The Three Sailors

by andlat

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Chapter 1

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Brian's grandmother was, in a word, eccentric. She always came up with ideas that the family called "out there", but everyone respected her too much to tell her what they really thought. So, when it came to Cassandra's wedding, the family social event of the season, she decided unilaterally that Brian and his cousins Max and Matt should wear sailor suits. It did not matter that Matt, the youngest of them, would be turning eleven in a month. What mattered was she thought they would look adorable, so it was set.

Brian sighed as he was herded into a bedroom to change into his outfit. Max and Matt were already there, stripped to their boxer briefs.

"Wanna see 'em?" Max asked. The three of them looked more like brothers than cousins, which was why grandma had decided the three should match.

"Sure." Brian said. He had seen photos of sailor suits and figured he knew what he was in for. Max led him over to the three sailor suits on the bed. Two white, one navy blue.

"Well, at least mine's navy." Brian said.

"How'd you know it was yours?" Matt asked, the two brothers standing on either side of Brian. He tried not to show how self-conscious he felt with the two of them towering over him. Max was only a grade below him, but he remembered

when Matt wore diapers!

"Cuz it's the smallest." He muttered, his height (or lack thereof) had been a long-standing joke between the three of them. "We'd better hurry."

Brian stripped to his underwear, ignoring the snickers as his cousins saw he still wore Spider-Man briefs instead of the boxer briefs they proudly flaunted. He turned his back to them and gritted his teeth.

"Quit lolly-gagging." He froze as he heard his aunt's voice. In his nervousness, he almost got stuck in his shirt. He felt two hands help him out of it and he looked up at Aunt Mary's smiling face. "Hey there, Brian." She said with a smile. "Where's my hello kiss?" Brian sighed and, rising onto his tiptoes, kissed her cheek. Why did that have to happen while he was in nothing but his Spider-Man undies? "I'm here to help you three with your neckerchiefs. Arms up." Brian blinked, hesitating just long enough that his aunt grabbed his wrist and lifted his arms into the air, pulling the sailor shirt over his head. "Sit down on the bed." She instructed and Brian felt a rock form in his stomach as he realized she had decided, much like her mother did, that she knew best and would dress him to get him ready in time.

"Mom, what is this?" Matt asked, holding it up as if it was a dangerous snake.

"That's your neckerchief." She said as she slipped socks onto Brian's feet. Shirt, then socks? What about his shorts? "Leave the neckerchief for now. Get your shoes on. Both of you."

"Ok." Max and Matt said in unison. Brian gnawed on his lower lip as he realized that giggling at Mary dressing him would have been preferable to how they were acting like this was completely ordinary for him to be dressed by her.

"Stand up." Mary instructed, holding his shorts at his sock-clad feet. Brian complied and up his shorts came. At least his underwear was finally covered. "And down again for your shoes." Brian sat, feeling defeated as she pushed the shiny leather shoes onto his feet.

"Boys, quit horsing around!" Mary said, standing up and leaving Brian for a moment. Seizing the opportunity, he bent over and tied his laces. That was not good enough for Mary. "Here." She kneeled and undid his shoelaces before tying them again. "We don't want you tripping. Max! Matt! Grab your kerchiefs and come watch." Brian sat there, feeling like the center of attention as Mary arranged his neckerchief just so. "Think you two can handle that?" She asked. The boys nodded and got to work. "Oh, you're adorable." Mary murmured, more to herself than Brian as she adjusted his shirt. "You'd be even cuter with a hat, but I guess your hair will do." She ran her fingers through his hair.

"Is this good, mom?"

"Yes, Max. Very handsome." She adjusted Matt's neckerchief before nodding.

"Almost as handsome as your brother." She surveyed the room. "Alright, you three downstairs and right to the photographer." The three of them complied, though Max and

Matt had quite a few muttered comments about how uncomfortable their shoes were.

"Alright, the three sailors." The photographer said as they crossed the lawn.

"Let's go white, blue, white." He gestured. The boys lined up and the photographer held up his camera. "Hmm, let's try something else." He went over to a nearby table and grabbed a white folding chair. He looked at the assembled boys thoughtfully, bushy mustache twitching under his nose, before nodding.

All three of them watched curiously as he set the chair behind them, adjusting it to make sure it was level.

"There we go." He walked over to Brian and slipped his hands under his arms.

"Hup!" He picked Brian up and set him standing on the chair. "There we go, little guy. You two, come stand here and buddy, you're gonna put your hands on your brothers' shoulders."

"Actually, he's our cousin." Max said.

"Even better." The photographer said cheerfully. "Put your arm around him and kinda set your head against his shoulder. Perfect. You" he pointed to Matt.

"Lean in so the little guy can reach you." He nodded. "Looks good." He came in and grabbed Brian's left hand. "We'll put this here, your other hand" he grabbed it. "On the big guy's

shoulder. Now, your leg" his big hand touched the back of Brian's knee, moving it to right where he wanted it. "Can you stay still like that for me, champ?" Brian nodded, blushing. "Big smiles!"

A crowd had started to form and Brian could not help but feel that he was on display. The camera clicked again and again with Brian trying his hardest not to move a muscle.

"And we're done." The photographer crossed over to them and held up his hand. "High fives, guys!" Matt and Max high fived him with smirks as they stepped away. Brian went to jump off the chair, but ended up right in the photographer's arms. "Got you!" He said with a laugh, spinning Brian around a few times before setting him down. He groaned as he saw Matt and Max's faces. He was never going to live this down.