Heart of Stone

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A Vore Romance

by

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Book 1

She coiled around him. No escape. She showed him her throat to inspire fear and he shuddered for the wrong reasons. That was okay.

As long as he squirmed, Ink didn't care.

Chapter 1

The Fat Lamia's Proposition

Ink's stomach churned through the intruder faster than she had intended, which was a shame; she would have liked to have played with them longer. With a clench, she deposited their soggy remains into her tail and sighed, watching the bulge travel through her long, magenta underbelly.

"You weren't the one," she hissed, "but you were delicious."

Evidence of their tryst lay scattered around her cave. The man's clothes had been tossed into random piles next to the pool she used to bathe herself. His sword, his bag, and his bow had been deposited at the mouth of the cave. His semen, still warm, was sprayed over the front of Ink's distended belly, and tits, and lips, and honestly it was all over the floor as well, though Ink had refrained from letting him cum inside of her. She was just about to dip into the pool when the sound of scales on stone made her taste the air.



“Gladdis,” she said. “What do you want?”

“You can take off your blindfold around me, Ink,” Gladdis said. “Or are you afraid that I’m going to turn to stone as well?”

Ink snorted and fingered the black silk that covered her eyes. When was the last time she had removed her blindfold? A week? A month? Yes, it had to have been a month, because there was still a bruise on her side from bumping into the statue of the farmer that had wandered into her lair. She still regretted meeting his eyes. His cock had been enormous. She would have liked to see how it felt sliding down her throat.

“Fine, fine,” she said. “Here.”

Even the faint twilight shining through the holes in the ceiling



were enough to make her blink. Gladdis was just a blur; a faint, green smudge against the brown backdrop of the walls. Rubbing her eyes, Ink waited for the world to glue itself back together. Was her tail really that fat? And when had she acquired so many statues?

They stood around her cave in various poses ranging from fear to satisfaction. Ink liked to think that the ones that she petrified in her coils were the lucky ones. The rest were unfortunate casualties of curious villagers and unprepared monster hunters.

Or idiots, as she liked to call them.

Gladdis slid further into the room, giggling at the erect farmer.

“Did you enjoy your meal?” she asked.

Ink frowned. Gladdis was smiling like she had just made a joke, but there was nothing funny about her feeding habits. Something warm dribbled onto her hand. Ah, the cum.

“An unfortunate side effect of my venom,” she said, licking her hand. “You wouldn’t know anything about it.”

“Everything you do makes men hard, huh?” Gladdis said.

Ink rolled her eyes. She dipped an arm into her pool and brought out a sponge, using it to wipe away the residue of the night. Meanwhile, Gladdis continued to weave throughout the room, admiring the dozens of statues. A warm summer breeze ruffled the tall grass that grew in the field beyond the cave. If Ink tried hard enough, she could smell the fires from the human village over the ridge where men and women lived their lives in fear of the terrifying monsters that made their homes beyond their walls.

Or neighbors, as Ink liked to call them.

Gladdis was the most persistent of the bunch. While many of her neighbors boasted high resistance to magic, not many could look a basilisk in the eye. Lamia, cousins of the basilisk, had no such problems, but Ink was…what was the word her mother used? Inhospitable. Only Gladdis could deal with her mercurial moods. Even the bugbears, notoriously horny, passed by her cave on their orgy

nights.

“You look like you’ve been keeping yourself busy,” Ink said, nodding at Gladdis’ belly. The soft, brown skin flowed sideways over her scales, looking like an overfilled bowl of pudding. Gladdis, undeterred, chuckled as she took a handful of her gut and shook it at the basilisk.

“That’s because I hunt, Ink, I hunt,” she said. “You’re always sitting in your cave, waiting for the next yeoman to stumble into your coils. If you picked your prey, you could put some padding on your hips. Maybe then you’d be able to find a mate.”

“I don’t think that’s the reason I can’t find a mate.”

“Ugh.”

Ink finished washing herself and looked at her reflection in the black pond. Her lanky, blue hair hung in curls around her breasts, tickling the thick areolas. Her skin was clean, at least, though pale from lack of sunlight, and the feathers on her tail were well pruned. She picked a venomous yellow quill from the bunch and held it into the moonlight. It was said that planting one under a woman’s pillow would help with fertility. Ink didn’t know about that, but she knew that tickling a man’s balls with one would get him to cum faster than he could sneeze.

“He’s out there,” she said, placing her blindfold back over her eyes. “Somewhere.”

“Prince Charming,” Gladdis said. When Ink stared at her, she shrugged her shoulders. “He’s a guy from a human book. He’s like, the model of a perfect man. Oh, and also: he’s not real.”

“There are men born with resistance to magic.”

“Not your kind of magic, hun. Just pick a guy with good bones and fuck him for a fortnight. My Anthony’s given me six broods and that man’s dumber than a rock. Got a few buns in my oven as we speak.”

Again, Gladdis jiggled her stomach. Her oversized breasts did a

merry dance as the bangles on her wrists dug into the skin. Ink wrinkled her nose and returned her attention to the man currently curving through her intestines. He had been big and buff and clever, but a mate? Not so much. He hadn't even been worth testing.

"And what are you going to do if you find a guy who can resist those pretty eyes of yours and he's a complete jerk, huh?" Gladdis continued. She sidled up to Ink and let their tails intertwine. It was a placating gesture. Ink allowed Gladdis to wind until their bellies were pressed together and their mouths were an inch apart. The lamia's kiss tasted like poison. Ink's eyelids flickered as she suppressed a moan. "You don't have to keep him. You're clearly pent up. I'll probably eat Anthony once this brood is born. The poor man can't take what I have to offer. That's why the best pair for a snake is-"

"A snake," Ink said, pushing her away. Gladdis maintained her hold on her, rubbing her tits gently across Ink's smaller chest. "It's



just…at least Anthony can look at you."

"I can look at you," Gladdis said, pecking her lips. "I can look at you all you want."

"You're not in love with me, Gladdis, your husband's penis is just small."

"Bah, love," Gladdis groaned. "Another storybook concept. Love can go jump off a bridge. We only need two things: food and sex. Everything else is extra."

"Fine," Ink said, kissing her back.

Gladdis was already so wet that when she inserted her tail into her cunt, it sank almost halfway, caught into the sucking, slurping conveyor belt of dense muscle and rubbery flesh. Ink was pulled in up to her hips, then her armpits. A vivid warmth was spreading over her skin. She raised her arms so that Gladdis, with her hands on Ink's head, could press her in up to her chin. Gladdis clenched, moaning, and Ink allowed herself to be tugged into a roiling inner world.

Her tits were crushed against the ever-moving wall of slimy meat. As Ink's fingertips brushed over the silky surface of her innards, Gladdis gasped, then relaxed, plunging her deeper with her hands. Once Ink was tightly nestled, she squeezed her hands loose with a pop.

"It's been a while," she whined, "and this doesn't work if you don't move, Ink."

"Sorry."

Ink closed her eyes and folded the tip of her tail in and up, running it along Gladdis' walls. She brought it all the way up to her stomach, cognizant of the way she was stretching the lamia's underbelly, then dragged the tip down, twisting as she did. The result was a gentle squeeze of pleasure. Gladdis kept her strength in check.

"That's good, that's good," she murmured, reclining against a statue.

Sweat trickled down Ink's brow. She let her tongue out and

placed it on the wall, sucking and nibbling, teasing the engorged flesh. Gladdis responded by kneading her body.

Two hands cupped Ink's breasts from the outside. She tried to resist at first, but soon found that with a fresh meal in her stomach, the expert advance of the lamia was too much. Gladdis' vagina was clenching around her, reminiscent of the coiling that her kind used when they mated. With instinct running through her veins, Ink gave herself to the moment and let herself flow inside of her friend, twisting and turning, kissing and licking. Gladdis continued the dance



and together they writhed, one inside of the other, until, exhausted, Ink surfaced between the lips of Gladdis' cunt, her face awash in sweat and slime. Gladdis leaned forward and tried to kiss her forehead. Instead, she just mashed her sweaty underbelly against Ink's face.

"Oops," she said.

"That's fine," Ink sputtered. "Let me up."

Gladdis clenched around Ink's neck. Her insides were still sucking at the basilisk's limbs.

"Every time I see you in there, I think to myself, 'Gladdis, what if you just kept her inside of you for the rest of the week? She probably wouldn't mind'."

"I would mind," Ink said.

She flexed her muscles, but the soft surface of her cage wouldn't allow her to use much force. Gladdis slipped her deeper for her insolence — a casual display of power.

"Why would you mind?" Gladdis asked, patting her cheek. "I mean, really, what are you doing here in your cave? You hardly eat, you hardly socialize, and really, if you can't be a good basilisk, you might as well be a good toy. Hehe, I got you to blush. Were you always this submissive, or are you just so used to being on bottom that you've grown to like it?"

Ink's annoyed hiss only made Gladdis laugh harder. She gave her one more squeeze, then unrolled herself, allowing Ink to push up onto her stomach. Gladdis rubbed her face against the soft, brown skin.

"Stop it," Ink demanded. "I swear I'll bite you."

"That would be worse for you than it would be for me," Gladdis purred. She pushed Ink up between her breasts, kissing her, slime and all. Ink lay there for a moment, listening to the rise and fall of Gladdis' chest while her muscles recovered.

After a few minutes, Ink slid down onto the cave floor and made her way to the pool. Gladdis followed, uninvited, humming a human song to herself as they both entered the cold water, washing away the

residue. Ink took a jar of herbs from a stony shelf and poured some of the powder into her hands. When it was nice and lathered, she applied it to Gladdis' hair, washing away while the lamia hummed. Then, she turned, and Gladdis did the same for her, adding a nice back massage in the process of soaping up her lithe body.

"You know that the rest of us do this in a communal pool, right?" Gladdis asked. Ink grunted noncommittally and slithered out of the water to dry off. "You should meet the others. They're so nice, Ink, and you can wear your blindfold if you want. Are you worried about Trixy?"

"No," Ink spat. She picked at her blindfold. The silk ribbon had a way of comforting her. "I'm just not social, Gladdis."

"I know," Gladdis giggled. "That's why I get you all to myself. Their loss."

She slid out of the water and stretched. One of the statues had been frozen with their arms out, allowing Ink to hang several towels over them. Gladdis took one and looked out toward the mouth of the cave where the sun was just beginning to peek over the tall grass, bathing the tips in gold. The farmer's erection looked particularly juicy in the warm, morning light.

"Hey," Gladdis said, "do you ever-"

Ink's towel hit her full in the face. Gladdis shrugged and stretched again, then headed toward the exit. Ink watched her leave, ignoring the strange, lonely feeling in her stomach.

It was probably gas, she told herself.

Chapter 2

The Power of Love

Ink was napping in the back of the cavern when she heard a dull thud and a whispered apology. It had been a day since Gladdis' visit and she had spent most of her time sleeping, digesting, and thinking about the lamia's offer.

"Sorry, er, whoever you are. I'll just…oh goodness, I think it's broken."

Ink dropped silently from her alcove, tasting the air. It was a human standing at the mouth of her cave, holding the petrified cock of the farmer who now lay dickless on the floor. He was young for a



man, sturdy, yet carrying no weapon as far as Ink could tell. She could smell the cloth humans used to cover themselves with, but no steel. The human didn't take any notice of her until she was right behind him. He was still trying to attach the farmer's cock.

"Maybe if I had some glue…"

"Looking for something?"

The human jumped so high that he actually hit his head on the low roof of the entrance. Rubbing his injured scalp, he turned slowly to face the basilisk who smiled, showing off her prominent fangs.

"Er, hello," he said. "My name is Augustus Cedwick. I'm, uh, rather lost."

"I'm afraid that you've been found."

"Right."

"Close your eyes."

A rational man would have run for the hills. She would have caught them, true, and swallowed them for their troubles, but it was an understandable reaction. Instead, the man closed his eyes, holding his breath as Ink lifted her blindfold to inspect him.

Her heart began to race.

He was cute! Okay, not that cute, or rather, not the kind of cute that the rest of the lamia tended to go for. He didn't have a square jaw or a prevalent chin, but instead sported an elongated face and a mopey set of lips hidden behind the goatee. He wore a pair of glass spectacles – Ink had never asked what they were for. Protection, maybe? – and his clothes were higher quality than most of the farmers that bumbled through the fields. Ink touched one of the buttons on his shirt. The man stood stock still.

"Alright," Ink said, letting her blindfold drop back over her eyes. "You can look now."

The man blinked. Ink was bending in front of him, tongue flickering against his chin. He tasted divine. Was he wearing some kind of cologne?

“I’m sorry for my intrusion,” Augustus said. “I wasn’t intending on coming to visit. I got lost amidst that infernal grass and just sort of stumbled into your home. That was rude of me. I, um, like your statues! Did you…make them yourself?”

“I did,” Ink said with the hint of a smile. She didn’t mean to taunt him; she just found the way he spoke adorable. “Care for a tour?”

Care for a tour? Goodness, what was she doing? The words embarrassed her the moment they came out of her mouth, but she kept her expression neutral as she wrapped the end of her tail around the man. He flinched at the touch of the muscles beneath the scales. Perhaps he could feel his predecessor waiting to come out.

