

JAMS (Just Another Magic Show)

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Arrival

It was a balmy spring day, and the Riverbend Music festival was off to a great start. I'd arrived as soon as they opened, spend the morning setting up a camp site, and now was sipping a coffee while I wandered the grounds. I listened to 3 old guys play some bluegrass for a while, and then a Caribbean drum band, the edible I took was kicking in perfectly.

I would say I couldn't have asked for more, but the circumstances I was there under ... weren't the best.

Let's back up – my name is Emma. About six months ago my boyfriend Travis and I had bought tickets to this festival planning to camp all weekend. Then three weeks ago, we broke up.

As breakups go, this was maybe average – it had been what we both wanted, until it wasn't. It was not exactly a surprise to either of us. Still, I'd been in a hard spot emotionally before this unraveled, and was now finally starting to move on.

The only complicated thing was the tickets. I still wanted to go to the show, but at that point, more camping passes were sold out – so adding more friends wasn't a pos-

sibility. And despite my persistent efforts, none of my other close friends could make something work on such short notice, and besides, who really wants to go hang out 1 on 1 all weekend with a freshly broken-hearted Emma.

Still with all that said, I was actually in a good mood. The weather was amazing, the vibes were off the charts, and you know what, I was in a perfect place to make some new friends. I even knew a few people there already – there was Nate and Cassie, who lived at the end of my block, and a guy at my climbing gym that everyone calls ‘Scooter.’

It was now around 2pm, the vibe was shifting from a chill morning into a more celebratory atmosphere. The energy was undeniably pleasant. I went to get a beer and sat down somewhere in the shade. A group of 20ish people were eagerly clustered around a stage, waiting for something to start.

I checked my copy of the schedule.

“JAMS (Just Another Magic Show) - A Comedy & Body Magic Performance by the Pineapple Magic Troupe”

It was there, at the Meadow Stage, that our story gets interesting.

“Hey,” said a female voice behind me. “Is it okay if we share the shade here?”

“Of course,” I said, turning around.

I looked at the two people who’d just approached – the girl who’d spoken had a blanket she was spreading out. The guy she was with nodded to me.

“Thanks,” said the girl.

I noticed two things about them. The first was the most obvious.

I don’t know the best way to summarize this, except to say that she *had his arms*. Like, she’d taken them away from him, and now she had *four* arms, while this guy had *zero* arms.

This assumption was, admittedly based on the mismatch in skin tones, the relative proportions and overall musculature of the 'upper' arms she was sporting. But given that the guy was also shirtless, it seemed like an easy inference to make.

The second thing I noticed, maybe a more subtle read, was that while these two were there together, they didn't read as *together* together. And what can I say – the guy was pretty cute without arms. And she was pretty cute with *extra* arms.

In any case, I found my interest was piqued.

"I love your tattoos," I said, smiling at the girl.

"Oh these babies," she said, flexing a bicep and grinning back at me, then flashing her eyebrows back at the guy. "Yeah I worked really hard on these."

I laughed, along with the other guy. We made eye contact for just a millisecond longer than needed.

"I'm Kelly," she said, extending a hand. "And this is Tommy."

"Hey, I'm Emma," I said, shaking a hand.

"I'll shake hands for him," she said, adding another delighted grin. I laughed in response as well, accepting a double handshake.

"How did you ... make this trade?" I asked them.

"It's a long and complicated story—" started Kelly.

"She won them for the weekend in a dice roll," said Tommy, laughing. "It's like a game all our friends play."

"We need a better story for you than that Tommy," said Kelly, admonishingly. "Like, I think maybe you donated your arms to charity, and I'm the rich heiress who purchased them at auction for a ridiculous price."

"I don't think you can sell the heiress part," said Tommy, with a smirk.

Kelly rolled her eyes and laughed.

"Anyway yeah," she said, with a shrug. "It's this silly dice game, if you call your role, you can make someone else do a magic-based dare, then you pass them the dice either way."

"Sounds fun," I said.

"It gets pretty ridiculous," said Tommy.

"Last month I lost a roll and had to wear my nose upside down for a week," said Kelly, with a smirk.

"So you two sound like you must know your way around some magic," I said, nodding to the stage.

"Oh yeah," said Kelly laughing. "The three people performing this are those same friends."

