

1

Jade and Izzy were seated at a booth in the buffet. Izzy had finished eating a while ago, and he'd been scrolling around on his phone, politely waiting on Jade before returning to the casino floor. When he looked up from the screen after a while though, he saw that Jade's plate was mostly untouched. Looking further up, he saw that she had her chin resting in her hand, and that she was staring off at something with a smile.

"Uh, Jade?" His voice surprised her a little, and she blinked. "You okay?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah. I was just watching those two," she said, pointing at a pair of people in the restaurant. A woman, a white rabbit wearing a slightly-fancier getup than the other employees of the casino, stood with her hands folded behind her back next to the chair of a canine man. "She's a hypnotist," Jade clarified, stating it as a matter of fact.

Izzy looked from Jade to the other rabbit and then back again. "A... Hypnotist, huh? That's a pretty, uh, bold claim. She looks just like any other employee here."

Jade smiled a little more - her look at the employee she'd named a hypnotist was dreamy. "You haven't been listening to her, huh?"

"No, I was looking at one of those blackjack cheat sheets."

"Mmhm," Jade replied absently. "I can hurry up, if you want."

"Nah, uh... The casino's open all night, and I'm not in a rush to blow through all my money."

"Mmhm." In a show of good faith, Jade cut off a bite and ate it, though her attention was still focused on the people she was watching.

With a concealed sigh, Izzy returned to reading on his phone. Now that Jade had pointed it out, though, he could pick out the woman's voice through the noise from the kitchen - she was speaking very loudly, in fact. "And we're all just soooo happy that you feel like you can enjoy yourself here, because we've put in every effort to make this place like a dream you can get lost in, and that's a pleasant thing to imagine, of course, and you..."

Her voice droned on and on, and Izzy shut it out, thinking she sounded more like she was trying to sell a captive audience on a cult than a hypnotist. He returned his attention to his phone for a while longer, and didn't look up again for a while.

After an extended silence, Jade said something. Or, at least, Izzy thought she did. Whatever she said had been too quiet for him to hear. "What was that?"

"Yes," Jade repeated, her voice only a little louder this time, breathy and hardly distinguishable from a squeak. Her chin still rested on her hand, but this time when he looked, her eyes were shut and her head had tilted lazily to one side. Her blue hair had slid over her forehead and covered her eyes somewhat. "Y-y... I'll... Mhm..." Her plate, Izzy saw, was still full.

"Hey, Jade?" Izzy huffed to himself. "Hey, Jade, wake up," he said, a little louder. When that didn't work, he leaned forward across the table and gave her shoulder a shake. "Jade."

"Mm... Hmm?" Jade's eyelids fluttered open. She stared ahead blankly for a moment, then her eyes slid shut again.

Izzy gave her another shake, less gentle this time. "Jade! Hey. I know it's kinda late, but we just got here. Don't you want to play games before you sleep?"

"Oh?" Jade lifted her head from her hand and stretched, yawning. "Oh gosh," she said, sitting up straight in her seat. "I dunno what just happened. Got real tired all of a sudden."

"It's fine. Do you still wanna eat?"

"Oh gosh, yeah," Jade said, putting a hand on her stomach. "I'm... Actually starving, now that I think about it. Uh, one minute."

She didn't need much more than that to down what was on her plate, eating quickly enough now that she'd remembered she was hungry, apparently. "Jeez. You weren't listening to that 'hypnotist' try to sell that guy on dessert were you?" Izzy chuckled.

Jade paused with her fork on the way to her mouth. "First of all, rude," she said, before taking another bite. "And second," she said as she chewed, "What hypnotist?"

Izzy blinked. "The... You said the-" Izzy looked over at the rabbit Jade had pointed at, and she was still talking to the canine. Her body obscured Izzy's view of his face, but they were still there. The woman's voice had dropped lower though, and Izzy could no longer make it out. "The lady over there, you were watching her, and you told me that she's a hypnotist."

"You're crazy," Jade said, through another mouthful. "'Cuz I certainly didn't."

"You... Yes you did." Izzy squinted, then folded his arms. "Oh, I get it. This is some kinda weird prank. And pretty soon, you're going to start clucking like a chicken at me and I'm not going to be able to shut you up and you're going to blame her. Gotcha."

