

Jeeves was far beyond exhausted. He hated nothing in the world more than the wrath of Lady Agnes, but that seemed like the only emotion that she was capable of conveying to her only loyal servant. He had often wondered what possessed him to remain in her employ, but he always had to remind himself of just how much money she paid him to put up with her constant temper. He sighed and replaced yet another dress on the rack that seemed to contain hundreds, each made of the finest materials in the most fashionable designs. As perfect as they were, however, she had already turned down almost a dozen of them since he had started trying to find one for her nearly an hour ago. She had either cast them aside without even giving them a second glance, or put them on and worn them just long enough to make him think she had finally decided before screaming about how horrible it looked on her.

It didn't help that her particular stature meant that NOTHING looked good on her.

The beleaguered butler pulled dress after dress down the rails on their hangers, yanking them harder and harder as his frustration grew. He grumbled to himself, until as he pulled away another dress—

“Afternoon!”

“Good lord!” Jeeves yanked the last dress from its hanger roughly at the sudden appearance of a face poking out from between the dresses. It grinned almost maniacally, but more like a person that was unreasonably happy to be somewhere than like a villain. Furthermore, the face was entirely new to Jeeves, so he could only assume that the man had come from outside of the house somehow.

“Hmm, no... I don't like lord, that's not right. Tailor, not lord,” the man mused aloud.

“Ah! A tailor, thank God you've come! Lady Agnes is impossible to please this morning. She wants me to find her the perfect clothing for the day, and she doesn't approve of anything I bring her.”

“I don't blame her. Look at all this fur—” He stopped suddenly and fussed with the butler's tie. “Much better. Good tie, by the way; bowties are cool. Look at all this fur!” he continued as though there had been no interruption, tugging at the borders of all of the dresses along the long line of hanging clothes. “Fur, fur... Why do people wear fur anyway? Eating meat is fine; animals eat meat.

But tell me, when is the last time you saw an animal wearing another's fur? Of their own will?" By this point he had taken several steps up to the butler and looked him in the eye from so close that Jeeves could hear him breathing.

"It's all the Lady will wear," Jeeves replied. "She refuses to wear anything but the finest fashions, and fine fashion must have fur." That last part was a quote from the Lady herself, so he added as much of an impression of her voice as he felt safe doing.

"Fur, fur, fur," the tailor fussed, looking over the other dresses, even throwing a few onto the floor in his rush to look through them. Finishing there, he even took the time to toss through the box of random hats at the end. Only rarely were any of them used, as the mistress had decided that she hated hats last December, so there were hats that no one had seen in ages inside. "Ah! A beret!" He pulled it out and looked it over, top and bottom. "Berets are cool for certain." He put it on and glanced in the mirror, then took it off with disgust, throwing it into a dark corner of the room. "Forget berets, berets are no fun. Why can't a man find a fez in this hemisphere?"

"Sir, I would very much appreciate it if you could find some way to make the Lady happy for once. Do you think you could do something about her?"

"Yes, certainly, no doubt. Run along, I'll find something for her."

Jeeves was uncertain of leaving a man he had never met before alone with Lady Agnes, but he just couldn't bear to be anywhere near the woman for another moment. This in mind, he took his leave, casting once last glance back at the tailor as the man picked up a dress and held it in front of himself as though to check if it were the right size for him.

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Lady Agnes had been angry before, but now she was furious. Jeeves had left her nearly twenty minutes ago to find something for her to wear, and he had yet to return. Maybe the fool had finally decided to leave her like he had threatened several times already. That didn't annoy her as much as the fact that he had left her with nothing to wear, standing behind the changing screen. If someone didn't come soon, she would have to venture forth on her own, and she certainly had no desire for that.

Finally, however, she heard footsteps, and an odd humming that she swore could not be Jeeves. She was about to call out when the person spoke first.

“Your ladyship, I’ve come with a dress for you.” She knew it wasn’t Jeeves, and was about to scold him when the dress was thrown haphazardly ovetop of the screen. As soon as she set eyes on it, she knew that it was perfect. There didn’t seem to be an inch of it that wasn’t covered with beautiful ermine fur, silky and white across the surface of the dress. Forgetting immediately that she did not know who had given it to her, she immediately took it and began to put it on.

Outside, the tailor stood in the room alongside the fireplace. He stared about the room with a strange curiosity somewhere between a cat’s curiosity and a villain’s scheme. Leaning to one side, he sniffed the flower arrangement that sat on the ledge over the fireplace. He made a face, and surreptitiously took the vase of flowers and emptied it into the fireplace, not even seeming to care that it was unlit.

It took Lady Agnes several minutes of undignified twisting to finally squeeze her not inconsiderable girth into the dress, but once she had done it she felt three hundred pounds lighter. She gazed into the mirror on her side of the screen and marveled at how the dress complemented her form. It was somewhat tight, but even if it forced her to move by inches, the glamor was worth it. She could almost swear that it was literally making her thinner.

On the other side of the screen, the man had taken to poking around the umbrella rack that was set in one corner. He poked one of the umbrellas for a moment before pulling it out and opening it. He twirled it in the air over his shoulder, nodding his head as he tried to convince himself that it worked, but then vehemently shaking his head, folding the umbrella and tossing it unceremoniously into the fireplace with the flowers.