"Speaking of," said Tommy. "I think the show is about to start."

Act 1

Applause rang out around the stage as a woman with short blonde hair and a number of colorful tattoos took the stage. She grinned as the applause spread a bit, and carried a large black bag out to the middle of the stage.

"How's everyone doing?" she said, taking the microphone from the stand.

A muted cheer responded.

"Okay, honestly, that was fucking awful," she shot back, putting a hand on her hip. "Let's do the thing where I ask the same question again, and you ... do better this time. How's everyone doing?"

The crowd responded with a higher energy greeting, myself included.

"That's ... we'll work on that part," she replied. "Anyway, I'm Zara Greenstone, and ... I can do magic."

She made a confident smirk and inspected her nails. The audience responded with cheers.

"Now I know, I know – body magic isn't as impressive as it once was, with Wiz-Works and SMASH and tons of stuff on TikTok. But my friends and I have this whole show planned out here, and like ... if I'm honest with you, Benny is sort of otherwise unemployable, so just like ... stick around maybe? Cause like ... he's not going to do well in a real job."

The audience cheered in reply. I was reading from people's body language that at least the closer portion of the group there had largely seen the same performers before.

"Now," said Zara, holding up a hand. "I do need to take a moment here to ... find my co-performers. See I'm the one of us who shows up on time, that's important for all of you to remember. I'm the responsible one, they're both deadbeats. That's just between you and me."

Some laughs spread around the crowd.

"The good thing is," she said, leaning over to the bag she'd brought. "Is that I can do some magic to get them here right away."

Out of the bag she pulled out a black felt top hat.

"I know, I know, it's a trope, but let's go with it okay," she said.

She reached into the hat a comical amount, all the way up to the shoulder and seemed to be rummaging around in the hat. Her expressions changed several times to provoke more giggling from the crowd. At last she nodded to everyone and drew most of her arm out of the hat, leaving just her hand inside.

"Okay, I found her," she said. "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm pleased to present my first costar, Angela Spellsworth!"

With a flourish, Zara brought Angela out of the hat. She was holding a cluster of Angela's hair, a huge amount of black curls. She had freckles and was wearing clear plastic glasses.

She was also ... only a head. And a decidedly unimpressed looking head.

"Hey Angela," said Zara, into the mic with a forced enthusiasm.

"What's up," said Angela flatly, prompting the audience to laugh.

"Where's um," said Zara, matching her tone, "Where's the rest of you?"

"You pulled me out of of hat, dude," said Angela. "How much of me did you think was going to fit?"

"Um," said Zara, making a comical grimace to the audience. "Yeah. So okay everyone, we're having some ... technical issues here."

"What technical issues?" said Angela.

"Look, it's fine," said Zara, acting nervous. "I'll just get you out ... piece by piece."

She set Angela's head down on the stage.

"Just hang tight there," she said, gesturing carefully to Angela.

She reached into the hat again, this time rummaging around more frantically. Laughter built up as she continued, then she pulled out an empty hand.

"What happened?" said Kelly. "You going to pull me out or what here?"

"Um, one sec," said Zara. "Hold this for me will you?"

She set the microphone down in front of Angela.

Zara then set the hat down on the stage and knelt over it. She started to lean all the way into the hat herself, and applause gradually built up as she climbed further in – first both her arms, then her upper body, then soon only her legs were sticking up. Finally she slipped entirely into the hat.

A long pause ensued. Nervous laughter spread around.

"So..." said Angela. "Anyone know some jokes?"

She waited another moment for more tension to build.

"What do you call a gal without a body?" she said. "A head turner!"

A general groan spread around the audience at the joke.

"So I was rolling my way to work the other day when this skater came up to me," she continued. "He asked if I wanted to race, but I told him I didn't want to get ahead of myself."

Laughter was building up a bit more.

"Hey did you all know I'm really good at soccer," she said, trying to surprise her own laughter now. "Like seriously every time I play, I end up scoring every single goal."

This line got actual applause. Angela grinned and let it die back down on its own.

"Hey Zara!" called out Angela. "How's it going in there?"

"Um, just great!" said Zara's voice, muffled but still audible.

"I'm kind of running out of jokes here," said Angela, with a smirk.

"Did you tell the soccer one?"