Jade paused in her eating again. "Uh... No. One of us is clearly imagining things here." She quickly finished what was left of her meal. "I'm willing to forget about it, though, if you're ready to go play."

"With pleasure," Izzy said, sliding out of the booth and standing up. As they left the buffet, Izzy looked over his shoulder at the woman. She had turned to look at him already, and she waved at him with a kind smile before turning her attention back to the man she had been talking to. Izzy blinked and shook his head, putting the weirdness behind him.

It was easy enough to put it all out of his mind with the sensory overload of the main floor. Lights blinked and bells rang as levers clicked and coins fell. Dealers shuffled

cards for patrons who shouted their bets back. All in all, it was hard to focus your attention in there on any one thing for too long.

"So many people," Jade breathed.

"Just as many as last time we passed by," Izzy said.

"Yeah, but..." Jade paused and looked around the sprawling room. "It's *different* now. It feels like everyone's looking at me."

"Anxious?"

"No, no. Just the opposite, I... I like it. I really really like it."

Izzy raised an eyebrow and looked at Jade, who was bouncing on her feet, gazing around excitedly. This certainly wasn't the sort of behavior he'd expect to see from her, to say the least. "Uh... Huh. I think you might be imagining things. Is this about that whole thing with the hypnotist?"

Jade giggled. "Hypnotist? You're weird, Izzy. C'mon, let's go play something!" She hurried off towards a slot machine, leaving Izzy with little to do but follow after her. When he caught up, he found that she was already at a machine with her gambling money loaded into it, and was in the middle of pressing the button to start it.

"Jade?" Izzy walked up to her machine. "I thought we were gonna play blackjack."

"Huh?" Jade's eyes flicked from the spinning reels to Izzy's face for a second, then went right back. He crossed his arms. "Uh, sorry! I just, I heard that the machines here were really good, and... Uh..."

Jade was interrupted as the reels started clicking into place. Cherry, cherry, cherry. It wasn't a huge payout - she was on a cheaper machine - but from the look that lingered on her face for a moment, you might have thought she'd really won it big. "Ooh!" She reached out and grabbed Izzy's shoulder out of excitement. "I'm a winner..."

“Uh, right.” Izzy hopped up onto a stool at the adjacent machine, resigning himself to watching her play for a while. “You know there are, like, tons of more *interesting* games here, right? I mean, you don’t even have to think about slots. Wouldn’t video poker or something even be more interesting?”

Jade, who had continued playing while he talked with less luck, shook her head. “No! Because, like, winning this made me feel really really good!”

“That’s... They all do! That’s what they’re made to do. Quit actin’ so weird!”

Jade wasn’t listening. She stared enraptured at the third reel, with a dollar sign showing on each of the first two. “Ooh! Ooh!” She grabbed for Izzy again, this time placing her hand on his thigh - a bit far up his thigh, at that. The third reel stopped, and she gasped. “Look, I won! I won!” Bells on the machine rang, proclaiming her victory.

Izzy leaned forward. “You won, like, fifteen dollars.”

“I won!” Jade repeated, oblivious. She turned back towards Izzy, bouncing in her seat. “Oh my God, Izzy, can I just say that I am, like, super hard right now?”

Izzy nearly fell out of his seat. “Jade, what-”

“Here, look!” She grabbed his wrist and pulled his hand between her legs. Before he pulled away, his palm indeed did come up against the bulge in her pants, and it twitched at the contact. “See?” She giggled and tilted her head back, pushing the button on the machine again.

Too stunned to be upset, Izzy watched her in silence for a few more (losing) spins. “Jade, what *did* happen back in the restaurant? You’re, uh, not yourself.” Izzy was sure that Jade wouldn’t have pulled a prank that required her to be so extremely *comfortable* in a crowded space like this.

“Wh-whadda ya mean?” The flush of Jade’s face was evident as she looked around the room. “I, I just feel really *good*. Like everyone’s looking at me and I want them to look, because, like...” She paused. “I dunno!” The reels on her machine paused on

cherries again, and Jade bit her lip and made a high-pitched noise. "I guess I just *want* everyone to see how good I feel." She moved to hit the machine's button again, then paused. "I'm gonna take my pants off," she declared, standing up from her seat.

Izzy barely had time to catch her wrist and stop her before she could follow through. "Jade! You... You can't do that," he said slowly. She looked confused. "Because we'll get kicked out."

