

Wren had to get a costume but as she wandered the streets she cursed her own stubborn criteria, to get something her husband would love. She had no idea what that might be.

In a moment of dwindling hope, having found nothing of worth in any of the shops and indeed feeling that she'd wasted her time completely, her eyes fell on a painted window. The shop called itself 'Madam Myrtle's Miscellany', with the paint brashly declaring, 'One look is all it takes! The perfect costume appraisal!'

That surely couldn't mean what she thought it did, right? Still, if she went in and left unsatisfied she'd lose only another twenty minutes in a day that was already a wash.

The door creaked, a black-painted bell ringing as she pushed her way into the shop. A witch laughed at her from behind a prop cauldron. At first she thought it was part of the prop itself until the long nosed, green skinned face, complete with a black dress and pointed hat got up and walked towards her. "Welcome, welcome. I'm so glad you came here rather than one of those other fools. They wouldn't know what's best for you dear." She said in a rush.

Wren was caught completely off guard, letting the woman lead her by the hand. The mask she wore - assuming it was one - had a surreal blend of fake appearance and realism twined together. The nose looked preposterous but the warts seemed real, and the skin was far too perfectly emotive without having the shine a costume might. She was so taken up by the other woman's appearance that she was halfway across the store before realising things were progressing a touch too quickly.

"H-hey wait a moment! What do you mean? What others? How do you know what I want?" She asked.

Myrtle paused, saying nothing, instead she looked Wren up and down, before giving her a look, one which filled in the question for her. "You are here for the appraisal." She said, not a question, in fact it sounded more like a command than a statement.

"I-I guess, can you really predict what costume is best? You don't know anything about me."

The witch left out a practised cliché cackle. "Oh sweetness, if you were needing a costume for yourself I'd have already stuffed it in your hands, but no, you're looking to get something to appeal to that other half in your life. And I know the very thing, how about a fictional childhood crush, hmm? That'd certainly earn the eyes you want him to cast your way."

Wren kept looking to interrupt, to assert that the woman couldn't know, yet her words answered thoughts that Wren herself had only half formed. "How are you doing this?" she gasped.

"The cauldron told me." Myrtle said in a most matter of fact tone before she turned to a box.

“Here. This is the one.” She said, turning and thrusting the box into Wren’s hands.

“It is? What is it?” Wren asked. Looking around the strange textured cube, ornately gilded looking, though that turned out to just be spray-paint over ridged cardboard, her eyes glanced to the walls. “Is there a changing room?”

“Oh, I don’t have a need for those.”

“So it’s a ... one size fits all deal?”

Myrtle grinned in a way that seemed pinched between mischievous and mean. “Close enough. Now, will you be taking it home or will you be-”

Wren flipped the lid open interrupting the witch-like woman. A glossy flat and smooth surface greeted her, as though the box had been filled with somehow solidified oil. “What is this?” She asked.

“Your costume!” Myrtle said, tilting her head, the muscles on her face twitching to keep Wren looking at her as with her back turned long rounded tendrils grew from the top of the previously smooth mass. The witch flicked her eyes to the box, conducting Wren’s attention back to it.

“Yikes!” she gasped, dropping the box as she saw the wiggling things which swept out and stuck to her. The rounded points pushed softly against her clothing and turned brighter in colour, the oily black fading through greys into an off white as it spread. “What the hell? What is this?!”

“Oh it won’t hurt dear, just let it work its magic.” Myrtle said, as with a wave of her hand the door to her shop clicked, locking to prevent any thoughts of leaving.

“Magic?! You’re a real witch?!”

“Some certainly think so.” Myrtle replied with another cackle, but she didn’t need to deflect Wren’s attention again, the woman was already looking. Her hand seized one of the tendrils, yanking it off her jacket, it pulled away but it squashed in her grasp, instead wrapping around the palm and wrist.

The freshly squashed mass turned from the white to a kind of yellow and orange, hardening into the former with the latter presenting as stripes that fell in place over the sides of her swelling over her hand. “Myrtle! Madam Myrtle! Make it stop!” She demanded.

“Can’t interrupt a wish in the middle of it being granted, dear. Aside from being improper it’s just not possible.”

The box fell away as the cubic mass of black had softened, depleting itself to spread through the tendrils, more still attaching, each one quickening the rate at which the woman was

covered, with the smooth trickle soaking through her clothing to form underneath it and in the undulations, push and pull it off!

Her underwear was mercifully preserved, covered over the top of, but all the more bulky items she wore were shoved off in a chaotic mess that tangled her legs and covered her head, tripping her to land on her backside in the confusion. As shoes and socks fell a soft and thick squeeze greeted her feet from the goop-like covering, thickening and forming into a paw-like shape before falling still. With the legs done the coating lashed up her body, a weight appearing at the back of her hips as it built a tail, then squeezed to tighten against her body.

Her jacket and shirt finally passed beyond her eyes, giving her just enough time to see a smooth stretching splash of the off-white shine before like a falling wave it rolled over her head. She shut her eyes, issuing a startled yell as the viscous goo wrapped over her head and added more weight above each of her ears as it formed false cat-like ones.

She dared to open her eyes once more, seeing through subtle lenses as she looked down at her body in flustered panic. The hand that squeezed the tendril rose into view, though it was completely hidden, buried in a fat yellow glove with squishy 'claws' out of the top and soft pink pads where her palm should be. "What is thiiiiis?!" She whined as the final roll of the goo was at the only part left; the exposed elbow and hand of her other arm. Her hand reached to the ears on her head, the clammy chill feeling of rubber greeting her as she tried to tug it. Then she made to pull the glove off her other hand but it was welded as a part of her whole arm, too snugly fitting to come loose.