"Yeah, they're not going for it," said Angela.

This prompted a broad laugh.

"Okay," said Angela. "I got a few more here."

She cleared her throat.

"What do you call a horny girl without a body?" she said. "A hopeless romantic!"

A bit more laughter spread around.

"What do you do with a bodiless girl in bed?" she said. "Anything you fucking want!"

More laughing was building up this time.

“How did the bodiless girl convince a guy to take her home?” she continued.
“There was still room in his backpack!”

A bit more laughter spread around and then it happened.

Zara’s hand shot out of the hat, dramatically. The audience started applauding, building up to a full applause as Zara’s other hand made its way out, followed by her wriggling up and out of the hat with some visible effort.

“Whew,” she said, picking up the mic, and scooping up Angela’s head. “That was something.”

“Did you ... did you find anything?”

“Nope,” she said, sounding out of breath. “Nothing.”

“Okay but – where’s my body?”

“It’s not in the hat I swear, I looked everywhere in there,” said Zara.

“Yeah but – I’m going to need it at least by the second act, there’s juggling and stuff.”

“That’s what we in the biz call a teaser,” said Zara, as an aside to the audience.
“How about this – we’ll get Benny out here and he’ll help.”

“Oh sure he will,” said Angela, rolling her eyes.

“I’ll get him ready, you do the intro,” said Zara, setting Angela’s head on a stool and fixing the microphone on a short stand.

“Fine, fine,” said Angela. “Ladies and gents and folks and stuff, please welcome to the stage our very own Benjamin ‘Hunkaliciuos’ Hocus-Pocus!”

Zara took a large piece of black fabric and swirled it around until it suddenly settled over a shape the size of a person. She whisked it away to reveal Benny had somehow materialized on stage with them.

He waved enthusiastically to the crowd.

Everyone began to applaud and laugh at the same time.

There was one thing about him that was pretty obviously missing. His head. His shoulders just continued smoothly across, without any trace of a neck or head at all.

This didn't seem to be important to Benny, who continued to bow and gesture and otherwise hype up the crowd.

Finally when the audience had died down a bit, Zara picked the mic back up.

"Um, so Ben," she said. "Benny. Benjamin my guy."

Ben faced her.

"Where's your head?"

Ben swiped at the empty space above his shoulders. Then again, as if he was just now finding out he was missing a head. He made a show of frantically patting around for it some more, before finally turning his palms up and shrugging.

"You lost your head," said Zara with a sigh. "We had this big show planned and you just ... show up without a head. So you folks can see the level of professionalism here, one performer forgets his head, the other can't find her body..."

"Ben, maybe you left your head at home?" asked Angela.

Ben shrugged and made some gestures that were hard to interpret.

"More importantly," said Angela. "Do you happen to know where any of my body is?"

Ben gave a thumbs up.

"You do?"

Ben gave two thumbs up.

"Where is it?"

Ben hesitated, visibly slouching. He waited until a bit more laughter started. Then he somewhat nervously pointed to Zara.

"Zara has it?"

Ben made an 'ehh' motion, and then pointed to his own missing head. Then through gestures he made a pretend visual of boobs and ass, then pointed to the black bag in the middle.

"You're saying my body and your head are still hidden somewhere here?"

"There's no proof of that," said Zara, defensively.

Ben gave two thumbs up. He pointed to his arms and legs and gestured a bit more.

"And you're also saying," continued Angela. "That I'm in exactly seven pieces and you and Zara have a new routine where you assemble me from parts on stage?"

The audience began to applaud as Ben gave two big thumbs up.

"Hold on, hold on," said Zara, waving and interrupting everyone. "I kind of think this is going well, don't you?"

"What do you mean?" said Angela.

"I mean, this whole ... head thing you've got going on. I think it's really working here. You told all those great jokes..."

"Zara, I need my body back, like half the second show is all these stupid stunts I do." said Angela. "What's this really about?"

"Okay I kind of thought that maybe," said Zara, with a conspiratorial look at the audience. "That this time, I could maybe have your really fit, sexy, strong body and you could ... not."

"I don't know about this Zara," said Angela. "Let's ask the audience."

A bit of cheering spread at this suggestion.

Zara theatrically rolled her eyes.

"Asking ... the audience," she said, flatly. "Class cop-out, gotta say it."