She led Augustus (why were human names so hard to pronounce?) toward the back of the cave. His expression shifted as he looked at the statues; the mix of fear and delight that each exhibited in turn, until Ink stopped by the pool and her sleeping shelf. Here, bioluminescent algae grew from an overhang, casting its aquamarine hues over the glittering surface of the water. Augustus, after a look of confirmation, went to stand by the water. His reflection rippled as a drop from the ceiling shook the pool.

“You live here?” he asked.

“Yes,” Ink said, somewhat defensively.

“Amazing.”

The compliment took her by surprise. Ink blushed, letting her tail whisk against the cave floor, stirring up dust. The man then inspected the sleeping shelf where a number of, *ahem*, “procured” blankets lay in a vast jumble. Ink collected anything that was soft: blankets, pillows, stuffed animals (she was fond of those), and any scraps of fabric she could get her hands on.

“Is this where you sleep?” Augustus asked.

“Yes.”

“It looks cozy.”

“It is.”

The man nodded, putting his hands on his sides. He was silent for a while. Ink shifted her body, winding and unwinding her tail, wondering if she should just go for the goods. The man didn’t smell aroused, but a bite would fix that. Did she want to bite him? She touched her lips. Maybe she wanted to do something else, first.

Ugh, Gladdis had messed up her brain.

“Excuse me?”

“Hmm?”

“You’re kind of crushing me.”

Ink’s blush deepened. Her tail had wrapped itself automatically around his legs – a bad habit from her childhood. She tended to coil when she was nervous.

“Sorry,” she said, relaxing. “It’s not often that I have polite guests. Can I get you anything?”

“Do you have tea?” the man asked.

“Er.”

No, she did not have tea. In fact, she didn’t have much of anything in the cave. She drank from a different, mountain-fed pool at the back of the cave and ate the people that came in. Of course she didn’t have anything to offer the man.

“I don’t have tea.”

“Ah.”

Ink could have swallowed him out of embarrassment. Instead, she slithered up the shelf of rock and into her nest. When the man hesitated, she patted the blanket beside her.

“Come,” she said.

He did. Ink kind of wished that he hadn’t. If he had run, she could have eaten him, and that would have ended the encounter entirely, but he didn’t run, which meant she didn’t know what to do, and now he was sitting beside her in her sleeping nook. Was sex on

the table? Surely not. Should she let him go? No, some other lamia was sure to pick up her scraps.

"What's your name?" the man asked.

"Ink," she said.

"Why do you wear a blindfold, Ink?"

"Because, if I looked into your eyes, you would be turned to stone. I am a basilisk."

"I figured that. I guess I wanted to be sure."

"Are you scared of me?"

"A little," the man admitted. "You eat humans."

"Humans hunt monsters," Ink pointed out.

"What would lamia eat if humans didn't hunt monsters?"

"Okay, you've stumped me. Probably humans."

"Thus the problem, eh? Why not…I don't know, bunnies?"

Ink let out a derisive snort. The man had settled into her pile of blankets. She was careful not to touch him, though she could feel the warmth radiating from his skin.

"Bunnies?!" she said. "Bunnies are awful! Tiny and furry and full of prickly little bones. They barely make a mouthful, which means you have to eat a lot, and they get so scared that they barely struggle at all! Humans can keep their bunnies."

"Then a larger animal," Augustus suggested. "What about deer?"

"Do you see many deer around these mountains?"

"Goats?"

"Ugh, horns. Too fussy."

"But those are all just preferences," Augustus pointed out. "You could remove the horns with tools. You have hands, don't you?"

Ink had never thought about it that way. Yes, she supposed she could, though she wasn't sure why she'd want to. Goats were gamey and their weird eyes freaked her out. She'd eat one if she had to, but they weren't her preference, which was kind of exactly the point the

man was making. Huh.

"Speaking of which," Augustus continued. "Not to get right to the sticky bit, but are you going to eat me?"

"Probably," Ink said.

It was the truth, after all. The man didn't seem alarmed.

"Ah. That's a bit of a problem for me. Would you take a trade?"

"A trade?"

Augustus gestured toward all of the blankets and pillows. Ink lay her tail across the entrance of the sleeping shelf just in case he was thinking about jumping for it, but he didn't.



"I could get you more blankets," he said. "Softer, too. There's a creature from the north called an alpaca whose wool is much coveted by traders. I am a trader by, well, trade. If you let me go, I could bring you one of those blankets and perhaps some news as well. I have

many stories from my travels."

"What guarantee do I have that you'll return?" Ink asked, though inside, she burned to know more about his travels. Had he ever seen a real dragon? She hadn't, but she didn't want to ask. "You could leave and never come back."

"I guess you'll just have to trust me," Augustus said. Then, with a wink: "As if I'd ever miss the opportunity to return to a beautiful creature such as yourself."

Ink's blush spread from her ears to her stomach.

Gladdis was right: she really was submissive.

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The man returned the next day, and the next day, and the next, each time bringing with him another gift. Ink adored the alpaca wool blanket he had brought on the first day. She hadn't cared much for the 'candies' he had brought on the second, but had devoured the exotic fish he had cooked on the third.

He told her stories, too, about the ocean to the west and the sea beasts that ruled the water. He talked of his encounter with a Roc, a giant bird that patrolled the mountains, and gave her news of human strife to the south. In return, Ink shared her own stories with him, telling of the clan of lamia that lived beyond the ridge; the cave trolls and the hobgoblins lurking in the tunnels beneath the mountains. There was said to be a giant serpent, too; a distant relative of the lamia that had the ability to change a creature's appearance. Augustus listened with polite fascination. He didn't seem to mind anymore when Ink coiled around him.

On the fourth day, Augustus brought a beautiful, silver necklace. Ink made him turn away to look at it, marveling at the bright red stone in the middle.

"For me?" she asked.

“For your stories,” Augustus said. “And for not eating me.”

“I still might,” Ink said, slipping the necklace on. The stone felt nice between her bosoms. “You always smell delicious.”

“Thank you. I was hoping that I could ask for one more favor, though.”

Ink turned. The smell in the air had changed. The man was tapping his fingers together, working up the courage to say something. His stomach was getting increasingly warm, as were his cheeks, as was his…groin.

Ah.

Well, Ink wasn’t opposed to having sex with him. She had been thinking about it a lot during his time in her cave, but there was never an appropriate moment to deliver the bite.

“I’d like to see your eyes.”

All of the enthusiasm in Ink’s body deflated.

She had told Gladdis about Augustus a day ago. Gladdis, after implying that she was going to simultaneously eat and fuck the man to get a rise out of Ink, had prudently asked if she was going to “test” him like she had tested the others. After long deliberation and another session inside of Gladdis, Ink had come to the conclusion that she would not.

She liked Augustus. She could see herself loving Augustus. If he was to see her eyes and turn to stone, then she would have to deal with the harsh reality that her standards were too high: there would never be a perfect man in her life.

So, when he asked, she refused.

“No,” she said. “You don’t want that.”

“I do,” Augustus insisted. Ink reached for him and brought him into her arms. It was the first time that they had embraced. His cheek was cool against her burning chest. His hands were firm and full of conviction. “I have fallen in love with you, Ink, and love transcends all things. Do you not believe in the power of love?”

No, Ink wanted to tell him, but that wasn't necessarily true. She did believe in the idea of love. The others thought she was silly for searching for the one, and yet the thought of hiding away a part of herself forever, of never getting to see the gleam in her partner's eyes – they didn't have to consider that. She did, though, and while Augustus was everything she wanted in a man, if he turned to stone, she was sure to give up her quest completely. Thus, she took his hands as gently as she could and gave him a firm squeeze.

"I believe that you are very important to me," she said. "I don't know what I would do if you turned up like them."

She nodded at the other statues. Still, Augustus remained resolute.

"I know," he said. "It will be alright. I've done some research and I believe that my ancestry will bestow upon me an immunity to your gaze. My great-grandfather was half-draconic. Did I ever tell you that?"

Ink tried not to get excited.

"You didn't," she said.

"Vitacus the Tall," Augustus said, puffing out his chest. "His blood runs through my veins."

That changed things, somewhat. Dragons were highly resistant to magic in all forms, thus it was conceivable that a descendant would inherit their fortitude. But four generations of dilution? It was too much to hope for. Ink shook her head.

"I'm not moving," she said, trying a different tact. "This is my home. Do you want to stay with me in this dreary place?"

"I don't care where we are as long as I'm with you," he insisted.

"I'm ornery. I get in a mood and it's like the clouds just won't lift. I can be spiteful."

"I'll weather any storm," Augustus said with a smile. "I'd be happy to."

Ink's heart thumped louder. She clutched her chest, fingering the

cool metal that rested there. It was her first item of ‘clothing’ other than the chest wrap she wore. She’d cherish it forever.

“We’ve only just met,” Ink continued, desperate. “And we’re so different. I’ll probably end up eating you. After a brood, lamia get ravenous, and if their husband is nearby, there’s a serious risk of him being devoured. It’s so common that it has a name in our community: the snake’s divorce. There’s no peaceful separation with a basilisk. You’re either mated with me for life or you end up in my stomach.”

“Then I’ll guess we’ll be mated for life,” Augustus said, “or I’ll die in the most beautiful stomach in all of the land.”

He put a hand on her soft underbelly and let it rest there to show that he was not afraid. Ink lowered herself to his level. Her throat was tight. If he was the one…then this was really happening. She would be mated at last.

“You’ll have to do it,” she said, “because I won’t. If this is goodbye, then know that I thought fondly of you.”

“It’s not goodbye,” Augustus said, slipping his thumbs beneath her blindfold. “This is only just the beginning.”

The smile on his face when he was frozen was dazzling.

A single tear of joy dripped down his cheek as Ink began to sob, flinging her arms around the statue, but there was no comfort to be had in stone.



Chapter 3

In Which Most Intruders Are Eaten

Ink didn't leave her cave for the next week. Not even Gladdis could coax her to come outside.

"Listen, I get it," she said. Ink was hidden away in the back of her sleeping alcove, wrapped in the alpaca blanket. The smell of Augustus hadn't yet faded from its wool. "He was perfect, except, actually, no he wasn't. He was a moron for taking off your blindfold. The fool could have had an amazing thing going if he had even a shred of common sense. Staring at a basilisk? The power of love? Pah, Ink, you knew it would end badly."

"I hoped it wouldn't," Ink mumbled. "I can't even look at him. I had to turn his statue toward the wall."

"Which one?" Gladdis said eagerly. "I'll break it for you."

"No!"

"Kidding, kidding. Jeez, Ink, you're wasting away. At least let me take you hunting. We can find some dunce near the river. Those smoothskins are always always there with their sticks and twine, trying to catch the fish. I got one just last week that had a whole bundle of them. Swallowed them together. Squirmiest stomach ever, I tell you, but it felt damn good and he wasn't a bad lay, either."

Gladdis slapped her ample belly. Ink buried herself deeper in her nest.

"You go ahead," she said. "I'm gonna need another week or so."

"If you're sure," Gladdis said, turning, "but I'll bring you a goat at least so that you don't starve. Maybe even a human if there's one wandering around–"

"Hark, demon! Is this the lair of the one who devoured Augustus Cedwick? Come out, beast!"



A sly smirk twitched the corner of Gladdis' lips. Ink stuck her head out around the corner of her alcove to see a man with a thick black beard standing at the mouth of the cave. He wore a shield strapped to his left arm and in his right hand, he carried a spear. His weak eyes glared into the unlit depths of the cave.

"Dinner," Gladdis whispered, bringing herself to the floor, "is served."

"Oh, don't."

Belly pressed flat against the stone, Gladdis slipped between the statues, always keeping one between herself and the man. Ink watched her approach, marveling at the grace of which someone so large could move when she really set her mind to it. The man with the spear didn't know what hit him. One moment, he was stepping into the cave, and the next he was hanging by his foot, weaponless, as Gladdis carried him back to the alcove and deposited him in front of Ink. The man

took one look at the two, enormous lamia and shrieked.

"Shut up, will you," Gladdis said, slamming his face into her belly button. She suffocated him there for a minute as she raised an eyebrow at Ink. "If I let him go, you aren't going to like, let him stab you or anything, will you?"

"I'm heartbroken, Gladdis, not suicidal," Ink said.

Gladdis let the man go. He trembled as Ink slipped off of her perch, landing with her coils already around him. She held him steady as she brought her face to his.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"M- my cousin, Augustus, went crazy a week ago," he said. "He started talking about this snake, this basilisk that he was in love with and then…then he went missing. I thought-"

"You thought I ate him," Ink said. "But I didn't. I am going to eat you, though, dear cousin of Augustus. If you would, Gladdis?"

"With pleasure," Gladdis chuckled, picking the man up with her tail.