In panic her hand went to the back of her neck as the goo caught her wrist and started to roll over it. Her little finger caught a soft shaking object, a zipper tag! Yet she couldn't knock it around or grip it in time before her hand was consumed. "M-Myrtle! — — —!" She demanded. Jaw locking and preventing her saying the second sentence. "What the hell?!"

"Ooh, sorry dear, it's cursed, you see. You can't suggest taking it off and I am also unable to do so. Though it is a curse that I know how to break." She explained sounding more delighted than apologetic or sympathetic.

"You did this to me! Break it at once!" Wren demanded. Fearing for a moment that she wouldn't be able to make that demand but it seemed to get through the supernatural filter.

"Hah! If curses were that simple to break I'd be able to make a fortune!" The witch said with much glee as if Wren had cracked a joke. "No, to break this one requires something very specific. It's Halloween, after all. I can help you but first, you must do two tasks. The first is to go knocking from door to door in neighbourhoods decorated by pumpkin lanterns."

"But that's trick-or-treating! That's for kids!" Wren declared in shock.

“If you want to stay cursed then by all means stay away from them. I’m not asking you to rake in compliments or bring in candy. Twenty doors should suffice, though you may want to double that if you want to be certain.”

The woman couldn’t believe what she was hearing, her hands still tried to get to the zipper at her back yet the bulky, strangely familiar gloves were too awkward for her to even brush it let alone get a grip. “You’re kidding me...” Wren said, trying to imagine the embarrassment and fearing it would be enough to kill her.

“Secondly...” Myrtle started, smirking as she saw the shivering wince that provoked. “A party, any party will do so long as it’s crowded. Perhaps your sweet husband will take notice of the problem and then you won’t even need the curse to be broken, hmm? After all, it is his favourite.”

In utter humiliation Wren got back to her feet. The thick heavy paws were durable looking and easy to balance on, but with her head and hands like this, there was no way she was getting her clothes back on. “I’m not paying you for this!” Wren scoffed.

“I do hope you’ll reconsider but I’ll save that discussion for when you return to me.”

“Return, why would I return?!” Wren asked in extreme exasperation.

“The curse won’t break itself, no matter how many criteria are met. You still need me.” She said with a wink. “But I won’t keep you any longer.” Her hand waved and with it a whoosh in the air accompanied a bell’s tinkle as the door swung wide once more. “Have a Happy Halloween. Ehehehehe~.” The witch said before striding back to her cauldron, which Wren refused to approach in case it turned out it wasn’t a prop, after all.

Hours later the bell jangled as the Gatomon suited woman walked back in. “Gatomon? A creature from a cartoon?!” She declared to Myrtle as she crossed the threshold.

“But he loved it, didn’t he?” Myrtle asked. “Enough that I see he took some very positive steps toward keeping it.” The witch said, gesturing to the wallet that Wren was just barely able to hold.

“Fine, I’m convinced enough to pay you. It was awful, humiliating at first, but then after the party...” She fell quiet, her significant other had done enough to make it seem worth it after all that.

“Well that’s wonderful, I don’t need money dear, the experience and the gratitude are more than enough for me.” She said. “But I owe you a broken curse, yes?”

Wren nodded. “Mmmh. Will there be strange potions and dances and weird chants involved?”

“Oh, none of that is needed, I’m already quite prepared for you, I knew you’d come back. Just stand here will you?” She said pointing to a flattened object on the floor; the box that the cursed costume had flown out from.

Myrtle walked over to Wren, placing her hands on the latex covered shoulders, her thumbs crept towards each other, pinching at the nape of the neck.

“Will this take long?” Wren asked to push the discomfort from her mind. There was no reply for a moment as she felt a light tug which ended abruptly and heard a small odd noise.

“And we’re done.” Myrtle asserted, Wren turned around.

“So you can take it o-...” Her mouth froze in the ‘o’ shape as she looked at Myrtle’s hand. The zipper that had been down her back hung loosely before it bubbled, turning to the rubbery goo and then vanished into thin air.

“Take it off? Oh you can ask, but it’s no longer possible.” The witch said with a chuckle.

“WHAT?!” Wren yelled. “You said you’d break the curse, not double it!”

“Oh I broke the curse, the curse of a normal and boring love life. That you love it enough for me to be able to pluck this free speaks more of you and your husband’s feelings than I ever could. Do enjoy, sweetheart.”

“This isn’t what I wanted, this isn’t what we agreed!” Wren tried to demand but then suddenly found herself staggering, a force like a wind pushed her toward the door, casting her out of the shop. She picked herself up off the floor turning to see Myrtle framed in the doorway. “Sadly with dawn’s light, I must be away. Do come and visit next year, perhaps send that lovely husband of yours to get a costume of his own.” She said with another cackle, the door shutting and suddenly the store front shook, replaced by an empty abandoned building, no display, no signage.

As soon as Wren recovered from the shock she yelled out, pulling on the tail, the legs, the chest, anything she could, yet even if she could gain a decent amount of grip there was nothing for it. The costume was her now. She wondered about the witch’s words. Her husband’s feelings.. Surely he’d help, right? Otherwise it could well be a full year before she could make fresh demands of the witch, a year spent entirely within this closely hugging outfit...