"Okay then," she continued. "By show of applause, who thinks Angela is better off as a head?"

A bit of stifled applause made its way around the crowd.

"And who agrees that Angela is killing it right now, and should donate her body to her good friend Zara?"

Laughter spread around at that bit.

"Who wants to see my body get brought back?" said Angela.

A brief and conclusive roar from the audience settled the debate.

"Okay, okay," said Zara. "But like... we're not giving Benny his head back are we?"

"What? No of course not," said Angela.

"What about y'all," said Zara, turning to the crowd. "Give his head back."

Benny made a dramatic thumbs up gesture. A single cheer from the back was the only response, followed by more laughter.

"Keep him headless?" said Zara.

Another surge of approval came from the crowd. Ben made a show of patting his own chest and 'accepting' the result, pointing to his missing head and gesturing with crossed arms.

"Okay then, everyone, we'll get on with it – the re-assembly of Angela Spellsworth!"

There was a pause as all three of them waited.

"That was the cue for the music," said Zara, into the microphone.

A track started playing.

"There we go. Real profesh here. I'm going to hand this mic off to Angela.

She fixed the microphone in place for Angela's head to speak, then she and Benny began getting the next part ready – this meant taking out several more black bags that looked very similar to the first one that had made Ben appear out of nowhere.

"Hey Benny," said Angela. "Do you think this makes you a body-builder?"

A groan spread around from the crowd at this remark.

"I got plenty of these," said Angela. "Hey Benny what do you call a man without a head?"

Benny stopped, mimed as if he was 'speaking' with his hand, and turned back to Angela.

"Above average intelligence!" said Angela, immediately cracking up.

Benny waved dismissively and kept on prepping.

"One more here," said Angela. "Hey Benny, you know the best thing about this is we'll never have to worry about you getting lost in thought."

"Ba-dum-tss," added Zara, walking by. "Okay, are we ready to rock and roll here Benny?"

Benny gave two thumbs up.

"Let's do it!" said Zara. "Here we go. Benny! I'll ask for the parts, you get them out for me, we'll put her together right here for all these lovely people!"

The crowd cheered.

"First. A leg!"

Benny reached in to the first sack and pulled out a long, well defined leg. A murmur of approving yips spread around the crowd.

"At last I have a leg to stand on here," quipped Angela.

Another bit of groaning came as a reply.

"You know," she continued, "When all you are is a single leg, hopscotch gets really hard."

"Enough of that," interjected Zara. "Benny, can you next get us – an arm!"

Benny made another dramatic reveal from one of the other bags, this time producing one of Angela's arms from a bag. He displayed it prominently for the audience's cheers, holding the detached arm up with both hands.

"You know what Zara," said Angela. "I was thinking of taking some comedy classes the other day..."

"Oh really," said Zara, accepting the arm from Benny.

"But when I went to register they told me it'd cost an arm and a leg to sign up!"

Zara fully facepalmed along with some of the audience.

"Okay," said Zara. "Let's just get the next body part—"

"Wait!" said Angela. "I got another one here."

"Fine. Let's get this over with."

"What was my favorite song as a kid?"

"I don't know Angela, what was your fav—"

"Head, shoulders, knees & toes!" sang out Angela, to another bit of fractured applause.

Zara covered her mouth to try and stop herself from laughing. She shook her head lip-syncing the words 'so dumb' to the audience.

"For our next body part, Benny—" called out Zara. "Please retrieve — a butt!"

"Hey," said Angela brightly. "That is my favorite piece of me."

Benny made another reveal, pulling Angela's detached hips from another bag. They were wearing a pair of red shorts, but left little to the imagination. He knelt down presenting them to the audience like an offering.

The cheering for Angela's ass grew to a so-far unprecedented level. It was also gathering more attention than they'd started the show with, and I was noticing the crowd size had probably just about doubled.

"Oh my god it's great to had an ass again," said Angela, with a big, genuine smile. A reprise of cheers followed her grinning.

"Hey Zara," continued Angela. "You know why I think this is good for business?"

"Oh really," said Zara. "How's that?"

"Because we're capitalizing on my 'assets!'" Angela grinned hugely, to another chorus of moans mixed with laughter.

"You know, there was one time in this story that definitely happened, where I had to testify in court," said Angela to a bunch of laughs at the set up.