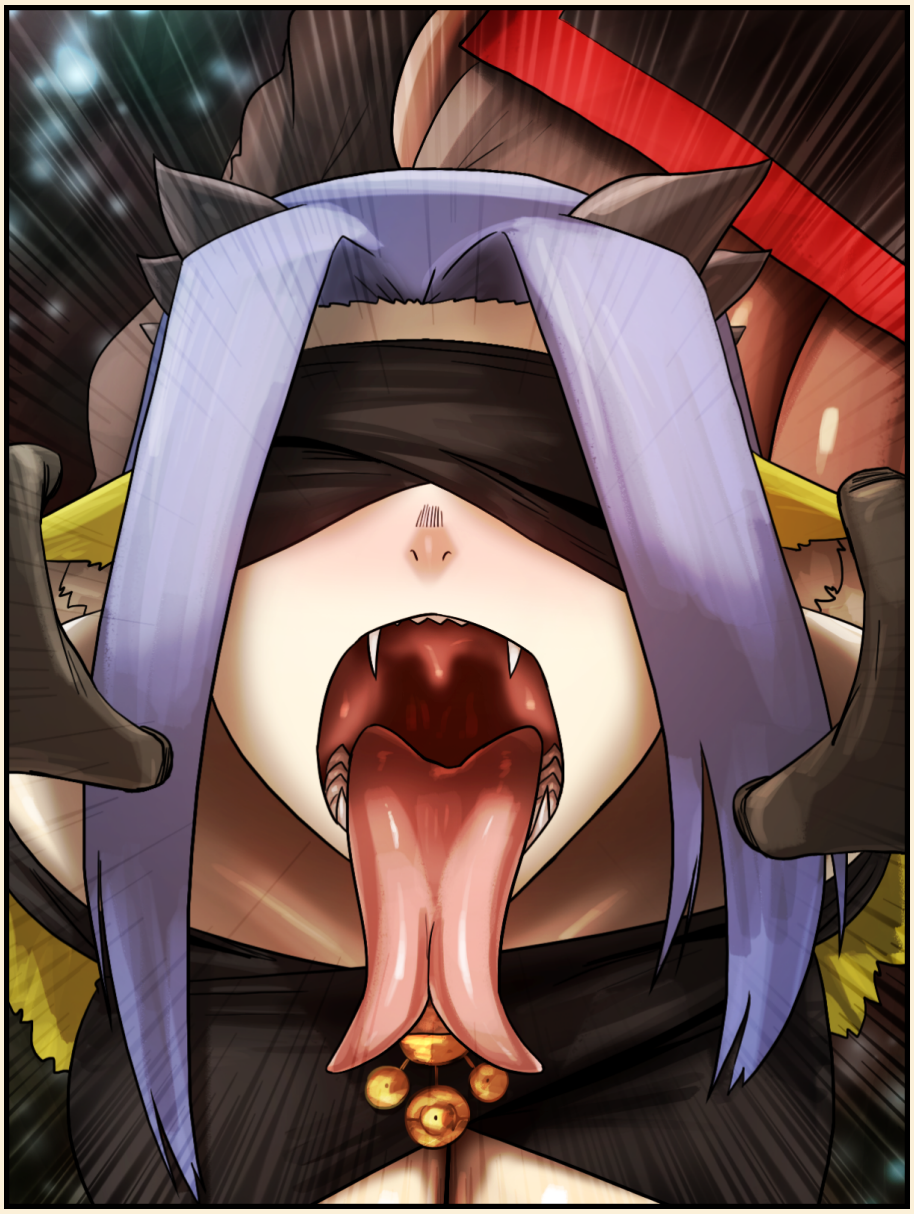
He screamed as he was lowered into Ink's mouth. Now that she was close, she could see the family resemblance: the same elongated face and mopey lips. On this intruder, though, they looked piggish and vile. Ink was glad when his face disappeared between her lips where she tilted her head back and relaxed her throat, allowing the peristalsis to carry him down without much in the way of resistance. Once she felt him hit her stomach, she swallowed and sighed. Gladdis put a hand on her newly engorged belly.

"Watching you eat is hot," she said.

"Of course it is, Gladdis."

The man felt good wriggling inside of her belly. Really good. For the past week, Ink had grown numb to the gnawing sensation of hunger. Being fed so suddenly came with a flood of satisfaction: satisfaction that Gladdis was all too happy to take advantage of.

"Let's get you nice and sloshy," Gladdis said, rubbing her hand



in a broad circle. The man stirred in Ink's stomach. The acids were coming in fast. "You've been hungry, haven't you? I'll bet you have been. I'll bet your tummy is good and ready to turn this nasty man into some padding on your tail."

"You don't have to talk to me like I'm a child," Ink said.

She let her abdomen relax, releasing the man up against the front of her gut as she slunk back into her alcove. Gladdis followed her into the nest, burying them both in an avalanche of blankets as her hot breath pulsed against Ink's throat.

"I love seeing you with a full belly," Gladdis said. Her hand was now tucked up beneath Ink's stomach, dangerously close to her cunt.

Ink's slit opened at a touch. She moaned as Gladdis' fingers danced over her clit. "Did I ever tell you that? It makes me hungry in so many ways. I just wanna-"

Ink's breath hitched as Gladdis' jaws came down to scoop up her stomach. The lamia took the whole thing in her mouth, tongue swishing, kneading the trapped man against her maw. Then, she leaned forward, and Ink's stomach tottered over her gullet. Ink tried to push her away, but Gladdis had tasted her now and her predator's instinct had been roused. Their tails were twirling together, winding, unwinding, and with a shlick, Gladdis entered Ink, pushing further than any human man ever could. Ink's eyes rolled at the sensation of having her stomach sucked. She put an arm over her eyes, gripping the sheets, and let what was about to happen, happen.

The man inside of her was panicking. All of the extra stimulation had driven her stomach crazy, causing it to release liquid at such a rate that he was soon swimming in it. His hands pounded the inside of her gut to no avail. He probably had no idea that he was inside of another predator's mouth.

"Mmm," Gladdis said, vibrating her lips. Ink's stomach came free with a pop as she leaned back, inspecting her handiwork. "Do you think he's ready for the plunge?"

"Not soft enough," Ink said, touching her stomach. The man's shoulders shook as he cried. "Give him a few more minutes."

"You've never sent a live one into your guts? Oh, my dear, naive Ink! It's one of the best feelings in the world to have prey wriggling in your tail as you milk them for all their worth! I can't believe you haven't done this yet. Here–"

Gladdis lowered herself on top of Ink's gut. Ink resisted the pressure at first, but when Gladdis kissed her, she relented, allowing the knot that led to her tail to open. The man's feet slid into the fleshy hole which expanded before him, coating him in goo. Ink bit into her thumb. She was tingling all over.



“W- what is that?” she asked. “Mmm, that’s…too much.”

“Don’t worry, don’t worry,” Gladdis assured her, pushing harder. “Trust me.”

Ink felt her insides swallowing the man. He was panicking, pressing out against the encroaching walls with all of his might, but a clench of her muscles was enough to break his grip, sending him sliding down, down into a whole new, labyrinthine world of contracting flesh where he was pressed on all sides, forced to lay motionless in the sticky foam. Ink brought her tail around and traced the bulge he made against the underside. Gladdis kissed it, then kissed Ink, shoving her tail deeper into Ink’s cunt.

“I can feel him,” Gladdis said, wiggling.

“I, ah, know!” Ink whimpered. “Stop– Ooh goodness!”

Somewhere in the midst of her pleasure, she lost control of her muscles. A snake’s torso is stronger than a human’s; her tail many

times so. Thus, when she emerged from the blankets, sweaty and tangled in Gladdis' arms, a sluggish mental check of her innards told her that the man had expired. Or, at least, she thought so given the sludge-like consistency of his remains filtering into her bowels.

For a second, Ink was content. Gladdis was snoring, her enormous stomach huddled up against Ink's smaller one, and the cave was quiet except for the drip of water falling into the pool. A fragrant breeze was coming in from the field, smelling of new growth. She was full and her needs had been met.

But then she remembered Augustus and his stony expression; how he was there, even now, staring at the cave wall while all glorious sensation passed him by and her eyes filled with tears, leaking past her blindfold which she now wore even in the presence of Gladdis.

Little did she know that the cousin was just the beginning.

***

"Who the hell are you?"

The presence at the mouth of the cave stirred. Ink could smell that she was a woman, she was wearing armor, and that she was currently brandishing a sword. A swipe of her tail relieved the woman of her weapon. The woman pointed a finger at Ink's chest.

"I have been contracted by Illian Cedwick, the mother of Augustus Cedwick, to slay the monster that has captured her son! Deliver him forthright or face the point of my mighty–"

ULP!

The woman's legs kicked against Ink's lips as she deftly maneuvered around the armor, undoing the straps with her tongue. These metal trinkets she spat onto the ground, leaving only the soft body of the well-endowed warrior. This, Ink consumed in a series of hefty gulps, belching as the woman's body met the wet kiss of her stomach.



UUurrrAaaAAAAAP!

“How many damn people is she going to send?” she asked Augustus.

His statue had been moved to the center of the cave. Having it in the corner had been too sad, but looking at it now filled her with a bittersweet dread. His face was so peaceful. Ink suppressed another burp.

The warrior lady kicked harder than the spearman that had stopped by earlier, but lighter than the burly wrestler from the day before. Ink had taken to dumping their remains, clothes and all, in a

pile outside of the cave entrance as a warning to those who followed, but more humans arrived by the day, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups. Other lamia had taken to picking them off in the grass as free meals and Ink was glad for it. Now only the armed ones made it to her doorstep, which was a nuisance, but not a threat.

"Oh, shut up," Ink said, slapping her stomach. The woman was roaring curses at the top of her lungs. Ink groaned and clenched and released another belch, depriving the woman of air.

BBrrAaAAAaAAAAP!

Her squirms settled down somewhat. *At any rate*, Ink thought, touching the thin line of pudge that now covered the outside of her stomach, *if this continues, Gladdis is going to get her wish: I'm going to be as fat as a barge.*

Sighing, Ink slithered back into the cave, only to be interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps.

"I swear," she said under her breath, turning around, "I swear I'm just going to petrify this one."

The footsteps stopped by the mouth of the cave. He was probably inspecting her little warning sign, Ink though, tapping her tail against the floor. She had also arranged a number of the more terrified statues in the grass. Already, they had scared off a few would-be idiots. The footsteps did a small shuffle, then pressed on into the cave. Ink put her face in her hands.

"Listen," she hissed. She was hidden behind a stalagmite, coiled in the dark. "I'm tired, I'm full, and I'm getting annoyed. Unless you wish for a swift death, and I assure you that I can deliver it, then I suggest that you leave my home at once."

"Oh, hullo Augustus! You're looking mighty dapper, my friend!"

The man, for he was a man, had stopped in front of the statue of Augustus and was wringing its hand like he was a real person. He smelled young, mid-20's, healthy by all accounts, but carrying no weapons. Another taste of the air showed that he was inexperienced in

combat as well, so not a warrior coming to take her head. Ink slunk out of the shadows and showed herself to the man who didn't even flinch as she approached.

"Who are you?" Ink asked.

"Who am I?" the man asked like he was surprised by the question. "Well, I suppose I'm Dean, or at least that's what my friends call me. My lovers call me Big D."

Ink's lip twisted. She despised this man already.

"Close your eyes," she demanded.

She didn't wait to check if he had. If he turned to stone, all the better, but when she lifted her blindfold, he had his eyes shut tight and was rocking back and forth on his heels.



He was shorter than Augustus by about half a head – fatter, too, with a waist that pressed hard against his tunic. His cheeks were red and cheerful and his nose was bulbous. He had the rich brown skin of a southerner, tanned from time in the sun, and his hair was a mass of black curls that he wore loose. His clothes looked expensive.

Ink replaced her blindfold.

"You may open your eyes," she said.

"Mighty good of ya to warn me," Dean said cheerfully. "One look at that pretty face of yours and I'd be as hard as Augustus, harr harr! Look at him, all smiling and such. Makes sense, given how much he thought of you. As beautiful as a sunrise, he said, and he was right!"

That gave Ink pause. Other intruders had mentioned that Augustus had spoken about her, but they had all framed his love as a delusion. Dean, for all of his bravado, seemed to have been the only one to have taken him seriously. She took a closer look at the bold little man who was inspecting the statue like one might inspect an esteemed work of art. Nodding, Dean snapped his fingers.

"Well, we'll get him right as rain, won't we?" he said. "A little bit of phoenix spit should do the trick. That and a few other assorted parts. Tricky shopping list, to be sure, but with a certified basilisk at my side, it will be a piece of cake."

"Wait, wait, wait," Ink said, sliding in front of him. "I'm not going anywhere with you."

"You're not?" Dean asked, tilting his head.

"No! Get out of my cave!"

"Damn! From the way Augustus talked about you, I was sure that you'd help me unpetrify him. Well, that's going to put a damper on my plans-"

Ink put a finger on his lips. Dean kept talking for a moment, then went silent. Feeling like her head was filling with fog, she tried to make sense of what he had just said.

"You know a cure for petrification?" she said.

"Uh huh."

"That's impossible. I would know."

"Well, I don't see why," Dean said, crossing his arms. Ink thought he was impossibly arrogant for someone within swallowing

range. “You’re a basilisk. Your job is to turn people to stone, not to get them out of stone. It is going to require some of your bile, though. Should I climb into your stomach now, or should that be the final step? I’m partial to it being the final step, if you don’t mind, given basilisk’s proclivities toward swallowing folks, no offense.”

