

ALL DOLLED UP

APRIL 2020 REQUEST STORY

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It was the final day. Sierocarte's shop had been giving limited edition scratcher cards for the past couple of weeks, each offering amazing prizes, many of which could only typically be obtained by spending hard earned crystals. As captain of the Grandcypher Gran had been the one scratching the cards, since only one was allowed per day, and so far they'd already obtained a great deal of goodies that had gone a long way in benefiting them. Yet... nothing truly rare had been obtained.

So it was with a saddened heart that the young captain took a coin to the final ticket in the corner of the store, well away from everyone else. There had been a string of people stealing winning tickets so they were encouraged to scratch where others weren't watching, and Gran respected that.

The first of the cleared spaces was Soul Berries. Useful, but common. There were nine spaces on the card overall, and three had to match to win the respective prize. If it was three berries on the final ticket, that would be a little underwhelming. But the second scratch was a beacon of hope! Parazonium, a gleaming purple dagger that was often tied to a specific member of their crew. It was a Grand weapon, an extremely rare find. Its appearance made the boy feel excited, but it also turned his stomach. Anxiety? Not quite.

Scratching the third box revealed a second Parazonium, and this time instead of his stomach doing a flip an unsettling numbness beset his body. "**I wonder if I have food poisoning...?**" He murmured to himself unaware of the link between the scratcher card and his onset symptoms, taking his coin to the fourth box all the same. It was a third

Parazonium! Yes! After all of the struggling they'd finally won something of significant rarity!

“**Ah--?**” He'd scratched enough of these cards to know how they worked, which begged the question: why had the three winning boxes suddenly begun to glow? The unsettling feeling Gran had only intensified, and a single gulp slid down his throat before time stopped. Not for Gran himself, but the world around him had frozen in place. “**What's--?**”

Gran was wracked by chills, but not those created by his body. Honestly? He'd just gotten really cold all of a sudden, but this was quickly justified when he looked down and... “**What am I wearing!?**” Gone was his usual sweater and brown pants, an outfit that was plain but suitably fashioned for a guy of his age and upbringing. In its place?

A black, Gothic dress that quite obviously didn't fit properly against his broad frame, the waistline gripping his stomach with an alarming tightness. His shoulders were left bare short of the spaghetti straps that hung down, and hands had somehow been crammed into black, leather gloved while feet had been crunched into heeled boots. The frilly dress absolutely did not suit him, but he also couldn't shake the feeling he'd seen this outfit before from a different perspective.

He hadn't even noticed the tiny bowler hat atilt on the right side of his head yet, and that would probably have been the biggest tell for him to realize. After all, considering the height difference between himself and its usual wearer, it was the article of clothing he was most often looking down at.

The scratch ticket had gone missing too, adding more mystery to this unusual phenomenon. “**I'm pretty sure I didn't dress like a girl this morning...**” But why was there even any doubt about it? He was a guy, he didn't put on dresses for fun because it wasn't his style. Yet he couldn't completely dismiss the possibility that maybe he'd adorned a dress and just forgotten.

Confused, he'd begun to try and strip by first removing the elegant gloves that reached past his elbow, not knowing that they were designed to reach farther up the arm than they were currently. But once he'd gotten one glove off and discarded it onto a nearby shelf, dread froze him in place. His hand was fully exposed, and on the whole looked normal enough.

It was just... one spot was *not* normal. The top third of his center finger. Now that Gran thought about it there didn't seem to be much sensation coming from it, but from a visual point of view it was askew. The nail on the finger seemed to be a solid pale color, possessing none of the healthy

coloration that suggested fresh growth at the bottom. It looked more like an ornament glued onto his finger than anything, and that was without taking the flesh underneath into account.

He tapped it against his thumb to verify the visual against the reality. The skin of this finger chunk seemed almost plastic, and pressing it into his thumb revealed that it felt just as authentically artificial. Were that not enough, a shrill gasp escaped as whatever was happening encroached into the joint. Obviously the joint didn't disappear.

It was quite the opposite in fact, almost like the skin that normally covered this gap had suddenly sunk inward so deeply that a dark gap was left, or like the skin itself had evaporated and pure vinyl had been left in its place. Gran tried wriggling the top of the finger as the plastic phenomenon beset the rest of the finger beneath, but the movement had become a lot stiffer and more limited. Like he was operating with ball joints, the kind you'd find in a *doll*.

Not only was his center finger ultimately corrupted in its entirety after a few short minutes, but once it had reached the boy's palm it had spread up the other three fingers and thumb at an alarming rate. Right before his eyes the humanity was wiped from his flesh, digits that were essentially inanimate left in their place. But they *were* animate, they merely weren't *biological*. Flexing fingers on the hand that was still gloved revealed that they too were suffering from similar reformation, yet that fit more comfortably in the glove itself. This was because his fingers had shrunk in slight upon becoming doll-like, hands practically made for the gloves themselves.