"And they were like, you know, can you take a lie detector," she continued. "But I was like why don't you just question my hips instead."

"Why did they question your hips Angela," said Zara, already smirking for the punchline.

"Well, everyone knows that hips don't lie!"

Zara let the joke land and roll around the audience for a moment.

"We need better jokes so badly," she said, with a big sigh.

"Hey Zara," said Angela, moving right to the next setup. "What's the difference between a smart-ass joke and a dumb-ass joke?"

"I don't know Angela, what's the difference?"

"This."

At first only a few people laughed, but as the joke expanded more and more joined in. Zara just smirked and waited out the response.

"Okay. Next body part!" she said, to more hoots and hollers. "Benny, can you please retrieve – another leg!"

Benny made another show of pulling Angela's remaining leg out of a bag, and pumping it up in the air triumphantly.

"You know now that my other leg is back, we can really kick this up a notch," said Angela, with a gigantic theatrical wink.

"These are so awful," stage whispered Zara, giggling before regaining her composure. She accepted the leg from Benny and placed it in the gathering pile of Angela's body parts.

"You know Zara," said Angela. "I've always thought of myself as an optimist."

"What makes you an optimist Angela," said Zara.

"Well I've only got 50% of me here, but I'm just a body-half-full kind of gal!"

"That doesn't even make sense," said Zara, shaking her head.

"Hey do you want to know how I got half-priced yoga classes with this one weird trick?" said Angela.

Zara nodded with an approving smirk.

"The good news," she said. "Is we're also about halfway done with these jokes."

"They asked me in the class if I could do a split and I was like pfft – watch this!"

Another groan circulated.

"What about this one," said Angela. "Hey did I tell you I was getting into competitive Twister?"

"Oh really," said Zara, grimacing for the next joke.

"Yeah, the key is to find a way to piece together a win."

This line actually drew some applause.

"Moving on!" said Zara, not waiting for things to settle down. "Benny! It's time for—"

She paused and looked conspiratorially around.

"Her chest," said Zara with a big grin on her face. As she said the words she proudly framed her own chest, prompting another round of more cheering and giggling from the crowd.

Benny rubbed his hands together in excitement and made two big grabbing gestures with his hands.

"Oh dear," said Angela, laughing. "He looks really ready for those."

"What do you think Angela," said Zara. "Do we let him cop a feel?"

Both Angela and Zara looked out at the audience which began the cheer again.

"Hmm," said Angela. "I don't know, maybe we just give him his head back."

Benny gestured to his missing head, made an X with his hands. Then he pointed to the bag he was now positioned over several times repeatedly.

"I think we know his preference, but what about all of you out there?" said Angela. The audience murmured approvingly.

"Who thinks he needs his head back?" said Zara.

There was virtually crickets. Zara almost laughed.

"And who thinks he's earned a little bit of boob action," said Angela, with a smirk.

"I mean they're your tits," said Zara, laughing. "Benny! Please produce Angela's chest!"

Benny made a long and slow play this time of carefully extracting Angela's chest from the next bag. She was wearing a tank top that hung loosely over what there was of her. He at first gestured around her boobs, presenting them to the crowd which slowly picked up a chant of "Boobs, boobs, boobs!" prompted at least in part by Angela and Zara.

Benny made a gesture as if he was listening for a higher volume several times, before finally making it official. He took two handfuls of Angela's chest and greedily fondled for the vicarious delight of the crowd.

Angela yipped with a big, embarrassed grin on her face. Benny handed her chest off to Zara who paused, raised an eyebrow to the crowd, and helped herself to the same thing, to even further cheering.

"Okay then," said Zara, with a big sigh. "Now that we've got that part out of the way—"

"Can we give it up for Benny first," said Angela.

Another round of applause spread through the crowd.

"I just want to say, I'm okay with Benny grabbing my boobs here because—" said Angela in a somewhat more serious tone of voice. "Because I sincerely believe that more men just shouldn't have heads."

Another round of cheering responded to this.

"And that's really a standing offer for all of you out there," continued Angela. "If you're a guy, and you're like 'What am I doing with this dumb head on my shoulders?' come see me after the show! You'll get some tit action, and I'll take care of that issue for you right quick."