“Stop,” Ink said. She put a hand up. “Just…stop. You have a plan-”

“A recipe,” Dean clarified.

“-that can unpetrify Augustus?”

“Only him I’m afraid,” Dean said. “Although that farmer over there probably wouldn’t thank me for bringing him back, given that he’s missin’ his dong. The ingredients are rare, you see, and only make one…potion? Tincture? We’ll have to pour it over him, anyhow.”

“I don’t believe you,” Ink said flatly.

“Oh, well, have a good day then! If I don’t return within a fortnight, I’m probably in some monster’s stomach.”

Baffled, Ink heard him walking toward the exit. There was no indication that he was going to stop. Again, she slithered in front of him, this time blocking him with her whole body. Dean waited patiently for her to move.

“Look,” he said. “Maybe I got the wrong idea. If you weren’t that fond of him, I understand. He was always a romantic. Maybe it was a one-way romance–”

“It wasn’t,” Ink snapped.

Dean shrugged.

“Doesn’t matter,” he said. “I’m going to gather those ingredients one way or another. I only stopped by because I thought you might want to help. Nobody else would hear of it. They all told me that I was crazy and that the best way to honor Gus would be to bring back your head, but it looks like a lot of people tried that.”

He didn’t move, but Ink could sense him looking at the fly-

ridden pile of refuse she had stacked by the cave entrance. Her cheeks reddened.

“That’s just a warning,” she said.

“Effective,” Dean said.

“You really know a recipe to unpetrify Augustus?”

“I mean, I haven’t tested it, but it was a bitch and a half to find if that’s any indication of its veracity. I had to pay a wizard just to point me in the direction of a library that might contain the grimoire and then I had to bribe the librarian because it was in the restricted section. The whole thing was written in an archaic cipher. I only managed to translate it this morning. ”

He said it all without a hint of self-doubt. Ink was almost moved to tears by his dedication to his friend.

“Hey, is there someone in there?” Dean asked, poking her stomach. “You’re fatter than Gus described.”

Nevermind. She was going to eat him.

But as her jaws clicked open, Dean turned, completely unaware of the danger, and bowed at the statue.

“I’ll be right back, buddy,” he said. “Love like that, well, it’s worth the moon, ain’t it? She seems like she’s worth it, this Ink of yours. Ah, we better start trekkin’. We gotta be at the troll caves by nightfall or we won’t catch them out and about.”

When Ink didn’t move out of his way, Dean climbed onto her tail, prompting her to shake him off. He hit the floor with a thud, jumping back to his feet in a merry swagger.

“You comin’?” he called over his shoulder.

Ink lifted her blindfold and took one last look at Augustus with his arms outstretched. Was it worth leaving him alone for the mere chance of his resurrection? What if someone carried him off while she was gone?

“Alright,” she said, catching up to Dean. “Alright, I’ll come with you, but we’re going to stop by a friend’s before we go.”

Chapter 4

The Food Chain

Gladdis swallowed Dean before he could say a word. As her gut bulged with the shape of his thrashing limbs, she belched, then blanched at Ink's horrified expression.

"What?" she asked. "He literally came right up to me."

"Let him out! He's going to help me unpetrify Augustus!"

The fat lamia made a face. A round lump traveled up her throat, then out onto her tongue where Dean's sputtering could be heard, as well as his excited exclamations.

"Well that's an experience!" he said. "Aye, just like Puck the Perverted used to write about: all spongy surfaces and potent vapors! Whew, my head is still spinning. The weight of your stomach was quite comfortable."

"I hate him," Gladdis said, spitting him out on the grass. "Please let me eat him, I beg of you."

"Not yet," Ink said. "Wait until we've saved Augustus first."

She filled Gladdis in on the situation while Dean bathed in the nearby river. When she finished, Gladdis rolled her eyes, but she agreed to cave-sit for a few days while Ink and Dean were off galavanting.

"But only a week," she insisted. "Having all of those statues looking at me makes me nervous. Hey, if anyone stops by…?"

"You can have them," Ink said. Dean tried to climb onto her tail like a man would a horse. Ink knocked him sideways into the grass. "We're off to the troll caves, now."

"Good luck!" Gladdis called, licking her lips.

"She was nice," Dean said as they walked toward the mountains.


NOM
!!
Gkn.
SLOSH
Rumble

The cloudless sky was stretched tight over the distant peaks which sank their teeth into the horizon. “Always good to have friends.”

“Shut up.”

“Okay.”

The path forward took them past the edge of the field. They skirted the human villages, sticking to the forests where they could. Dean, despite Ink’s many requests for him to stop talking, tended to narrate whatever they saw, pointing out interesting plants and trees and tidbits about the villages they walked by. At first, Ink ignored him, lost in her own anxious ponderings about the journey to come. Eventually Dean’s voice became too much to drown out and she begrudgingly started to listen as they traveled through muddy ravines and crossed over shallow rivers.

“See that big tree there?” Dean said when they stopped for dinner. The sun was still hovering above the mountains, casting their shadows across the rocky ground. Ink looked up from her sandwich (Dean wouldn’t let her eat the woodsman they saw earlier) and nodded at the moss-covered behemoth.

“Sure,” she said.

“Well, it used to be the home of a giantess named Y’nin. She built a shack where she could stand among the clouds and bathed in the rain showers that passed by. The giants in the mountains got jealous of her view, however, and hurled stones at the tree until it fell. You can see them there.”

Ink gazed at the rock formations dotting the landscape. They really did look like they could have been tossed from the mountains, landing in jagged clumps, but the story was ridiculous. Giants had long since abandoned the country to gather in the frozen tundras. She had never heard of a giant that climbed trees, either.

“Is that story true?” she asked.

“I dunno,” Dean said, chewing. “Does it matter?”

“It does,” Ink said. “What’s the point of a story if it isn’t true?”

“Hmm. Entertainment, I suppose? A lesson?”

“Oh yeah? And what’s the lesson from the story of Y’nin?”

“Don’t piss off giants or they’ll throw rocks at you.”

Ink snorted and swallowed the rest of her sandwich whole. Dean kept chewing thoughtfully, staring off into the distance. He was so different from Augustus in everything from his speech to his mannerisms that Ink could hardly believe they were friends.

“How did you meet Augustus?” she asked.

“Hmm?” Dean said, brushing his hands on his pants. “Oh, I saved his life.”

“What?!”

“Yeah. Crazy story, actually, but Augustus has this bad habit of getting himself into trouble. I guess that his current predicament is as good an example as any, no offense. His merchant vessel had been sunk in a storm and he had been captured by mermaids. Now, mermaids usually eat their captives, but Gus is, you know, Gus, so they were saving him for marriage.”

“Then what happened?” Ink asked.

Dean leaned against her scales. She shook him off, annoyed, but that didn’t deter him. When he settled again, she let him be.

“Well, I happened to be sailing by,” he said. “I’m a trader, too, and an adventurer I guess. I’ve always been sturdy.”

Here, he patted his belly.

“Anyhow, I was passing by the rock where they were keeping Augustus and saw him all tied up in kelp, so I sailed over. The mermaids weren’t happy. Wanted to eat me, too, but then I asked about Gus and they said they were saving him for marriage. Well, said I, which of ya is the happy bride? ‘Me!’ they all called at once. You can imagine the scene! They all fell upon each other like sharks and I nipped on over to Gus and carried him back to the boat. We’ve been friends ever since.”

Dean finished the story with a slap of the knees. Ink squinted at



him, nudging his chest with her feathered tail.

"Is that story true?" she asked.

"Truer than anything," Dean laughed. "I'm not surprised he took to you, either. You're a kind creature, Ink, listening to a scallywag like me chatter on for hours."

"I'm really not," Ink grumbled, touching her necklace.

"Bah. You're kinder than most humans. Anyhow, we better get on our way."

They made it to the caves as night fell across the valley. The caves were nestled within the stone roots out the mountain – tiny black dots hidden by the trunks of the evergreen trees that grew in the rocky soil. Ink sensed the earth stirring beneath her scales. Many creatures moved in the dark. She put a cautious hand in front of Dean.

"The trolls are riled up about something," she said.

“How do you know?” Dean asked.

Right, he didn’t have a 22-foot-long body pressed flat against the ground. Ink took his arm and pressed his palm to the soil. He nodded.

“Trolls only get excited about two things,” he said.

“Food and sex,” Ink said.

“It doesn’t sound like they’re having an orgy, so that means–”

“Gnomes.”

Ink stuck out her tongue and shuddered. Gnomes were the pests of the monstrous underworld – blind little creatures with grabby hands that flooded out of holes dug deep into the earth to pillage treasure from anyone and everyone. If you saw one, it was too late; there were dozens more lurking in the shadows, ready to squeal and run when revealed. Most notably, they also tasted horrible, which made them a nuisance to deal with. Only trolls, with their lack of taste buds, ever bothered to eat the creatures, treating a gnome infestation like a whale treats a school of sardines.

“Where are you going?” Ink hissed.

Dean was walking straight toward one of the caves. He waved a hand over his shoulder.

“Aye, they should be distracted right about now,” he said. “Best time to nab one and grab a finger.”

“Come back! You’re going to get eaten!”

Dean disappeared into one of the caves, causing Ink to curse and follow him. She proceeded with caution. Trolls were no match for a basilisk, but there were a lot of them and they were dangerous when feeding.

“Dumbass, dumbass, dumbass,” she muttered under her breath. “Gonna get both of us killed.”

The cave went straight down into the earth and let out in a cavern filled with towering stalagmites. She found Dean crouched behind a rock, watching the shadows flit about under the glowing rocks fitted into the cavern ceiling. As she went to join him, something sharp

pricked her tail. She looked down to see a gnome gnawing on her feathers.

WHAP!

Her tail cracked like a whip, sending the creature flying into the back of a troll female who gobbled it down in seconds. The stupid beast didn't even look to see where the thing had come from. Her stomach was already packed tight with knobby little corpses.

"Creepy things," she said. Dean's eyes were trained in her direction. "What?"

"We could have used that one as a lure," he said. "We need to get a troll over here without being spotted."

"Then why don't I dangle you over the rock," Ink snapped. "I bet that would get one of those gluttons running in a heartbeat."

Dean tapped his chin.

"I don't see why not," he said at last, shrugging. "Actually, that's a great idea."

"Are you insane?!"

Hundreds of trolls wrestled in the dark. It looked like a full-blown gnome geyser had burst out of the ground, with thousands of squealing pests flooding out only to get gobbled by the handful. One troll grabbed another and yanked off his arm. The troll continued eating regardless, the stump twitching as it began to reform.

"Just dangle me on your tail. Then, when one sees me, pull me back. It's just like fishing."

An image of the stupid humans with their sticks and string entered Ink's mind, as well as the graphic description Gladdis had given of eating them. Dean was already climbing over her body toward her tail. She licked the air to make sure that nobody was coming.

Whatever, she thought as Dean grabbed hold of her feathers. If he dies, so be it.

"Wait, tell me the recipe first," Ink said.

“Not a chance,” Dean chuckled, holding on tight. “Are you ready?”

Ink gnashed her teeth in frustration, but positioned herself behind the rock. Lifting her tail, she dropped it over the top of the stalagmite, bouncing it back and forth to draw the attention of a troll.

“I think one’s seen me,” he said. “Oh, yes, she’s coming over! Oh shit, she’s fast! Pull me back! Pull me–”

An additional weight latched onto her tail as Ink yanked it over the rock. A troll had grabbed Dean’s leg with her mouth and was now pulling herself up his body by the strength of the muscles in her throat alone.

It was…pretty damn impressive. Ink was jealous.



“Are you just gonna sit there, smirking?” Dean asked. The troll was already up to his torso. Her sticky drool rolled in globs over his

chest. “Ugh, the gnomes in her stomach are grabbing my feet!”

Ink stunned the troll with a blow to the head and wrenched Dean free. He blanched at the sight of his saliva-soaked pants: troll spit was green and unbearably smelly.

The troll was already starting to wake up.

“Damn their regeneration,” Dean said as Ink stunned it again. “Let’s get her out into the moonlight so that we can get what we came for.”

They waded back through the rocks until they got to the slanted cave entrance. Ink went up first, covering the distance in a matter of seconds, but Dean had trouble with the shifting soil. He kept grabbing onto roots that broke under his wait and tumbling back down to the ground.

“Come on!” Ink said, wrapping her tail around him. With a tug, he was up by her side. She carried him all the way into the forest where he was deposited next to the troll. Its mouth twitched. Two blows to the head meant nothing to the creature.

“Thank you,” Dean said.

Ink huffed and crossed her arms. Dean patted her flank and went to examine the troll that they had kidnapped.

“I’ve never seen one in the light before,” he said. “They’re not as ugly as the stories say.”

Dean must have been blind, because Ink found her completely repulsive. She was a squat, squarish creature with broad shoulders and gangly limbs. Her skin was a mottled yellow, covered in fleshy protrusions that made lumps in the brown fabric she wore as a shirt. Her eyes, when she opened them, were pure black, and her teeth, when she snarled, were crooked and bent, but all in all, she was mostly human shaped and if one squinted very hard, she might actually pass for one, but for her pouch-like swell of a stomach, currently filled with gnomes.