Jade blinked at him. "But... Why? It's just *fun*."

Izzy rubbed his palm against his forehead. "Because you're not allowed to just take your pants off anywhere you want. Look, I think we gotta get outta here. Sherry will know what to do with you."

Jade swooned for a moment, then giggled. "Yeah, she would," she said dreamily. "But I wanna stay! I wanna win more. It's really fun!"

"No, Jade, you don't understand, you're... I dunno! You were talking about a hypnotist, and then you started acting different. I don't know if you really got hypnotized or what, but this is super weird. We can come back tomorrow, ok?"

"Hmm..." The gears in Jade's head turned almost visibly, trying to process things. "So you're saying I got hypnotized - like, I'm hypnotized right now - and I don't even know it?" Her face reddened again, and she giggled harder, leaning against Izzy and wrapping an arm around his shoulder. "That's pretty hot."

Izzy had both of his hands on his face. "This is hopeless."

As he said that, a cheerful voice behind him said, "Hello! Is there something I can help you two with tonight?"

"Yes," Izzy said, as Jade grabbed her own breast. Blushing, he turned away to speak to the person behind him. "See, Jade and I here, we were- Hey!" Izzy blinked. Behind him was a white rabbit woman - the very same one who he'd seen in the buffet, and, supposedly, Jade's hypnotist. "Uh..." Izzy struggled to find the words. "Hey, this is a weird question, but are you a, uh, hypnotist?"

The white rabbit tilted her head. "Huh? What makes you ask?"

Jade leaned forward, peeking over his shoulder from behind. He could feel the heat of her body on his back. "Oh! Are you that 'hypnotist' Izzy was talkin' about?"

Izzy put his hand back on his forehead. "Uh, look. I just think there's been some kinda mistake. Jade, here, told me you were hypnotizing someone in the restaurant, and..."

"Oh!" Jade perked up. "Now I remember that. And then I went all fuzzy, and... Ehehe..." She nuzzled her cheek against Izzy's neck. "I like feeling fuzzy."

"And now she's acting like this," Izzy said, pointing at Jade. "Can you please just tell me what's really going on here?"

The white rabbit looked between their faces. "Oh, goodness. See, I *am* a hypnotist, and I will admit, I *was* hypnotizing someone in the restaurant. Now, I don't mean to brag, or anything, but I am quite good at my job and sometimes, if innocent bystanders eavesdrop a little too closely..." She looked at Jade with a sternness that lacked sincerity. "Well, then they stop being quite so innocent anyhow, I suppose."

Jade blinked, still trying to remember. "Hmm. Well, that's okay, I suppose. I mean, I guess I'm probably pretty easy to hypnotize. It turns me on, so that's probably why I-"

Izzy reached up over his shoulder and covered Jade's mouth with a hand before she could proclaim her enjoyment of this terribly strange situation any more. "Look, ma'am, I-"

"My name's Millie. Nice to meet you!"

"Uh, right," Izzy continued. "Millie, if this is all some weird accident, would you mind, uh, fixing her? I'd like to go play some games, but it's kinda hard, because, uh..."

"I'm kinda hard," Jade said, surely louder than was necessary. She giggled, and Izzy sighed.

"Well, Izzy," Millie said, "I think I can understand your frustration. Your friend here is getting to have all the fun! But it puts me in kind of a tight spot. See, the casino hires me to help people enjoy themselves, and accident or no, she sure seems to be enjoying herself. You like being hypnotized, right, Jade?" Jade nodded against his shoulder vigorously. "See, if my guess is correct, I've just associated winning with a simple loss of inhibition for her."

"She was talking about wanting to take her pants off," Izzy said, starting to feel a bit angry about having his plans for the night diverted in such an odd direction. "I don't want to get kicked out because you messed with her brain!"

"Oh. Hmm." Millie rubbed her chin. "She must have been listening a bit longer than I thought. See, I just reminded the person I was working with that it can be *exciting* being in a crowd - he had a bit of anxiety about it, you see. Perhaps she took it the wrong way. Well, I doubt you'd be kicked out, anyhow, if nobody complained, and I doubt that they would."

Izzy stared with his mouth open. "You... What kind of casino is this? You can just go and take your pants off, and..." He shut his mouth and took a deep breath. "Look, while I'm sure Jade had a ton of fun, or whatever, with all of this, I'd really like to get her back to normal."