"Conversely," said Zara. "If you just want to grab some tits really bad, all it's going to cost is, never having a head again."

"Oh right," said Angela. "To clarify, in this case, this will be a permanent arrangement. I'll be keeping your head."

"If you go over to her house she's got dudes mounted on the wall like hunting trophies," said Zara, with a faux-serious nod.

"Okay, I think we're coming off as weirdo's here," said Angela, with a laugh. "Seriously, we will give you your heads back, but ... let's see how many guys we can get to do this, right? We'll give the heads back after the festival, but can y'all imagine if we had like 50 more dudes as hot as Benny?"

Practically everyone cheered in response. Benny clasped both hands together and made a couple of old-timey 'hooray' gestures.

"Let's get some jokes in!" said Angela. At least some portion of the audience cheered in response.

"Do we have to," said Zara, smugly. "I was enjoying this boob and headless guy related discussion."

"They're boob jokes, don't worry," said Angela. "Hey Zara, did you know that boob jokes are controversial?"

"Among some people I guess," said Zara.

"Yeah, there's a real cleavage in opinion on them," said Angela.

"Oh my god," muttered Zara.

"Did I tell you that my tits started an OnlyFans page?"

"Oh really," said Zara. "How's that going?"

"They're building up quite an endowment!"

Zara smirked and let the laughter subside.

"To clarify," she added. "That part was still just a joke."

"For now," said Angela, bouncing her eyebrows at the crowd.

"One more," continued Angela. "I need your help for this one Zara."

"Okay, what do I do?"

"There's a joke I wrote down, and left it in my bra."

"Okay, let's retrieve the booby joke," said Zara, rummaging briefly in Angela's shirt.

She looked at the piece of paper as she unfolded it. Her pained expression looking back at the audience and then to Angela and then back to the audience drew out more and more laughter.

"Seriously?" she said to Angela.

"Read it!" said Angela, excitedly.

"You wrote this down? On purpose?"

"C'mon! Do it!"

Zara rolled her eyes.

"Knock, knock," she said, wearily.

"Who's there," said Angela, grinning broadly.

"Chest," said Zara. At the back of the audience someone shouted in approval.

"Chest who?"

"Chest get you back together, there's only two pieces to go!" said Zara, forcing out the joke and not waiting for the response. She threw the paper off to the side, with a defeated shrug.

"Let's get to it, there's a lot more show to go," said Angela.

"There certainly is. Benny. No reason to wait. Let's get out the rest of Angela!"

To another round of cheers, Benny produced both Angela's final arm, and her midsection from the remaining two bags.

"And there we go," said Zara. "We got your body back, now we can get on with the show."

"Wait, wait, wait," said Angela. "You have to put me back together, too don't you?"

Zara looked around at the audience with a frown.

"Um," she said. "I feel like we're running a little long on this bit already, and we've got to keep the show moving, so maybe ... we just skip that part this time?"

"Okay, well then, uh... let's try something else. Benny! Hey Benny. C'mere."

Benny pointed to himself and pretended to turn around looking for someone else, before wandering close by.

"Pssppssppssppsssss," said Angela, in a loud stage whisper to Benny, who pretended to listen with a cupped hand.

Benny replied with a thumbs up. He picked up one of the black bags.

"Can you clean her up, we got to set up for the second act here," said Zara. She folded her arms in mock impatience and turned her back.

"These co-workers am I right, y'all?" said Zara to the crowd.

Meanwhile Benny made a show of casually sneaking closer and closer behind Zara.

Then, in one swift motion he drew the bag over her head and scooped her entirely up into the back. For a moment, he held up a large and almost shapeless sack for the audience.

The crowd had only begun to clap when he took the opening of the bag and dumped it back onto the stage.

Out came Zara. Well, several pieces of Zara. She tumbled into a heap next to Angela.

The crowd began to cheer as loud as any point in the show.

"That's it for our first act!" yelled Zara. "We're going to take a short break here and we'll be back for part two!"

"Tip your bartenders!" added Angela.

Intermission

There wasn't a curtain to close, but stage hands started to clean up the stage, including the pieces of both our performers.

I realized leaning back then, how completely absorbed I'd been in the performance. My mouth was dry from hanging open for so long. My back was still from sitting on the edge of my seat.