“Whatcha whatcha want with Nickel?” she asked. “Come steal

froma me?”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Dean said. “No, we came to ask for a favor.”

“Favor no free! Snake hithit onna head!”

She rubbed her scalp to emphasize her displeasure. Her hair was a frizzy red mass of kelp-like strands. Her stomach shifted in a grotesque wave of rapidly digesting gnomes.

“Hava food?” she asked hopefully.

Dean rummaged through his bag and brought out a wrapped sandwich. Without even bothering to unwrap it, the troll grabbed it and thrust it into her mouth, spraying crumbs and paper everywhere.

“Blech! Cold food! Not living!”

“Drat,” Dean said as the troll scrubbed her tongue. “I thought that would work.”

“You could always feed yourself to her,” Ink suggested, smirking. “Tell me the rest of the recipe and I can complete this quest on my own.”

“Harr, harr.”

The troll finished spitting into a clump of reeds and wiped her mouth, looking back toward the cave. Ink wound her tail around her legs before she could run.

“Gah! Letgo Nickel nownow!”

“What do we even need from her?” Ink asked, squeezing the troll. There was a wet crunching sound as some of the gnomes in her stomach expired. “Her spit? Her hair? Just take it and let’s get on our way.”

“Her thumb,” Dean said, “but, er, she has to give it to us.”

“What?!”

“Consent is part of the magic.”

Ink shook the little creature as hard as she could. The troll’s head rattled on her neck.

“Look here,” she hissed. “We need your thumb, so lop it off quick and we’ll be on our way. It will regrow in a few minutes anyway.”

“Nooo! No taka thumb! Hurthurt bigtime!”

“Ink!”

Ink left off throttling the poor creature and threw her into the weeds. As Nickel wailed and rolled around, Dean motioned for her to bring her ear close.

“I don’t mind threats,” he whispered to Ink. “She’s basically immortal and we have nothing to trade, but if she keeps screaming, she’s going to bring the hoard. Maybe we can do something for her or find something that she wants.”

“What?!” Ink said. “I’m not doing errands for a troll.”

“Let’s just ask!”

Dean approached Nickel who was now looking at him between her legs. Her shirt did not cover her ample rump, nor the gaping crevice of her vagina. She seemed to regard him better than she regarded Ink.

“Not taka thumb,” she warned.

“How about a trade?” Dean asked. “Is there anything that you want?”

“Hmm…”

Nickel tapped her broad lips.

“Keepa you for sex,” she said, spreading her asscheeks.

“That’s fine,” Ink said.

“No it’s not!” Dean cried. “What else?”

“Three bags of gold! Big bags! Once counta gold, give thumb.”

Dean looked at Ink.

“Do you…?”

“I do not.”

“Right,” Dean said. “Can’t do the gold. I guess, if a trade doesn’t

work, we might be able to do you a favor?"

He winked at Ink who rolled her eyes (not that he could see that).

"No want favor. Gold or forever fuck. Keep you for…five years, then give thumb to snake."

"Forever?" Dean asked.

"Five years!" Ink yelled.

She surged forward, bearing down on the troll. Nickel jumped up on her squat legs and tried to run, but she tripped on a root and was snatched up to face down an angry basilisk. Ink shook her, stretching her jaw.

"Now you listen here and you listen close," she said. "We need that thumb and you're going to give it to us or so help me, I will swallow you. I'm not waiting five years."

"Goa head," Nickel laughed. "Nickel no digest!"

"No," Ink said, smiling. "But Nickel can still feel pain."

Nickel's confidence faltered as her head was placed on Ink's tongue. The snake's throat widened into a gluttonous tube, extending down into the pit of her belly. A wet undulation lubricated the pulsing red flesh. Nickel's yellow skin turned a sickly gray.

"Only joke," she said.

Ink lowered her head past her uvula. The troll tasted vile, but she didn't care. All she could think about was Augustus.

"Only joke!" Nickel yelled. "Fat man, help me!"

"Fat man?" Dean scoffed. "Ink, be so good as to swallow the pest!"

ULP!

It was a tough descent. Nickel fought the whole way, wedging her body into Ink's throat, digging in with her nails. Ink swallowed again and again, every time pounding her in a deluge of saliva, but the troll was insistent and stronger than she looked. Dean watched the bulge in her throat, thinking. Then he tapped Ink on the arm.

“Lower me in there,” he said. “I read something somewhere that might help.”

Ink shrugged. If it worked, that was fine, and if he accidentally tumbled into her gut along with the annoying troll…that was also fine. She picked up Dean by the leg and held him over her jaws. He wrinkled his nose at the smell of her breath, but bravely plunged his arm deep into her throat, finding the troll’s gnarled body.

“Coochie coo!”

His finger had no sooner touched the troll’s armpit than she burst out laughing. Ink swallowed quickly, her throat suctioning around Dean’s arm.

GuuuULP!



“Ow,” he said as she set him down. He waved his arm, working out the kinks. “You have a strong swallow.”

“Thanksss,” Ink said, tongue flickering.

Prey in her stomach – even disgusting prey – made her instincts sharper. Beneath the silk of her blindfold, the brief, finicky movements of Dean reminded her of a mouse running from a snake. What a novel image. What a delightful image…

“Anyhow,” Dean said, oblivious. “How’s your guest doing?”

“NICKEL SORRY! NICKEL NO WANNA— ARGH!”

“She’s fine,” Ink said, patting her stomach. “Where to next?”

The gurgling cry of the troll made Dean shudder. This pleased Ink. He had been getting a little too familiar with her considering she was a basilisk. She purposely brushed him with her bulging gut as she passed by, heading deeper into the forest, and he followed, humming to himself to drown out the rancid sounds of her stomach’s inner workings.

They made camp somewhere in the woods that night.

Nickel screamed until morning.

Chapter 5

Keeping Warm

Dean tried not to laugh. He failed spectacularly.

“BAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Ink crossed her arms and refused to look in his direction. Her elbows dug into the heavy flab of her breasts which had tripled in size overnight – the result of continuously digesting an ever-regenerating troll.



“That’s too damn funny,” Dean wheezed. “Oh goodness. Oh dear.”

“Shut up,” Ink growled. “Shut up or I’ll eat you.”

The weight hadn’t just congregated in her chest; her stomach was larger, as well as her tail. Nickel was buried in a cocoon of pudge, trapped in the buttery belly of a bumbling basilisk. When Ink had enough of Dean’s laughing, she whacked him with her tail. He reduced his laughter to a giggle.

“Calm yourself,” he said as she brought her face close. “Lamia-types have an incredible metabolism, or so I’m told. This should only last for a day or two.”

“It better,” Ink spat. “What are you still grinning at?”

“Nothing. I prefer this look, myself.”

Ink blushed and made a mental note to never tell Gladdis about this moment. Her fat friend would never let her live it down, what with her insistence on gaining weight.

Nickel was ejected out onto the grass in a shivering ball. Patches of her skin had turned a bright red. In the pale light of the morning sun, they were already healing – yellow flesh stretching to replace the burnt red fibers. The mental damage, however, was not so easily undone.

“Nickel s- s- sorry,” she stuttered. “Nickel give whatever you want.”

“Damn,” Dean said, scratching his head. Ink came to a halt next to him. “I almost feel bad for her.”

“Do you know one of troll’s main sources of entertainment?” Ink asked.

“Please tell me it’s horrific.”

“They steal and eat human babies.”

“Ah, thank you. I will never feel empathy again,” Dean said, kneeling down next to Nickel. He was just reaching out to help her up when she lunged, jaws wide, intent on swallowing him whole. In a

snakelike movement that surprised even Ink, Dean flowed to the side, slamming his arm into her softened belly.

Nickel fell again, retching.

"Can't fault for trying," she groaned. "Snake belly…terrible."

"Noted," Dean said, handing her a knife. "Thumb please."

The troll didn't flinch as she brought the blade to her thumb. Even as the rotten thing fell into Dean's waiting palm, another was already growing in its place. It started the size of a pea, then a baby carrot, and then there was a full-fledged thumb. Nickel wiggled it for good measure.

"If it was that easy, why didn't you just do that last night?" Dean asked, offended.

"Nickel no know snake be crazy. Thought was bluff. Wanted sex human."

Ink hissed and Nickel jumped. The basilisk pointed toward the direction of the caves.

"Go," Ink said, and Nickel went.

"That's one ingredient down," Dean said, holding the thumb up to the light. "Although, I must admit, I hope the rumor that severed troll limbs regrow into new trolls isn't true. The rumor about them turning to stone in the morning wasn't."

"They just have weak eyes," Ink said. "Also, what was that movement earlier?"

"Movement?" Dean asked. "What movement?"

Ink mimicked his sideways step into an arm bar. Dean shrugged.

"Just lucky, I guess," he said. "Come on: we have a long way to go today and you, uh, have some calories to burn."

His snakelike movement didn't come in handy as Ink's palm caught him on the cheek. Unlike with the troll, the red mark remained on his cheek for the next hour.

***

The air grew colder the further up the mountain they climbed. For Dean, it was as simple as pulling a fur coat from his pack, but for the cold-blooded Ink, the chill was more of a nuisance. She slunk behind him, miserable, suffering from a bout of indigestion from the leaves she had consumed somewhere along the route. Dean had warned her and she hadn't listened. Now she was clutching her stomach which was making horrendous, bubbling noises.

GgrrGGlllRrrRT!

"Where are we going?" she asked for the dozenth time.

"Up," Dean replied for the dozenth time.

He was consulting a map. Ink looked curiously over his shoulder, but he held it away from her. She retreated, annoyed.

"I promise not to eat you if you tell me what the next ingredient is," she said.

"Lovely," Dean muttered, scanning the landscape, "but I'm afraid you'll have to wait. I think that we've gotten a little lost."

"What?!"

Now Ink did snatch the map, though the squiggles meant nothing to her as she inspected them beneath her blindfold. An errant shiver sent goosebumps down her arms. She sneezed.

"Achoo!"

"We better make camp," Dean said. "We're pretty far along, I'm sure. Tomorrow, we'll find what we're looking for."

"You have no idea where we are, do you?" Ink asked.

Goodness, the shivering was getting worse. It felt like there were icicles in her blood. Behind them, the fields where she had grown up looked like a quilt: green and brown squares as far as she could see. The air tasted crisper here. It was harder for her to get a read on the environment without resorting to her eyes. Looking forward, she

glanced over the top of her blindfold at the encircling peaks. If they had to climb much further…

"Come on," Dean said, pointing along the ridge they were standing on. "There's a cave that way. You should feel right at home."

"Harr harr," Ink said, but she was glad to get out of the wind.

The cave turned out to be unoccupied, which was a relief. While Dean went to check for hidden gnomes (mountain gnomes were more viscous than their forest counterparts), Ink found a good-sized indent in the ground and settled into herself, hugging her gut. Her tail twitched as a breeze caught her in the side. She shifted to move away from the entrance.

"Nothing," Dean said, coming back. "Oh dear, are you alright?"

Ink couldn't hide her shaking anymore. Dean dug through his pack, bringing out a very familiar blanket.

"Where did you get that?" Ink snarled as Dean threw the alpaca wool over her shoulders. He tucked in the corners, making sure that she was covered, then squatted down to strike flint against steel. A tufted piece of cotton made the tinder. He fanned the sparks into a flame, adding sticks he had gathered before the climb.

"This ain't the one Gus gave you," he said. "Smell."

Ink took a deep breath. Sure enough, it was different. It smelled like spices and…Dean. She made a face, but kept it close.

"He actually came to me to buy it," Dean continued, undeterred by her obvious distaste. "I know a fur trader from the north that carries them, but he wasn't in town, so I, uh, commandeered two from his warehouse. I left money, of course. Anyhow, I was glad when he said that you liked it. Couldn't wait to meet ya."

"And Augustus thought we'd get along?" Ink asked.

Dean laughed, adding a stick to the fire. The cave was starting to warm. Ink moved closer so that she could unthaw her tail.

"I know I'm a lot," he said. "Gus used to say so, too. He'd say, 'Dean, I love you, but sometimes you've got to know when to stop

talking'. Aye, and he was right. My mouth's gotten me in more trouble than it's worth and yet I can't help myself from yammering. My dad was like that. Drove my mom nuts. She would groan about his constant stream of dialogue, but she would also smile whenever she complained. Dad said he lived for that smile. He loved mom."

"Loved?" Ink asked.

She could just make out Dean's hands beneath her blindfold. They were folded together, thumbs touching. He didn't speak for a while. When he did, his swagger had subsided.

"He was, ah, eaten," Dean said. "Whole, alive, you know the ordeal. Mom always said it would happen. She gave me the same warning when I left the nest, she said: 'Dean, you're a sweet boy and sturdier than most, but see where kindness got your father'. We ain't talked much after that. Let's just say that I don't agree with her worldview."



“That’s terrible,” Ink said, and was surprised to find that she meant it. “I worry about that with Augustus: my instincts. Lust and hunger are one and the same for beings like me. Gladdis has gone through four husbands so far. Sometimes I think it’s cruel that all lamia are born female.”

