Plum Fairy, Jason was caught by surprise. His body still moved as if this was all second nature, but inside, he felt like a panic attack was coming on. The second lift came, then the third, with Jason getting higher and higher each time. He felt like he was being shown off as each lift not only took him higher, but lasted longer. As the song finally began to wind down, Jason still found himself being twirled and posed by this stranger. Granted, he knew his body was moving of its own accord, but each time he held a pose with this man holding him, he felt like a doll being played with. It all culminated in him using the man's arm as support to raise his leg up straight up into the air as he balanced on the very tip of his toes, causing the audience to erupt in applause and praise.* I am going to **murder *Charlotte, he thought acerbically as the dance finally ended and he was escorted off stage by the hand. That was exactly what he had always thought ballet was, but why did it have to happen to him?

Jason found himself once again standing in the wings, ever at

attention on the tips of his toes. He noticed a few other ballerinas doing the same thing, but he felt like a goody two shoes with how diligent he was about always being ready. Bows came and Jason waited his turn before extravagantly prancing out to the middle of the stage to meet his dance partner. He took one of Jason's hands, bowing grandly as Jason curtseyed. The audience went wild as he stepped back and let Jason have the spotlight, growing even louder as he curtseyed and even blew kisses. With all the noise, no one could hear Charlotte laughing her head off, but Jason could see her. It's finally done. He thought, trying to walk right to his family, even though he was not sure just how he would explain this. Instead, he tiptoed backstage once again. This isn't over yet!? he thought as he floated as if by autopilot out into the lobby of the theater, where he was immediately swamped by adoring fans. No one seemed to notice or mind that he remained silent, smiling and twirling slowly for everyone to admire his full costume. His face ached from all the smiling, his muscles ached, and the outfit seemed as snug as ever, but there was no escape from everyone wanting to see the Sugar Plum Fairy.

"You were great!" Charlotte gushed. Where had she come from? She grinned toothily up at her brother. He seemed so tall – and so feminine – on pointe. He felt his face suddenly relax.

"Get me out of here!" He demanded before his face returned to the frozen smile. Charlotte laughed.

"You have so many fans to meet." She said, almost giddy.

"Besides," she had to lean in close to be heard over the din around them. "This was just opening night. You have a whole week of performances still to go!" She vanished into the sea of adoring little girls before Jason had really understood what she had said.

Chapter 2

Swan Lake (Sugar Plum Fairy II) - Chapter 2

“Y'know,” Charlotte said. “Last winter was really nice, getting to watch whatever I wanted while you were across town, twirling and dancing.”

“Very funny.”

“And you were so graceful for like a week after!”

“Charlotte, stop.” Jason muttered.

“You know there's another ballet there right now.” Jason felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up.

“Charlotte…”

“What? I was just gonna suggest we ask Mom and Dad if we can go.” Jason studied her face. Was it some plot of hers? Get them there and then do whatever it was she had done last time? “Eh, but I don't really know anything about this ballet.” Jason allowed himself to relax. “You had fun last time though, right?”

“Sure.” He forced a smile. Charlotte nodded. Was she buying it?

“What role did you play again?”

“I was… the Sugar Plum Fairy.” Charlotte snorted.

“That's right! Good thing you remember.” She softened somewhat. “I know it was a lot, but you did have fun, right?”

“I said yes!” She grinned.

“Oh, good. Cuz I was thinking about how nice and quiet it was around here while you were busy being a prissy ballerina and well, I miss it.”

“Charlotte.”

“And with ballet, you really gotta use it or lose it, right?” Jason turned to leave the room, but it was already too late. “Off you go!”

The next thing Jason knew, he was backstage in a broad, fluffy white tutu. He looked down over his body.

“Not again.” He still had nightmares about being the Sugar Plum Fairy, but he could feel the leotard, the tights, the shoes, everything. This was real. He ran his hands over his head. He was wearing some sort of feathery headband that seemed to refuse to budge even as he pulled at it. Well, he was not going to hang around for this!

Spying the exit sign, he ran for it, pointe shoes thumping, tutu bouncing. He could feel everything shifting with him. This was no dream. He was a ballerina again.