I suddenly realized that I was still sitting next to Tommy and Kelly. I caught their looks as I finally relaxed a bit.

"That was incredible," I said. "I've never seen a show like that ... ever."

"I love how hammy they are," said Kelly, laughing.

"Can you two do ... magic like that too?"

"We're not nearly as good as them," said Kelly, laughing. "But I know my way around the WizWorks app at least."

"And you've seen their show before?"

"Oh yeah, plenty of times," said Tommy. "The jokes have gotten worse and the performance has gotten better."

"That's the perfect summary," said Kelly, nodding.

"Have you ever tried body magic?"

I considered the question.

"Sort of I think?"

"What was sort of," said Kelly.

"Oh it was at this off-campus party in undergrad," I said. "And this guy – he was doing these party tricks, and I guess he ... turned my head around backwards? Anyway, I hung out with a backwards head for a bit, but then my friend wanted to go to this other party, and so we had him put it back the normal way."

"Cool," said Kelly, nodding. "How did you like it?"

"It was interesting," I said. "I thought about leaving it backwards, but you know, I didn't know anyone else who could change it back..."

"Well," said Kelly, looking around. "There's at least like a dozen or so master magicians here, so you're in a good spot if you want to try something fun."

"Thanks," I said. "I ... am thinking about it."

I thought about the possibilities as I took a final sip of my beer. My eyes caught Dan's as looked back up.

He was cute. And, based on my further reading from Kelly, available.

"You know what?" I said. "Let's just do it."

"I've got just the thing in mind," said Kelly, with a big smile. "Wanna try it?"

"Sure, what do I do?"

"Just sit down here," she said, patting the blanket in front of her.

I obliged, scooting over and she positioned herself right behind, with her legs out and straddling me from behind.

All four of her arms wrapped me up in a hug. Then, with me firmly overpowered by her strength, she forced both of my arms out to the sides. It seemed like a position that should have been remarkably uncomfortable, but my shoulders were feeling weirdly extra-flexible.

"Wait, are you—" I said, but she was already doing it.

With two audible popping sounds, both my arms came off. The tension completely snapped away from my shoulders and I saw her hold out both detached arms.

"Holy shit," I stammered. "You just de-armed me."

"She's a very disarming person," said Tommy. "Sorry I had to."

"Oh shut it, or I'll put you to work writing jokes for Angela," said Kelly, halfway gesturing with my detached arm at him. She began affixing my arms under both of her already-existing arms.

"I'll give them back whenever you want," said Kelly. "I just really wanted to try six arms for a sec here."

"No that's fine," I said, giggling. "This is so weird. It's like I'm tied up, but like ... there's not even a way to struggle a bit."

"Sounds like you might have some tied-up experience there," said Kelly.

I could read the writing now. She was probing the situation as hard as she could.

"A bit yeah," I said, with a slightly embarrassed laugh. "Nothing like this though, this is ... great."

"I totally agree," said Tommy. "Arms are dumb."

"Yeah," I said. "Only dummies have arms."

He leaned over with an empty shoulder. I bumped it with mine.

"So you are okay with this," said Kelly, holding out a hand to pause the other conversation. A hand that just happened to have recently been mine.

"Yeah," I said, smiling back. "It's ... kind of wild, but I like it. At least let's swap until the end of the show."

"Perfect," said Kelly, with a smile that bit her lower lip. "Um, very wingman-type question, and I don't mean to pry into things, but are you ... available here? Am I reading the vibes here correctly?"

"You very much are," I said, with a grin.

"Great," said Kelly. "Then it is now my project to get you two to sleep with each other."

"Oh," I said, with an embarrassed laugh. "Okay, let's see how that goes."

"How about some beers? You two can sit here and talk about how you don't have any arms. It's kind of something you've got in common! Along with how you two are ... well let's face it, very, very helpless and dependent on your good friend Kelly to take care of you."

"Of course," said Tommy, with a smirk. "Beers sound great."

"They do," I agreed. Anything to take away the spotlight for a moment.

"Okay then," said Kelly, standing up. "Oh wait! One other thing. I almost forgot."

"What's that?" I said.

She reached into her pocket and pulled out a six-sided die.

"Tommy," she said, starting to roll the die in her hand. "If I roll a three, guess what else you're going to lose..."