Lady Agnes suddenly winced. The dress was tight from the beginning, but she was almost convinced that it was becoming even tighter the longer she wore it. She was loath to admit it, but after several minutes of discomfort, she decided that she would have to work a little harder before she could fit properly into a dress of this size. She began to pull it off, but gave a sudden squawk of confusion as the dress pulled her skin as she tried to remove it. Frowning, she tried again, only to find the same

result. The dress was so tight that it was stuck fast to her skin! She was familiar with close fits, but this was an entirely new matter.

The man noticed her strange cries immediately, but made no move to help, nor did he attempt to inquire after her safety. Instead, he pulled out a fob watch from his pocket and looked it over a few times. Opening it, he twisted the knob, moving the minute hand five minutes ahead.

At the same time as the man turned the knob, Lady Agnes felt a distinct pinching around her middle, coming from the dress. She gasped in distress, unable to cry out because of the tightness of the dress. She glanced into the mirror, and stared in shock. There was no doubt that something strange was going on. While she did try to fool herself into thinking she was thinner than she was, she was nonetheless aware of the degree of her rotundness. Looking in the mirror, however, revealed that she had not only lost her distinctive pudginess, but in fact now looked almost unnaturally tall and thin. Not only that, but the dress, which she was certain had no sleeves when she had put it on, now had white-furred sleeves that extended down to her elbows and seemed to be... No, they were extending down the lengths of her arms!

The tailor had been patient for a few moments now as he waited for Lady Agnes, but even his patience had its limits. With a sigh and a shake of his head, he opened the watch again and turned the minute hand further forward.

This time, Lady Agnes was watching in the mirror as the watch hands turned. The sleeves jumped from her elbows all the way to her hands in a split second, and her hands suddenly changed radically, only the palms unfurred, instead bearing pads like an animal's paw. Even more shocking, claws now extended from her fingertips, making her hands look precisely like the paws of some animal! As she tried to steady herself, she found that her legs were also different. Knees would not bend right, and looking down revealed that they also looked nothing like human legs. Her feet especially looked like paws, while her thighs had become shallower, thinner from side to side and thicker from front to back. Worse, while her hips would let her stand on two feet, she could tell just by looking that they would not let her take more than a step or two without falling to all fours.

Her head was unchanged beyond some thinning around her cheeks, but streaks of white fur were reaching from her collar up along the length of her neck, reaching like ghostly fingers in search of purchase they could use to alter her visage into that of a beast. She whimpered at the thought, but no amount of struggle would let her escape this horror.

The man outside glanced at his watch again and then looked back at the screen. He seemed indecisive as he tried to decide if he should check on the Lady, but he ended his consideration with one last, slower twist of the watch's knob, setting the hands about five minutes further on.

The furry strands that were slowly reaching for Agnes' head finally broke the suspense with a rush of growth. For a moments, although they progressed upward, these fingers of fur made no gain on her head as her neck lengthened, and then then finally overtook her face, covering it in a rapid burst of growth. Her face's shape remained the same only for a moment, and then it changed as well. A narrow, tapered snout extended, absorbing her nose and mouth into a single unit, adorned by whiskers on either side. At the sides of her head, her ears grew up and rounded off, earlobes lost as her ears gained the ability to rotate and find the source of specific sounds. Her gaze into the mirror ended for a moment as she was forced to blink, and when her eyes opened again, she found herself staring into deep pools of blue rather than her usual human green. Whiskers extended from where her eyebrows had once been, and as she looked at herself in the mirror in awe, she realized that her breath was not strained anymore.

She thought briefly that it had completely finished, but then something began to extend behind her. She caught a glimpse of it in the mirror as her growing tail flicked around behind her back, and she managed to catch it with a little more effort, watching in wonder as it reached its full length, silky white with a black-stained end. As she glanced into the mirror, she recognized the form. She was not only wearing the fur of an ermine, she had entirely become one!

The tailor finally stepped around the corner of the screen, but stopped with a look of disappointment on his face.

"This is taking entirely too long," he commented. With another gesture, he pulled out the watch and twisted the knob once more.

Agnes squeaked in protest, but could manage no words, even as she found herself at a drastic loss for height. She fell to all fours as she lost height by the foot, squeaking her shock once the shrinking ended. She stood back on her haunches, and looked into the mirror to see that she was only a few inches tall. There was no indication that she had ever been anything but an ermine; even her posture had shifted, and she now stood on her haunches, front paws dangling before her as she sniffed the air.

“Well, there’s your wish then,” the man said from behind her. She turned to face him, chattering and squeaking in protest. “Well, don’t complain to me!” he said. “You wanted to have all of the finest fur. Now it’s just your own fur. Maybe you’ll change back some day. Maybe, if you’re lucky. For now, I’ll just give you a little change of scenery.”

With that, he tossed a small lace handkerchief over her form as she gave one last squeak of surprise. Almost instantly, the cloth sank down strangely, revealing that there was nothing within. The tailor leaned over and retrieved the kerchief, tucking it into his pocket along with the watch. Although he couldn’t see it, he knew that Agnes was now in a more natural, snowy environment, far better suited for her new shape.

Turning, he walked back out into the clothing area, and stopped for a moment by the cork board left there to inform staff of their household duties. He mused for a few moments, and then pulled a card from his opposite pocket. Carefully, he tucked it under a pin on the board, and then walked out of the house and down the road.

Later, when people were searching for Lady Agnes after her mysterious disappearance, they could only find that little piece of card stuck to the board, with only two words written on it.

The Tailor