“**Ah...!**” If how Gran had stumbled despite remaining immobile had been any indicator, his feet were shrinking too. Suddenly boots that were dead set on crunching his toes together to the point of cramping felt a little more bearable, a lot of the feeling in general lost but not completely absent. This seemed to be a trend among the areas that had become doll-touched. They didn't completely lose their ability to feel, but it was a much duller sense than before.

And speaking of duller senses, Gran's cries of shock were becoming less and less animated. Almost like a dial was slowly being turned back on his personality to make him less expressive than the island youth he actually was. Subconsciously he was being rewired to be think in a different way and express himself with subdued reservation. “**My body is... I know who this is.**” Identifying the dress alone had been too difficult a task, but doll-jointed fingers were a dead giveaway. He only knew one person like that, and they weren't a young man by any sense of the term.

Numbness ran up both arms, the length of the glove on the covered arm creeping up towards his shoulder as the length of either appendage shrunk in tandem with legs. Knees became vinyl plastic, both them and Gran's elbows the most blatant recipients of doll joints thanks to the complicated motions these pieces demanded. Almost like fingers had dug in all around his knees, flesh sunk in and hardened as the knees themselves became single, orb-like pieces nestled in between the casing of lower legs clad with boots and curved thighs that suggested feminine adolescence, but also seemed a little more real than below his legs.

“Orchid...” This was the name that had come to mind, and as he said it aloud Gran couldn't help but feel like he was introducing himself instead of speaking another's name. It was a word that was only ever used to refer to himself after all... or was that right? He was becoming increasingly unsure, and as he stood still with confusion lavender locks fell down from where brown bangs typically hung. **“I am... Gran? ...?”** Saying the other name just felt blasphemous somehow. Not wrong, but not right, and the feminine tone the question was delivered with was *extremely* flat.

One might say as flat as *her* groin. Did she really have genitalia? Gran's dick and balls receded as vinyl consumed what was meant to be her crotch, but while indentations poked inward to suggest she might have grown the female equivalent, the biology of this body was certainly in question.

Whether it was real or not, it didn't stop Gran's increasingly faux-realistic facial features from turning pink. His face looked more lifelike than anything else, but there were likewise indicators that it was merely a tool to show expression and communicate for a vessel that wasn't technically supposed to support life -- but the techniques used to keep the soul and body tied together did an amazing job of making her face look practically human. Even if she barely resembled the boy she'd one been, with a disinterested crimson gaze, fair facial features, and long light hair tied into tails beneath her little hat.

“I'm a girl... I wonder if I should tell Sturm and Drang about this...?” She'd been asking those two for more and more favors after she'd hired them last-- **“Wait. Why... Why would I do that?”** Drang and Sturm were members of her crew? Her... crew? That felt so impersonal. No, her relationship with them was more intimate than that. She trusted them a lot, because Apollo trusted them a lot.

Her waistline finally receded as the doll body conversion met in the middle from both the bottom and top. Stomach dipped into a shape more typical of a young girl than a young woman, navel filling in to remain naught but an indentation while more dramatic gaps took form.

Beneath her chest, right above her stomach in face. It was clear on analysis that her torso had split into two separate pieces so that she could crunch forward if necessary, though the top was accentuated with greater definition as a tiny pair of breasts pushed up and hardened with faux nipples attached. They allowed her dress to rest loosely on them, and made her look less androgynous and more like the young (*doll*) lady she was instead.

Said young lady had yet to grasp her own mental state, let alone her physical one when time promptly resumed in the wake of her completed physical changes. Her long lashes danced as noise in the shop resumed, and surprisingly she found herself with both gloves on and the scratch ticket between her fingers once more. It was disorienting because she was Gran. She held a little doubt about that when her memories of being Orchid, of meeting Gran and Lyria back then and how the Grandcypher saved her, were more prominent. But she couldn't deny the thought that she had once been that captain brought a little warmth to her otherwise lukewarm vessel.

“Gran... That’s you, isn’t it?” A nearby voice took Orchid by surprise because it was clearly directed at herself with that name. That name was right, but she still chose to correct the source. **“Oh... Right, so Orchid now? Um... well...”** The speaker was familiar, but Orchid wasn't close with her. A Draph covered in bandages. She could be none other than Danua. Though as Danua herself told it... **“Blue... hair... I was...”**

“She was Lyria!” One of the puppets at Danua's side shouted. **“She can't seem to say it, but we can! She scratched one of those cards and, well! Same thing happened to you, huh?”** Those two puppets usually communicated for Danua since she had some deep seated anxieties, so could they get around the curse?

Orchid, however, could only blink slowly. Was she concerned? Certainly, but her mind kept wandering back to Apollo and the Empire. Regardless of who was what, she had to get back as soon as possible. **“I see. Well even if I was Orchid, I am Orchid now.”** The doll girl couldn't even say her old name, and recognition of that was evident on Danua's downcast gaze. Surely, if that was Lyria, she felt the same way. **“I need to leave...”**

That the why this had happened probably wasn't something they could answer.

That they had to move forward as these new selves.