"I *feel* normal," Jade said in protest.

"I'm sure," Izzy grumbled. "But you can't plan to let her just leave like this; you gotta fix her *sometime*."

"Oh, of course!" Millie smiled, as though she were innocent in all this. "Tell you what. You go play some games, leave Jade with me, and I'll send her back to you in a while good as new!"

Jade bounced behind Izzy. "Ooh! Are you gonna hypnotize me again?"

"You bet!" There was nothing predatory in Millie's look - only in everything else about her, as it seemed to Izzy.

"That'd be fine, and all, but I'm sure when Jade is thinking straight again, she wouldn't appreciate me having left her in your company alone. No offense, but... I mean, you hypnotized her already. I guess."

"Yeah!" Jade leaned forward again. "You should hypnotize Izzy, too. I wanna watch that."

"Jade!"

"What?"

Izzy stepped back and took Jade by the shoulders. "Jade, this would be a lot easier if you'd just snap out of it on your own. Wake up, okay?"

"I *am* awake!"

Millie was still watching them with a smile. "Okay, okay. How about this - you two come with me to the VIP section where it's quieter, I'll get back inside Jade's head and do what I need to, and then you can hang out back there for a while. Sound good?"

"Now *that* sounds just fine," Izzy said, relieved.

"Yeah! Hypnotize us!," Jade said.

"Only you, Jade," Millie said, raising her eyebrows. "I don't think Izzy wants to be hypnotized like you do."

"Aw. But it'd be fun!"

"It'll be fun anyhow," Millie assured her. "Now follow me, please!" She pointed to a door on the other side of the wide room, and the three of them walked across to it. Millie opened the door by waving a badge at an electronic lock and let them through.

The place behind the door was much smaller than the main casino floor. While the main area looked about like you'd expect, with red carpets and flashy machines, this area was more subdued. There were no slots to draw the eye, though there were some tables that well-dressed people played card games at. The carpet and walls were black and the furniture was a dark purple, and there was a small bar with a single bartender in a dark suit. It took a bit for their eyes to adjust to the dimmer lounge.

Millie looked to see who all was around. VIPs or no, nobody seemed to acknowledge their intrusion. "Let's go sit over there," she said, indicating a trio of empty cushioned chairs around a glass table. She left the way, taking her seat first, and Izzy and Jade followed suit. Something somewhere between jazz music and what you might hear at a spa played over the lounge's speakers, though not so loudly that it made conversation difficult.

"Alright, this is a good spot, don't you think?"

"I don't know much about what spots are good for hypnotizing someone, so I'll trust you," Izzy said.

"Very good," Millie said with a smile. "Jade, may I?"

"Yes!" Jade squirmed in her seat. Her erection was still quite visible, and she didn't seem interested in hiding it. "Yes, please."

"And Izzy, are you sure you don't want to have some fun with your friend while she's hypnotized?"

Izzy blinked. "Uh, yeah. I'm good. She's the one who's into this stuff. I mean, apparently. Plus, that'd be weird to make her, what, put on a show for me?"

"She wouldn't mind, I think," Millie insisted. "But if you say so!" She turned to face Jade and leaned forward. "Alright, Jade, get nice and comfortable; this will take a bit. Izzy, you don't listen too close, okay?"

"What? Do you plan on doing *more* weird stuff to her?"

"Of course not!" Millie pulled something from a pocket of her jacket. "But I am quite a good hypnotist, as I mentioned, and I gather that you don't want to go under."

"Oh. Right." Izzy turned his head to hide his grin. Did this lady really think that she'd be able to put him under? "Uh, I'll be good."

"Of course you will. Now, Jade, before, I took you under with just my voice, but I can take you much deeper this time if you'll keep your eyes focused on this." She held up a length of golden chain from which a round blue charm of some sort hung. "You *would* like to go deep, yes?"

Jade nodded, her eyes wide and fixed on the charm. "Uh-huh."

"Going deep can be quite exciting," Millie said, and her chain started to swing left and right in front of Jade's face.

"Uh-huuuuuuuh," Jade breathed, her turquoise eyes sparkling with what appeared to be quite genuine awe as she gazed at the swinging pendant.

