

Part 10: Pants As The Need Requires

-Sometime Later-

The tiger dialed a number on his mobile phone. He'd thought about it a lot, and he'd given his feelings time to cool. After a few moments, he got someone's voicemail. With a swish of his tail, he waited for the message to finish playing.

"You know what? Let's give it another shot. Are you free Saturday night at seven? I'd love to spend some time with you then, alone. We could talk, eat, and maybe work things out. I hope to hear back from you."

And then he hung up. He had a lot of preparation to do...

-A Short Time After That-

"Alright, I've got it on and I'm coming back out. Tell me what you think?"

Teri walked out of the changing room clad in fabric the color of newly grown baby grass. The dress was tight around his stomach, but widened out up around the chest, with straps of fabric along the front of the shoulders that wrapped in hoops around the upper part of each arm. Around the tiger's hips it blossomed out like a flower, with several layers of varying shades of green ruffles: Some lighter, some darker, like layers of petals in a flower. The dress went down to his knees. The tiger had his long brown hair pulled back into a ponytail, bound with a cream-colored headband. If it weren't for the bone structure on his face and his scent, Xavier would have sworn he was looking at a lady.

The skunk scowled. "I THINK that I still don't understand why you're dragging me along to do this. I know you have female friends who would be better at this. Why drag me into it?"

The tiger glared at him, narrowing his pale blue eyes. "About the outfit, charcoal drawing." He put his hands on his hips, swaying them. "And Samantha and Georgette were busy this weekend. So you it was."

The act caused Xavier to look away. "Ok, I don't know why you feel the need to get so dressed up. I mean, it's just that guy. It's not like he hasn't seen the package under the wrapping paper before."

That sentiment provoked a huff from his feline friend, and then a wadded ball of paper thrown at him from the changing room. "That doesn't mean that the PACKAGING goes to waste, you fashion heathen!"

The paper smacked into his face with a soft crinkle. Xavier rolled his eyes. His roommate was being ridiculous again. With a soft sigh, he picked up the wadded paper and moved towards a trash can, dropping it inside. "Teri, just show up in a pair of jeans and a t-shirt. It's not like you're going to a fancy restaurant or anything." After a moment, he found himself unable to resist. "Also, 'charcoal drawing'?" He raised an eyebrow.

"I'm having trouble thinking of other black and white nicknames for you, ok? Shut up." The tiger folded his arms and looked away. "And you know my position on pants, Xavier."

"Yeah yeah. It's 'only when absolutely necessary', right?" The skunk sat back down on a bench. "I don't get what you have against them. They're utilitarian, warmer than shorts or those skirts you insist on prancing about in, and I've never had any comfort complaints with them." Xavier looked back down at his textbook. Teri had somehow talked him into coming along on this shopping trip, but he had brought his bookbag with him. A double major required a ton of studying, and Xavier had no intention of falling behind.

"They're just... such a stereotypically 'male' thing to wear." Teri grumbled. "And I guess when I started cross-dressing, it was at least in part because everyone was expecting me to do it anyway. Because I was such a 'flaming fag', according to the punks in the gym locker room." The tiger rolled his eyes and walked to a mirror in the changing room, turning his body around and trying to examine his dress-clad body from all sides. "I figured if I was going to have to deal with the stereotypes in high school, I could either fight an uphill battle to re-assert my masculinity at every turn, or I could just embrace it. And upon that day, pants died to me. Hey, does this dress make my butt look big?"

"Teri, I wouldn't answer that question for a girl, I'm not going to answer it for you." The skunk looked up from his book. For just a moment, it looked almost like the tiger was wiggling his butt at the skunk. And then, in the blink of an eye, Teri turned again, still trying to see his backside in the mirror. Xavier felt his face getting hot. "T-the dress looks nice, but does it come in blue? You'd look better with something that matched your eyes." He was eager to say anything to get his mind off the idea of the tiger waving his butt... just for him. He tried to think of anything else, finally settling on some girls he'd lusted after in high school.

He had no intention of joining the harem of boys Teri had following him like baby ducklings.

The tiger's eyes went wide at the comment, then narrowed, a smile growing along his lips. "See? You can help me with the selection process. I was right to bring you along, Charcoal Sketch!" He walked back to the changing room to close the door. "As soon as I get back into my regular things, we can look for the same dress, but in a nice sky blue!"

"You're really sold on that dress, huh?" Xavier watched as the green dress was flopped unceremoniously over the gray plastic top of the changing room wall.

He heard a purr coming from inside the changing room. "It's absolutely gorgeous! A perfect thing to wear on my date tomorrow. It'd be perfect, if it just had some pockets to keep a wallet and things."

"I've got pockets." Xavier smirked. "You know, in my PANTS."

"Which are far less elegant!" Xavier couldn't see the tiger as he changed his clothing, but he had a hunch Teri was pointing a finger at him. "I'm not going for a 'two bros going to grab a beer' look-"

Xavier's lips curled into a snarl. "You'd BETTER not be, after what happened last time you had booze."

"-I'm going for the 'powerful, feminine, and flamboyantly gay' look." The tiger huffed behind the changing table. "Pants ruin the effect!"

"You know what else they do? Save you money." The skunk looked out of the changing area into the Men's wing of clothing. "If I'm reading the signs right, you could buy two pairs of pants your size for just two thirds the price of that dress."

There was no response from the other side of the dividing wall. Xavier figured he'd hit home there. "Pockets aaaaand money!" He said, in a sing-songy tone. It would either convince his roommate to try something other than dresses on the whole day, or annoy him immensely. Either way, Xavier felt he would win.

"...I will consider ending my ancient blood feud with the long-legged garments of hate." Teri grumbled, pushing the changing room door open again. "But if I tolerate such a change in attire, it means we have to start from the ground up again!" He rubbed his chin. "I mean, should I go with khaki pants or jeans? Should I wear something tight to accentuate my ass, or go with something looser and more comfy? Do they make rainbow glitter spackled-jeans for men, or am I going to have to try to make my own? So many questions!" Teri's eyes were alight with excitement, his tail whipping kinetically behind him. "It's going to mean going back to the drawing board, Charcoal Drawing!"

"Oh god what have I done." Xavier grumbled, stuffing his book back into his backpack.

"You've ushered in a glorious new age of be-panted revolution!" Teri grinned, as he put an arm around Xavier's shoulders. "No let's get to work. It shouldn't take much more time, I promise. Maybe just another hour or so..."

Xavier rolled his eyes, letting the tiger lead him out. "Well, I guess if I've got no choice..." He looked around at the sea of clothing encircling them. "Why are we shopping at Doebucks, anyway? This place is like forty-five minutes away from our apartment as it is."

"Oh, I work here." Teri sighed. "Can't beat the employee discount."

Xavier stopped. "Wait, you work at a clothing store? I thought that'd be something you were excited for. Why do you always come home so frustrated?"

"They still make me put out the ugly clothes too, Xavier."

TO BE CONTINUED