“Whoa!” In his haste, he nearly knocked over another ballerina. Another ballerina? No, he wasn't one, so she was the only ballerina.

“I gotta go.” He stammered. “My sister Charlotte… she…

I…” his heart and mind raced. There was no way he was going to go through this again!

“It's just some Opening NIght nerves.” The ballerina he nearly knocked over said, waving her hand. “Come on. You know the best way to get rid of them is to stretch them out.” She took his arm and led him over to a barre. “Go on.”

“You've got to listen to me! I'm a boy! My name is Jason! I'm in seventh grade, I… I'm not a ballerina!”

“We've all been nervous before, Jason. Even Summer.” She nodded over to a ballerina in black, who smirked at Jason. He remembered her from last winter. “Now, come on. Stretch out all this nervousness. You are too a ballerina! I know it!”

“But”

“Stretch!” Jason sighed and relented, surprised that he seemed to know exactly how a ballerina was supposed to stretch. He felt feminine and ridiculous. He had planned to watch dumb YouTube videos in his underwear and now, thanks to Charlotte, he was about to go on stage as a ballerina again! “Doesn't that feel better?”

“A little.”

“Let's get some energy! Say it! I'm Jason, I'm a ballerina, and I'm gonna rock Swan Lake!”

“I'm Jason, I’m a ballerina, and I'm gonna rock Swan Lake.” He said, not even sounding convincing to himself.

“Stretch out those nerves!” He stretched and repeated the

mantra until the lights flickered, signaling that it was nearly showtime. Try as he might to resist, Jason felt an overwhelmingly urgent something deep inside tell him it was time to dance. I'm not a ballerina though, he reminded it. I'm a seventh grade boy and they're women!

All the same, he felt himself hurry along, hands to either side as he got into position with what felt like an endless number of ballerinas. The overture began, sweet and serene. Soon enough, however, the music turned loud and bombastic. Jason thought he might actually have enjoyed watching this ballet. Dancing in it though? Especially in a girl role and girl's costume. Charlotte would pay.

As the Sugar Plum Fairy, Jason had had one dance. Now, he seemed to be in a variety of scenes. The Sugar Plum dance last December had felt like it lasted forever; now he was doing so much more dancing, completely unable to stop himself from doing everything with a feminine grace and poise as if he had trained for years. With the dazzling stage lights, he could not see the audience. All he could see was ballerinas in white tutus all around him, a constant reminder that he was dressed just like them, smiled just like them, danced just like them. No one pointed and laughed at the boy in the tutu. He was a ballerina the same as any of the others on stage. Even Charlotte watching a livestream at home had difficulty picking him out of the ensemble.

Finally, he got offstage and felt like he could relax, even as his body moved as if on autopilot to make sure he was ready for whatever was coming next. He would get revenge on

Charlotte for this, he thought angrily as a young man, maybe seventeen or eighteen, strode confidently up to him. How did he not notice that Jason was a guy just like him?

“Time for our trio.” The man grinned at him. “Time for me to make you two ballerinas look good.” He looked from Jason to the other ballerina.

“You gotta help me.” Jason whispered desperately. “My name's Jason. I'm in seventh grade, I'm not supposed to be here.”

“Real funny, Jason.” He said with a grin. The music began and the three of them walked out into the stage lights.

Jason stiffened as he felt the man's hands on his waist, helping him pirouette. He had done group dances before, but it was different when everyone was in a tutu. Having a guy here reminded him that boys did not wear tutus. Boys did not focus solely on grace and beautiful fluid movements.

The man grabbed his hand and strode purposefully forward as the ballerina on either side of him minced along on the tips of their toes. How am I even doing this? Jason thought. Dad had just chided him that morning about tripping over his own feet and now, he was dancing ballet! It's not like I'm really doing any of this. He thought. The magic or the music or something was moving him around like a puppet. How could he get free? He could speak backstage, but no one really listened. He was trapped. The song ended with Jason balancing on one slippered foot, his lips puckered against the man's cheek. Charlotte would definitely pay.