"Shh. You don't need to make a sound. I already know that I won't be telling you anything you don't already know." Jade nodded back at Millie, smiling, and Millie continued. "There's just a little part of your brain that I need to convince that *now* is a good time to slip deep, deep down into a nice, cozy spell of trance. Because I know that you're *really* ready to go into trance, well, all the time - I can tell that it feels so natural to you that you'd spend every day in trance, if you could. Even Izzy can tell how much you love it, I'm sure."

Izzy groaned, wanting to be left out of this as much as possible, but what Millie said was at least not untrue. Millie might've silenced Jade, but the overwhelmed smile on her face spoke loudly enough for itself. He wouldn't admit it to Millie, certainly, but he knew enough about some of the things Jade and her girlfriend Sherry got up to to know that Jade was a practiced individual when it came to this sort of thing.

After watching Jade slowly start to blank out for a while, Izzy realized that he must have, once again, tuned Millie out. He'd not caught a word of what she said for - how long had it been? The last time he let that happen, Millie had wound up saying some pretty weird things, apparently. Sitting up straighter in his seat, he resolved himself to pay better attention this time.

Millie was speaking in a softer voice now, but her words were coming quickly. "That's right, just letting my words fly around your head like pretty little butterflies that brush soft wings against your face and let your eyelids know that it's time to feel warm and drowsy, warm and drowsy and heavy and only just barely able to stay open enough for you to keep watching even though they want so very badly to close..."

Izzy blinked. Even trying to pay attention to Millie was a challenge - her breathless approach to hypnotism was dizzying even as a bystander. Izzy was even starting to think that, just maybe, if he were watching Millie's swinging necklace, that she might even be able to convince him to sleep. Nothing like what had happened to Jade, of course, but he could imagine himself falling asleep if he followed along with his eyes as closely as Jade was. But instead, he was watching Jade's face, staring at her as all of what composure remained about her started to slide away, revealing her to be nothing but a vacant, drooling girl who couldn't help but love how she felt when...

Izzy forced himself to sit up straight again, blinking and rubbing at eyes that were astonishingly bleary. When they cleared, he saw that Jade was on the edge of trance, about to fall as certainly as a tree that had all but the last bit of its trunk cut and was just waiting for a final push, for someone to say the word and give it permission to fall...

He realized, then - and just in time - that he had been listening to Millie, and that most of his disjointed thoughts had come from her mouth. Inexplicably, he felt a flash of anger. He might, if he'd not caught himself, have wound up in the same position that Jade had, hypnotized by mere proximity - just the idea of it embarrassed him, and his brain rebelled against the picture it imagined with frustration.

Though he fumed, he stayed silent, because Millie was dropping Jade. Millie had leaned forward, and now she whispered something in Jade's ear, and in the very next moment Jade's forehead was resting against Millie's shoulder. Millie had her hand on Jade's back, rubbing small, reassuring circles as she whispered her deeper down, solidifying the trance until she could push Jade back into her seat and have her sprawl there like a ragdoll.

Satisfied with her work, clearly, Millie turned to Izzy. "What do ya think?"

"Seems... Excessive." Izzy looked once again at Jade, and, seeing her sitting in such an undignified manner, he turned away quickly. "Aren't you almost done?"

"Oh, yes," Millie said, pocketing her necklace. "Though, if you don't mind me asking, why didn't you let yourself go into trance?"

Izzy furrowed his brow and frowned, not meeting her eye. "What?"

"I saw - just out of the corner of my eye - that your face was doing everything Jade's was."

"No it-" Izzy huffed. "Ugh. Look, just leave me out of it, and tell Jade to be normal again so we can get outta here."

"Well, I doubt that'll happen." Millie giggled. "Your body must be so heavy in your seat that you can't even stand up."

Izzy rolled his eyes in an attempt to mask his mild panic at the idea that she might be right. He hadn't noticed, but prompted to think about it, he realized that he felt as though his seat had swallowed him halfway. "Oh, please. Like I said, leave me out of this mess."

"I just can't seem to!" Millie had, apparently, entirely forgotten what she was supposed to be doing with Jade, because she'd turned in her seat to face Izzy instead. "See, Jade might have gone under the first time by accident, but you knew if you let my words in that they'd hypnotize you, and you *still* did it! I think you must want it even more than she did."

"And I think *you* must not be very good at reading people," Izzy retorted. "I'm quite awake, thank you very much."