“Ah, but that’s the thing about love, ain’t it? Love doesn’t care. It may end in tragedy, but to have found that, to have experienced that…it’s a beautiful thing, Ink.”

His smile had returned, somber, but thoughtful. The fire was blazing higher, warming Ink’s scales. She had stopped shivering.

“Do you believe in the power of love?” Ink asked.

Dean clicked his tongue.

“I believe in the power of commitment,” he said. “I believe that love can spur effort, but effort is only as valuable as the person committing to the effort. I might love a kraken, for instance, and I might love it with all of my heart, but that would not stop me from being drowned in its loving embrace. Love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power without love is reckless and abusive. Someone important said that once, though I can’t remember who.”

“Love without power…”

Had that been what Augustus had: love without power? And where did that leave her? Power without love? Was she destined to inflict herself on all of her mates, given that there would always be a disparity between them?

Ink groaned.

“Life used to be simple,” Ink said. “When did it get so messy?”

“Perhaps it's the price we pay to keep life interesting,” Dean said, patting her flank. His hand was warm; warmer than most human’s. “Once we revive Augustus, then you can work out these questions with him, no?”

“Sure,” Ink said, settling in a circle around the fire.

Dean remained inside of her coils. With nowhere else to move,

he lay against her, and she let him. He was warm, after all, and the wind was howling outside of the cave. Ink's eyes fluttered. She placed her head in her arms. The alpaca blanket was soft on her shoulders.

"Dean?"

"Yes?"

"I really am sorry about your father."

"It's alright," Dean said, folding his hands over his chest. "He always said that mom was bound to eat him someday. That's the nature of a dragon, eh?"

When there was no reaction, he looked over his shoulder and smiled.

Ink was fast asleep, curled around him.

Chapter 6

Frostbite

Snow was falling when they emerged from the cave. A flake brushed up against Ink's nose, causing her to sneeze and blink as the sun reflected against the pure white surface of the mountain. Dean put his hands on his hips and took a deep breath, exhaling a puff of mist.

"Shouldn't be too far of a walk today," he said. "And let's hope it keeps snowing. She only comes out when it's snowing."

"So it's a she we're visiting," Ink said, trailing after him. The path they were taking looped beneath a cliff, plunging them into shade. Patches of ice covered the ground beneath the fresh powder. Dean almost tripped, only keeping aground with the aid of Ink's tail.

"Thanks," he said. "And yes: the next item on our list is a snow maiden's frozen tears."

"A snow maiden?"

"They're spirits of the frost," Dean explained. "They make their homes high in the mountains along the shores of frozen lakes, seeking out the warmth of lost souls, or so the story goes. Lonely creatures, they often keep the humans they find, freezing them if they try to escape their icy clutches."

"Who would ever do such a thing?" Ink hissed sarcastically. "So needless to say she's another dangerous monster we need to appease?"

"I'm not sure how dangerous she is," Dean said, coming to a fork in the icy path. "But I'm interested to see what she decides to trade for her tears. We'll have to be on our guard."

They exited the shadow of the cliff where the mountain dipped on the other side, forming a valley of frostbitten evergreen trees. A frozen lake sat in the middle of the valley, a glacial mirror over which

a flock of strange looking birds flew. Dean eyed them with some trepidation. Ink, however, was focused on an anomaly taking form at the edge of the frozen water. A mound of snow seemed to be caught in an invisible hurricane. The air tasted strange – a scent she had never encountered before.

"What is that?" Ink asked.

"Roc chicks," Dean said, still looking at the sky. "We're going to have to be careful. If the babies are here, then that means that mama is close by as well and you better believe she's starving."

"No. The snow. "

The mound of snow had grown larger, spitting out gusts of frozen wind in all directions. A rabbit with milky, pink eyes, fled across the lake, hind legs pounding as it ran for safety. The snow was starting to take shape. Dean gasped.

Ink risked raising her blindfold to see what he was looking at. In the middle of the rapidly diminishing mound of snow was a woman.

Her hair was as white as hoar frost, with pale blue skin like veins of ice. She wore a dress that trailed off over her bare feet, tied in the middle with the sash beneath her enormous breasts. Snowflakes melted on her long eyelashes. Her face was slender, doll-like, with the only unique feature being a pair of fangs that bit into her plump bottom lip. She didn't move, but her visage itself seemed to shift, parts of it scattering, then coming together. A blue finger was raised in the direction of the man and the basilisk.

"Are you lost?" a voice whispered over the wind. Ink shivered. The temperature was dropping rapidly. "I can feel your warmth from here, raging like a bonfire. What are you? Not simply human. Something more? Come closer, closer. Let me sit by your fire."

"Maybe you should hold back," Dean said. "The closer we get, the colder it will be."

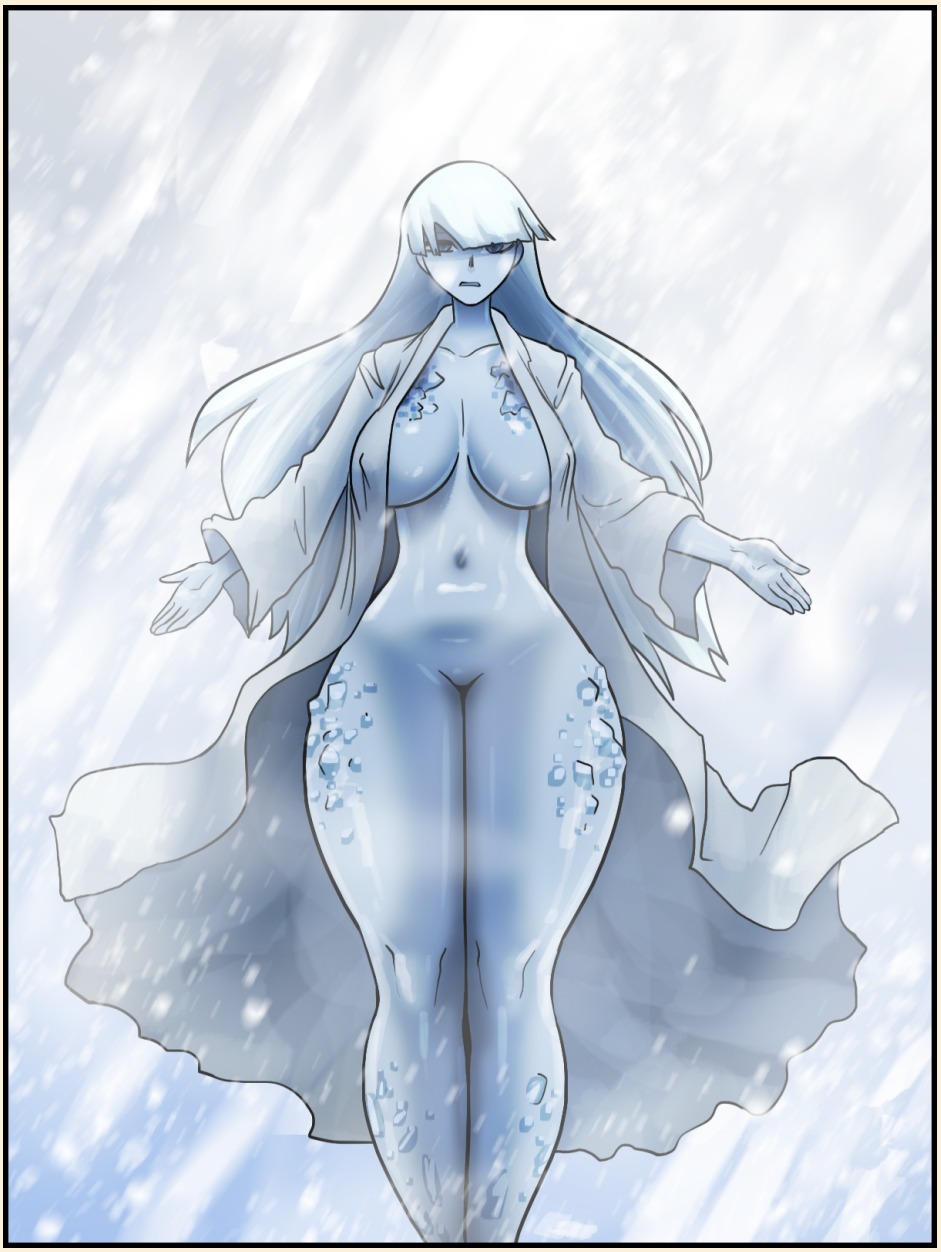
Instead of responding, Ink dug through his bag, throwing the alpaca wool over her shoulders. She moved forward resolutely,

followed by Dean, his feet crunching in the snow. The woman waited for them at the foot of a shallow hill. She ignored Ink, speaking directly to Dean.

"There's a flame inside of you that even I would have trouble putting out," she said. Even her voice sounded like chips of ice. "Come closer to me. I'm so very cold."

"We've come to you for a favor," Dean said, refusing to move closer. "We require one of your tears."

The woman seemed to melt into the landscape. She reformed a few steps back from her original position, blue lips pouting, arms



crossed over her prodigious bosoms.

"I don't give those away, away. Come closer. Closer. Let me feel your warmth. Enter me, human. Let us join ourselves, fire and ice."

"What will you take in exchange for your tear?" Ink asked.

The woman regarded her with open contempt.

"Nothing from you, serpent. Nothing except maybe…"

The woman was in front of Ink before she could react. A frigid hand touched her chest and the very air in her lungs froze, leaving her paralyzed. The woman fingered the necklace that Augustus had given her. She traced the silver with her thumb.

"I like this, this. I'll take this, this."

Ink felt the chain on the necklace snap as the snow maiden yanked it away from her. A firm hand came up to grasp the snow maiden's wrist.

"That," Dean said, taking the necklace, "doesn't belong to you."

"Warm," the snow maiden murmured. "So warm."

She faded, appearing back in her original spot. Ink found that she could move again, though it hurt to breathe. She coughed. Dean handed her the necklace.

"You're freezing," he said. "I can take care of this."

Ink couldn’t get enough air to argue. The snow maiden waited with open arms as Dean approached. When he stopped in front of her, she knelt to hug him, steam forming wherever their skin met. Then, in a whirl of snow, they were gone, and Ink was alone once more.

Chapter 7

Dean

The Snow maiden's cave was surrounded by pillars of ice which formed mirrored walls, filling the room with light. They were beneath the lake; Dean could tell that much. The Snow maiden stood in front of him, timid, her head tilted towards the ground. With one hand, she pulled aside the neck of her dress, exposing a pale white breast. Dean gulped. It was the size of his head.

"It's been too long, too long," she said. Her lips puckered as if she was experiencing an unpleasant memory. There were statues scattered throughout her cave, men and women frozen in ice, but unlike Ink's collection of stone, every expression was one of absolute terror. It seemed that none had lived long enough to mate with the snow maiden.

Dean took a deep breath and stoked the fire in his chest. He wasn't sure if he could endure the touch of a snow maiden for any length of time, nor was he sure that it was worth it when they could have so easily given up the necklace in exchange for the tear. Then he remembered Ink's face when the Snow maiden had yanked the necklace from her throat. There was no guarantee that they could bring Gus back. If their quest failed, then that was one of the only pieces of him that she had left.

And Ink was one of the only pieces of Gus that Dean had left.

"All right," Dean said, clapping. "Let's do this."

If it wasn't for the moderate risk of freezing to death, Dean might've found the Snow maiden beautiful. Indeed, her skin seemed to be made out of porcelain, and when she moved, she flowed, arching her catlike spine as she slipped her dress over her shoulders, letting it

fall to her waist where it caught on the sash. Bare from the chest up, she approached Dean, stroking his cheek with a frigid finger.

"Hey," Dean thought. "That's not that bad. I can handle that."

Then she kissed him and his soul went numb.

It was like the very idea of warmth had left his body. He couldn't move his fingers. He tried to blink and found it painful. There were bits of frost creeping across his eyelashes and his cheek had turned blue where the snow maiden had kissed it. He could see it in the mirror, just like he could see the snow maiden disrobing, pushing him towards her bed.

Her bed was a down mattress at the back of the cave. Dean questioned, deliriously, how it had gotten there as the snow maiden pushed him down on the sheets and set about undoing his belt. His fingers burned with pins and needles. It was funny how when cold enough the body felt like it was on fire.

Dean called to the flame within. Some warmth returned to his limbs.

"Not ice, not ice," the snow maiden murmured approvingly. "But just as hard."

She laughed at her own joke, a bitter, tinkling sound that reminded Dean of the rasp of nails on a chalkboard. She knelt before him and placed her icy breasts on his knees. More steam formed when they touched. She stuck her tongue out and, cupping his balls in her hand, she kissed the head of his cock.

A whole new wave of pain and pleasure roared through Dean. He threw his head back, gasping, as the snow maiden licked him again, seemingly amused by his reactions.

"Durable, durable. What are you, human? Can you withstand me?”

Dean bit into his lip as she bounced his shaft on her tongue. Using the tip, she glided up to the head. Then she took him in her mouth and sucked. Dean spasmed, his knees making waves against the

snow maiden's breasts.

"When will you give me your tear?" Dean asked. Having an end goal in mind kept him from succumbing to the ice. The snow maiden smiled.

"When I am finished," she said.