"Of course you are, Izzy. I haven't given you permission to sleep yet! Watch my hand."

Millie raised her hand up in Izzy's direction and drew a circle in front of his face with her dancing fingers. Without giving it a second thought, Izzy did as she asked, watching her fingers flit about around his field of vision. "I don't *need* your permission to sleep." She giggled, and he added, "Because I don't even want to."

"Because you can't stop watching my fingers?"

"N- Nuh-uh." Despite his protest, his eyes were still firmly fixed on her hand, and he wasn't even trying to pull them away.

"Oh. Okay, then. Let's make a bet. I know you came here to gamble, after all. I bet that when I stop waving my hand for you, you're going to switch off and be as vacant and blank as Jade is. Because your mind is only moving as fast as I let it, and I'm only letting it move as fast as my fingers." She slowed the pace of their motion. "So when they slow down, your brain slows down. You get tired. Sleepy. Heavy. Can you still speak, Izzy? Or is your tongue too..." She'd been gradually slowing the circling of her hand even more, and now she brought the motion to a crawl. "Slow?"

Izzy found his mouth already open when he tried to speak. It was - as anyone watching the poor boy might have guessed - impossible for him to do so. He'd slumped back in his seat, with only a little more posture than Jade had, and was drooling onto his chin already. At long last, he managed to put together one word. He said, "Not." It took so much out of him to do so that, by the time he managed to do it, he'd forgotten why he'd said it.

"Shh," Millie said. "I still have to tell you what's at stake. If you let yourself slip under that trance you're already neck-deep in, I'll bring you out and back into trance so many times that your brain is going to be fried for a week, and then I'm gonna make you and Jade part of my show tonight. And, well, we don't even need to worry about

what would happen if you don't go under. You're already there. I've already won." Her hand stopped, and in the same moment, her fingers snapped. "Sleep."

Izzy could resist no more than a lifeless doll being picked up by some giant hand might. His eyes shut with a forcefulness that, as it seemed, knocked him backwards, sending him sliding against the back of his seat and leaving him draped over the armrest, with his head and one arm limply dangling over it. Millie leaned forward and cupped his chin gently, lifting his head. "Up," she said, raising him until he was sitting up again. "Wake up, Izzy."

"Wha?" Izzy blinked, feeling almost like he'd just been dropped into a pool of cold water. "What just..."

"Look into my eyes, Izzy," Millie said, and her voice sounded almost as authoritative as it felt to him. He looked, and they looked back into his, past them, through him. She was still holding his chin. "Drop for me, now." Izzy's eyelids fluttered shut again, grateful for the excuse to do so. Her hand was the only thing keeping his head up. She let him drift for a moment before saying, "Up again, Izzy. Eyes open."

Izzy opened his eyes only halfway this time, and didn't even bother lifting his head. "Why're ya doin' this," he mumbled.

"No words. Eyes only on my eyes. Every time you rise and fall, you rise less and you fall more. Deep sleep now, Izzy. Wake up." Izzy tried to say something more, but he couldn't even open his eyes all the way when he was 'up,' let alone do much more than slur his words. "Sleeping again in three, two, one. Sleeping now. Waking up in one, two, three. Deep sleep now."

Izzy's mind was exhausted, and Millie didn't let up, bringing him up and down several times more. Before long, the difference between "waking" and "sleeping" was completely indistinguishable for Izzy. Everything was constant - he was hearing Millie speak, and he was rushing to obey as well as he could, chasing the delicious high he felt every time she gave him permission to drop all over again, deeper and deeper. She eventually guided him back into his seat and, standing up and walking behind him, leaned over his shoulder and continued to whisper to him. Her words no longer held any meaning to his 'conscious' mind, if it could even still be called

conscious - though his eyes stayed barely-open, they were glassy, and there was no spark of thought in them.

Really, Millie hadn't *needed* to overwhelm him quite so much. Izzy had gone under so easily that she knew he'd be easy enough to toy with all night long, if she'd wanted to. But with him this deep - and he was deeper than even Jade, who had hardly moved a muscle since Millie had sent her sprawling back into her seat - Izzy would make for just as good of a performance as his friend would. She thought she'd lucked out coming across just one extra-susceptible rabbit before her show tonight; two was even better. And there was still plenty of time before the show - she figured she'd warm them up by having them provide some entertainment to the other guests on a more individual basis beforehand.