Leaving off, she straddled him on the bed. Dean was surprised to find that her thighs were as soft as satin, hugging his hips as she shuffled her ass into his lap. Once more he was inundated with the chill that left him gasping, but the snow maiden took his hands into her own and pressed his face into her bosom. There, the warm air of his breath caught in the crevice and the snow maiden let out a girlish



squeal. She pushed forward, sending him onto his back and, fingers still interlaced, took him inside of her. Both of them cried out at the same time.

The snow maiden had probably never experienced the raw touch of a man. Heat spread through her nethers, causing her to buck and moan, squeezing his hands tighter and drawing him to her breasts. Dean, meanwhile, was merely trying to survive as the frost in his veins expanded, threatening to extinguish his fire. And yet… and yet he took the snow maiden by the hips and drew her down hard, sheathing himself inside of her and allowing her to writhe around him. Her lips came down and brushed his neck, once, twice.



"Take," she said, placing her nipple to his mouth.

Shivering, Dean did as she asked, and the taste of her skin was as sweet as honey. He began to suck harder, and the snow maiden

responded, dragging her hips in slow circles, creating a rhythm between them. The steam was getting thicker, but Dean could feel that he still had a ways to go. The snow maiden was not so easily satisfied after long years of high expectations. She wanted everything from him. He gave it to her.

Despite the difference in height, Dean managed to slip out from beneath the snow maiden, rolling her onto her back. They stayed connected throughout, with the snow maiden clenched around him as if afraid to let them go. She was wet. She was tight. She was thick in all of the right places. Dean focused on these things and nothing else; especially not the clumsiness of his extremities and the plunging temperatures in the cavern. He drove into her, balls smacking against her pale ass. She wrapped her legs around his neck. Her eyes rolled in her head.

"Oh my," she whispered. "Oh my, oh my, oh my."



She was twitching. Dean felt her grasp around him, desperate for his seed, but he was slowing down. The frostbite had spread from his fingers and toes to his forearms and his knees, making standing difficult. He tried to draw more heat from within, but with nothing to stoke the flames, he came up empty. He would have to finish her off quickly, and that meant leaning into the pleasure and ignoring the pain.

So that's what he did. He focused purely on the way her lips formed a silent 'O', the curve of her eyelashes, the tightness in his crotch, yet at the same time, he remembered the warmth Ink's scales as she coiled around him in slumber; the pulsing heat of Gladdis' throat. Latching onto these thoughts, he continued, exploring the imaginary folds of the lamia's gullet and the subtle twitch of Ink's lips whenever she whispered a threat in his ear. There was an erotic curve to the serpent's spine that he had noticed, but not elaborated upon. He elaborated upon it now, tracing imaginary fingers over the flesh, forward and under each supple breast.

The thoughts didn't come without guilt. Dean told himself that he was merely remembering the most recent visions of warmth. The flame within was stoked by emotion, and right now warmth was all he sought.

But the images began to mix with the snow maiden. He was taking her harder, faster. He reached forward and grabbed her breasts and the snow maiden dug into his hips with her nails, lost in the motion, wanting to melt. They were getting close now. Dean couldn't feel his arms or his legs; his breath was coming out in puffs of white. Still he continued, though he had forgotten the original purpose of his visit to the snow maiden's cave. Her thighs squeezed hard around his neck. Flexing her abdomen, she pulled herself up to his face and kissed him, and at the same time they released, resulting in a billowing, salty steam.

"Fantastic," the snow maiden said. "Fantastic!"

Her voice came to him from a distance. Dean's teeth were

chattering so hard that he thought they would shatter, if not for the way that his jaw was clenched. He attempted to move his arms, his legs, and found that he could not. Ice was creeping up past his knees, enshrining him, and the fire inside of him was dead. The snow maiden was unconcerned. She sighed and stroked his cheek.

"Thank you," she said. "You have earned my tear and yet I fear that you will be incapable of claiming your prize. Know that I wish you no malice. This is my nature, after all, and it was wonderful that you were even able to lay with me. I'll take good care of you. You will have a place of honor in my cave."

Dean's heart was banging in his chest. The sound was palpable, ringing against his eardrums, slowing to a crawl as the ice finished covering his chest. He could feel it around his neck, constricting. Would he die when it covered his face, or would he remain petrified until he thawed? His lips trembled.

"Give the tear," he whispered. "Give the tear to the snake."

"I will, I will," the snow maiden sang back.

The banging was getting louder. Was he afraid? Dean had faced death many times, but this was the most he had considered his own mortality. He had never taken a mate. His nomadic nature made relationships a nuisance and his increased lifespan made the notion of dating another human untenable. The banging reached a fever pitch. It sounded like someone driving an ice pick through his brain. If only. The frost was racing across his eyes. His vision turned blue. There was a scream. His own? A blurry shape had invaded the cave and was racing toward him. Something sharp pierced his skin.

The shape had bitten him.

The fire in his heart flared into an inferno.

Chapter 8

Thaw

Ink had broken through the ice not a moment too soon. She had tracked Dean across the lake with her keen sense of smell; digging, hunting, tasting the air. The wind made it difficult to pinpoint an exact location, but Ink had been persistent. Occasionally she would call out.

"Dean! Dean, where are you?"

The moment that she sensed him beneath her scales was the moment that his smell began to diminish. She dug in a fervor, chipping away at the thick ice with her claws, screaming as she did so.

"Dean, I'm coming! Hold on!"

Her hands came away bloodied. One of her claws had chipped, pulling away from her finger. Gritting her teeth, Ink slammed her tail on the weakened chunk of ice, using the extra weight she had gained from the troll. The ice began to crack. She slammed it over and over again until a hole formed in the surface of the lake, admitting her to the cave. The snow maiden was standing before a bed of white satin. Dean sat in front of her, his body covered in ice.

After she had petrified Augustus, Ink thought that she had known the depths of despair. Watching Dean's once jovial face contorted in agony as his pink lips turned blue was too much to bear.

"What did you do?" she asked.

The snow maiden shook her head sadly.

"He could not hold on, on," she said. "He will freeze, freeze."

Even from halfway across the cave, Ink could feel the effects of the snow maiden's presence. She wanted to lay down where she stood; to take a nap in the middle of the cave and wait until the weather was warmer. Shaking away the instinctual urge, Ink raced towards Dean,

sliding to a halt next to his frozen hands. He looked up at her. The corners of his lips broadened, but he did not speak. She wasn't sure if he could actually see her.

"Not another one," Ink whispered, turning to the snow maiden. "How do I fix this?"

"There is warmth inside of him that needs to come out."

The Snow maiden gestured towards her legs where Ink could see the stain of Dean seed leaking between her thighs. The steaming goo both aroused and disgusted her. He had fucked the vile creature? It also gave her an idea.

The ice covering Dean's arms and legs was thick — an impenetrable shell like the ones that had consumed the rest of the snow maiden's victims — but the ice covering his throat was still thin, giving Ink a place to plant her fangs, biting down as hard as she could. She felt the venom eject. She saw the pupils of his eyes widen through the ice, prompting her to quickly draw down her blindfold.

A second passed. Two.

A plume of steam burst from the shell of ice. Dean let out a ragged gasp as he emerged into the cavern, falling onto his hands and knees, clawing at his own chest. Ink swept them up into her arms. She held him close until the thrashing stopped. Then he began to shiver.

"The frost is still in him, in him," the snow maiden said, handing Ink a bottle. "It's unclear if he will live, live."

"He will," Ink snapped. "I'll make sure of that."

Dean groaned into her chest. He grasped at her with weak hands, pawing at her skin, and Ink bundled him tighter into the confines of the blanket that he had given her. Still, it was not enough. While his core radiated heat, his extremities remained deadened. Ink whisked him toward the hole she had made in the ceiling. She climbed over the statues, not sparing a look back at the snow maiden who stared after them with baleful eyes.

"Good luck, luck."

Ink sped across the barren landscape, breathing hard, ignoring the scrape of ice on her scales and her own numbness. She had to get Dean back to the cave where the embers of the fire awaited.

Why was she helping a human?

She brushed away the question, choosing instead to focus on the distant black dot nestled beneath the cliff face, but it plagued her still, resurfacing every few seconds like a pesky fly. Why was she helping a human? Why did watching him suffer make her feel this way? Was it because he was helping her? Was it gratitude, that vague, unfamiliar emotion that armored her against the cold? Perhaps. It certainly wasn't a sudden bout of altruism; she still felt the urge to swallow the annoying man she was carrying in her arms. If she got desperate enough, she would. That would warm him up for sure.

Dean was mumbling something. A prayer? No, a question.

"The tear?"

Ink felt the bottle slip against her nipple. She pulled it out and held it above her blindfold, gazing at the translucent blue crystal contained within.

"I have it," she said.

"It feels like I'm being burned alive. What did you do to me?"

"Nothing," Ink lied. "Now quiet. We have to get you to the cave."

Dean didn't utter another word until they reached the safety of the cliff face, but Ink sensed a stiffness forming beneath her breast. She shifted Dean in her arms, blushing, as his moans turned into a needful keening and his lips met with her collarbone. The man didn't know what he was doing. It was an effect of the venom, that was all.

They reached the cave after what seemed like forever. The embers were still there on the floor, as was the pack that Dean had stashed before they made their way to the lake. Ink lay Dean down next to the coals and searched through his pack. There wasn't much wood left.

"This will have to be enough," she said, tossing what was there

on the embers.

Luckily for her, the wood was dry, and soon the fire licked its rough surface, warming the cave. Ink pushed Dean closer to the fire. He was tossing and turning, his eyes shut tight, fighting against the icy momento of the Snow maiden's touch and the amplifying effect of the basilisk's venom.

“What did you do to me?” Dean asked again. His hat tumbled off of his black curls. Ink picked it up and set it aside.

“It’s my venom,” she said. “It makes humans fertile.”

“Fertile? Gods, Ink, my manhood is on fire.”



Some of Ink’s annoyance returned. How could she have forgotten that it was Dean she was dealing with?

“If you didn’t want me to save you–” she started, but then Dean grabbed her hand. A familiar, salty smell reached her nose. She hadn’t

managed to pull his pants up to his waist, so the result of his emission was all over her underbelly. “Hey!”

“Not on purpose,” Dean said. His hips bucked. He was already hard again. “Basilisk venom is…new. Still cold. Sorry.”

Ink clicked her tongue, ignoring her own urges. Yes, her venom was incredibly potent, but that didn't mean that he had the right to splatter all over her. The agony served him right, too, disappearing the way that he did. He had scared her! Ugh, she wished she had her pool. The smell of his seed was growing stronger by the second. Dean was flopping around on the cave floor like a rabbit in heat, trying not to embarrass himself further. She could satiate him, of course. She could pick him up and place him in her mouth, letting him relieve the pressure in his manhood on her tongue. Or she could do it with her tits. They were big enough, given the sudden enlargement, compliments of the troll. That made her think about how Dean had made fun of her for her weight gain.

Nope! He could suffer for all she cared.

The shivering returned. A stiff breeze was coming from the mouth of the cave, cooling her scales and tugging at the flames. Dean was mouthing something, but she couldn't hear him. She brought her face closer.

"The fire," he said. "Don't let it go–"

The wind caught one of the sticks and sent it skittering into the dark. Unmoored, the rest of the fire collapsed into a pillar of sparks. Dean put a trembling hand over the feeble remains of the coals. His body seized.

"What's wrong?" Ink asked.

"A lot," Dean said, gnawing the flesh in between his thumb and his forefinger. "Fuck, it's cold."

Ink had hoped that her bite would push away the snow maidens curse, and it had somewhat. However, unless she got him warm in the next 10 minutes, the ice would return. Dean never asked for her pity.

He just lay there, groaning pathetically. Ink picked at her injured claw, looking back and forth, making sure that nobody could see what she was about to do next.

"All right, all right, you big baby," Ink hissed, pushing her tail beneath his leg. "I guess you did manage to get that snow woman's tear, which makes you at least slightly useful. I suppose I could-"

"Ink."

A sharp word. A warning. She had been coiling around him, pressing him into her soft, rubbery underbelly where her warmth tended to congregate. In her hurry to solve one issue, she had forgotten about the one that she herself had created. As her coils clamped down around his waist, Dean sank his teeth into her fur, stifling a cry as he came.

This time, with his throbbing cock clutched in her sensitive underbelly, Ink had a much harder time resisting her urges. Her slit opened against his chest, emitting a puff of tepid air.

"Stop that," she said, squeezing him. "Stop that at once!"

"Really… trying," Dean gasped.

He was hard again. Why was his shivering so erotic? Right, it was because it mimicked the fear response of her prey. Ink's stomach rumbled above his head. She began to drool.

Her stomach was warm, she thought. It would be doing him a service to swallow him down and when his shivering stopped, she could just spit him back up. That was a lie, though. Gladdis might be able to regurgitate her food on a whim, but Ink was far more protective of her meals, what with years of hoarding the rare passerby that came into her cave. It was possible, though, that slithering voice in her head whispered. He probably tasted good right now, all salty, all sweaty from fever, and she could relieve some of the pressure in his crotch with her throat. The only other option was…

Ink shuddered. He was right there. It would be nothing, nothing to stuff him into her cunt. It would be like a warm sleeping bag. A

warm, slimy, sleeping bag with moving walls and a moaning basilisk attached to it. Did she mention deep? She could fit Gladdis inside of her, much less a human. She could send them far into her tail and in there, he could cum all he wanted.

No, Ink reminded herself. She was saving that for somebody special. She was saving that for Augustus!

"What are you making me think of?" Ink asked, slapping her cheeks. She was blushing from her ears to her breasts. "You stop that right now!"

Dean, rightfully confused, attempted to stop moving, which wasn't hard considering Ink had lost control of her coils, constricting around him until it became difficult to breathe. She released him, gasping, onto the cave floor. He began shivering again at once.

"We have to get down the mountain," he said. "We need to get somewhere warmer soon, or all..."

Ink placed her tail to his lips.

"Can you walk?" she asked.

Dean got up on one knee, placed his foot beneath them, and fell forward onto his elbows. Ink pushed her tail under him again, bringing him into her clutches. He put his cheek against her engorged stomach which gurgled in his ear.

"No," he said. "You'll have to carry me, but with this cursed, agh, venom in my veins, every movement is difficult."

"I was just trying to-"

"I know. I am grateful, Ink."

Dean smiled and Ink knew that smile because she had stared at it for a full week after Augustus had been petrified. She wiped away a tear in her eye and grimaced, knowing that Dean was watching her. She had almost met his gaze. If that had happened, this all would have been for naught. Anyhow, the prospect of carrying him down the mountain presented a unique dilemma: if she was going to keep them warm, then she was going to have to swallow him with either her

throat or her cunt.

Her cunt would be the safest, but it was promised to another, and her stomach would be the warmest, but there was also the chance that in her predator's greed, she'd decide to digest him.

If only his cock wasn't rubbing against her stomach. It was making it impossible to think.

"All right!" she said. "I have a plan, but you're going to have to trust me."

"I do," Dean said, "not that I have much of a choice."

Ink's lips twitched. This was a dynamic she was more comfortable with.

"I," she said, bringing their noses together, "am going to swallow you whole. I am going to gulp you down like the worthless piece of meat that you are and you are going to thank me for the privilege, because it's going to be this stomach-"

She pushed his cock harder into her belly. Both of them moaned.

"-that's going to save you. It's not going to smell good. It's not going to be comfortable. It is, however, going to be warm, and it is going to keep you safe until I can get us down the mountain."

Dean went to shake his head 'no'. She could actually feel the muscles in his neck straining to do so, but then he stopped for some reason. He was… afraid? That was to be expected. She had just told him that she was going to eat him and fear was a normal response to that, but he was also aroused. That too could be explained away as a result of her venom and of the promise that his cock was going to glide through her throat, spurting every few feet until he had coated her gullet.. The thought was incredibly erotic to Ink who liked the idea of playing with sex and hunger.

It's Dean, she reminded herself.

"You promise that you won't digest me?" he asked.

"I promise to keep you warm," Ink said, chuckling. "Anything else is beyond my ability to predict. You might be tasty."

Ink could smell Dean's hormones. Nobody could hide their arousal from her. The statement had gotten a reaction.

Her venom must be more potent than she thought.

“Alright,” Dean said. “Do it.”

He grabbed her forearms, causing her to jolt. Ink wasn’t used to her prey begging to get inside of her and his insistence awakened an itch. It was…nice to be desired. Other men found her body erotic, yes, but none had looked at her with such intoxifying devotion to the wet press of her throat. Ink found her appetite whetted. She’d give him what he wanted.

Dean’s breath hitched as she licked him. Her tongue was long and dexterous and it snaked beneath his clothes, lapping at his hairy chest and stomach. With deft fingers, Ink undid the button on his cape. His sash came off in a snap. His tunic was whisked over his head and one tug was enough to get his pants off, leaving him naked and statuesque.

He wasn’t as beautiful as Augustus. Ink had taken plenty of men more aesthetic than Dean, but he was broad and as her fingers explored his back and shoulders, she found herself gliding her palms over thick cords of muscle. He’d drop like a stone in her throat. The thought made her wet. There was an intensity to his presence that raised goosebumps on her arms and she knew in her stomach, that presence would be muted by her body. He’d be just a lump beneath her skin, heavy and satisfying. Ink took hold of Dean’s hips. She couldn’t hold back anymore.

The man needed no further prompting.

Her tongue came up and under his balls, toying with his throbbing member. She enjoyed teasing his shaft, feeling him shudder, then taking him with her lips. He was close, but she would offer no relief. His desperation was delicious.

Dean clutched her shoulders. His thumbs dug into her collarbones as he attempted to thrust. He was strong, but Ink was

stronger and she held him back, keeping him at bay with her tongue. Once or twice, she crept up his body, letting her fat breasts drag over his torso. His cock buried itself in her cleavage, twitching, but still no relief. Ink wanted revenge for the fright he had caused her.

"P- please…"

"You let me keep my necklace, which means you deserve a reward," Ink said.

Dean's eyes rolled back in his head as she took him deep. Precum leaked against the roof of her mouth. Ink let him out with a slurp.

"But you also made fun of me when I ate the troll and then I had to save you from the snow woman. What do you think is a suitable punishment for that?"

She traced a claw over his shaft. Dean almost fainted.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"You better be."

Digging her hand into her cleavage, she made room for Dean's shaft, tucking it in before letting the ample walls come together to sandwich his cock. Slowly, using her elbows, she began to rub her tits together.

"There," she said, kneading him. "I don't want to hear another word about my weight; not when you're enjoying the result so much."

He was twitching like crazy. He was going to cum. Ink continued to find his cock through the skin of her breasts, pushing in with her fingers, getting him tantalizingly close. With her increased size, there was only one way she wanted him. She drew her cleavage together so that no part of his cock showed and squeezed.

SPLURT!

Hot cum drained between her tits. Dean, nearly unconscious, sagged into her arms.

"I'm gonna…get you back," he said.



“Sure you are,” Ink said. “But I think you’ve been freezing long enough. Time to see my stomach. Maybe you can collect some of that bile while you’re in there, hmm?”

It didn’t take long for Dean to snap out of his stupor. Staring into a basilisk’s maw would do that to people, especially since Ink had opened extra wide, letting him peer into every nook and cranny of the drooling mound of soft pink flesh. Did he like her fangs? She brought them close to his face, showing him the needle-like appendages before retracting them with a snap, licking his chin. He was hard again.

“What did Gladdis do to you?” she asked, amused. “Did one dip in her fat stomach turn you into some kind of pervert?”

“Any promise of warmth after that snow witch is sure to be erotic,” Dean gulped, watching a strand of saliva sink into the velvety folds of her throat. He could only imagine what it would feel like sliding down that moistened path. “Surely your venom has corrupted my mind.”

“My venom merely amplifies the erotic. Seeing as you can’t breed with my stomach, getting hard at the thought of being inside of it puts the blame squarely on your big, succulent shoulders.”

She dipped him into her mouth, releasing him with a pop. He had stopped shivering. That was good, but now that they had started, she wasn’t going to stop. Behind her blindfold, her eyes were narrowed to pinpricks, the taste of his body galvanizing her predator’s instincts. She coiled around him. No escape. She showed him her throat to inspire fear and he shuddered for the wrong reasons. That was okay.

As long as he squirmed, Ink didn’t care.

Her mouth drew over his shoulders, pushing deeper and deeper as her uvula dragged over his spine. When his cock touched her bottom lip, she rubbed it, working him into a fine frenzy before folding him onto her tongue.

Are you going to provide a marinade? Ink thought.

SPURT!



Indeed he did. Dean crested her lips with a nervous laugh, seeking the back of her throat with his hands. It was dark in Ink's mouth, with only the sound of her gentle breathing and her stomach to distract him from the gravity that slowly pushed him downward. Ink gulped to lock him in place. He was hanging over her gullet, facing down the muscular shaft.

"Can't I just wait in your mouth?" he asked. "You're big enough. You don't have to swallow me."

A pause. One by one, the muscular rings that made up her throat parted, forming a tunnel beneath him. Noxious air rose from below, giving him his first breath of his prison – his transport down the mountain. Ink tilted her head. His hands slipped inside. There was nothing to grip in the slick embrace of her gullet. His fingers slid over the ridges, prompting a groan from his captor. Inspired, Dean tried it again.

“Shtop at,” Ink said, tongue tugging at his legs.

“So you like having your throat rubbed,” Dean said. His voice echoed somewhat inside of her body. He dug his fingers harder into the quivering flesh, drawing out a moan. Too late did he realize that Ink was bending. The tunnel widened and he sank into it in a deluge of saliva and cum.

SLORP!

Ink traced his path down her throat with her palm spread against her burning skin. Her face was ablaze from Dean’s vulgar disregard for the danger that her stomach presented. Never had prey tried to pleasure her. Never had they toyed with her instincts as much as this man had. He was going to be punished. He was going to pay! It was a good thing that she could control every muscle in her throat. His descent was slowed midway through, allowing her to hold his body above the sphincter of her stomach which rumbled hard, complaining about the delay. Where was his cock? Ah yes, there it was, pressed against her larynx. Ink made sure to hold her throat tight as she swallowed, squeezing for all she was worth.

Dean heard the swallow before he felt it. His face was pressed against a knot of flesh from beyond which her stomach bubbled and popped. He was waiting for it to open, sweating, fidgeting against the spongy walls that gripped him when the first ring of her gullet clamped around his already twitching cock, kneading the orgasm out of him before he knew what was happening.

ULP!

“Gah!”

Ink smirked as Dean fluttered inside of her. Fool. Did he think that was all she had?

ULP! ULP! GuuULP!

Oh, how he thrashed! She had full control of him now, throat locked around his manhood, and as every joke he made ran through her head, she swallowed and swallowed, punishing him for his

insolence.

"Ah! Ink! Ahh, please! That…oooh my…ffffuck! What do you want from me?"

Ink stopped swallowing, choosing instead to press her finger against his cock. A slight wiggle set him off again.

"Ink!"

That's right, Ink thought, drawing her hand down to her necklace. *Beg! I'm going to make you- oh!*

Dean had dragged one of his arms back up her throat during a swallow. Now, knuckles deep in one of the ridges, he rubbed and it was Ink's turn to spasm.

"Mmm!"

She wanted to bite. She wanted to swallow. She wanted to coil and constrict and boil the man inside of her! Tearing off her blindfold, Ink bent forward, saliva splattering against the remains of the fire. She had forgotten about her mission, losing herself in the pleasure of swallowing her prey. There was only one thing for it.

Dean had just allowed himself a satisfied smirk when the knot beneath his head opened suddenly, dropping him with a splat into the sweltering mass of the basilisk's belly.

Ink felt him hit the bottom. She felt her stomach stretch around him, conforming to the shape of his body as his knees slid up to his chest in a sea of putrid slime. Were those his feet pressed against the base of her stomach? She touched them, but it was hard to tell given the deposit of pudge the troll had left. A clench of her abdomen got him wriggling. Ink shook herself hard, laughing as her stomach sloshed.

"Warm enough for you?" she asked. "My belly should hold the frost at bay, but you're probably not going to want to move so much. My belly sees you as food, after all, and if you squirm, it's going to think it's time to digest. Settle down and settle in. Kick twice if you can hear me."

THUMP THUMP!

OOuUUuuUUUuuuRRP!

His kicks had displaced a bubble of gas. How embarrassing! Ink giggled as she curved from side to side, enjoying the newfound weight resting against her hips. His cock would be pressed against the saturated folds of flesh and with her venom still coursing through him, he'd have no choice but to succumb to the warmth and friction of her stomach's loving rub.

"Ink!"



His voice was muffled by her body. Her breasts shifted as his head came up between them and she pushed him back down, delighted to hear the sputter of her gut displacing more air.

UUurrrRP!

“What is it, snack?”

“We need to get down the mountain.”

Oh right. That was the original purpose of her swallowing him, after all. Ink put a finger to her lips, coiling in place, fighting the drive to lay in a dark corner of the cave to finish off her meal. Her stomach gurgled as she thought. It wasn’t as patient as she was.

“Fine,” she said at last, picking up his discarded clothes and stuffing them in his bag. “But I’m serious about not moving too much.”

Dean, surrounded by darkness and gyrating walls, could only nod. He didn’t have much choice in the matter, anyhow. If he wanted, he could stretch his legs, forcing them through the mass of Ink’s stomach fat to get them beneath him, but doing so would expose more of his body to the sluice of hot liquid currently bubbling against his groin. Ink’s stomach regularly filled and drained. He suspected that the inside of her tail was getting particularly slimy.

More pressing of an issue was the pressure on his cock. Now that freezing to death wasn’t at the forefront of his mind, he was free to focus on the mounting need to release despite his aching balls. He lay his head against the wall and fought the urge to touch himself.

Chapter 9

Eye to Eye

The journey down the mountain was easier than the journey up. For one, Ink actually knew where she was going as she slithered through the crags of snow toward the green pastures on the horizon. For two, everything was more amusing with prey in her stomach. Especially prey that was trying so so hard not to cum.

“Oops, another bump,” she said, nudging her stomach with her elbow. Dean groaned, sending a shiver down her spine as he twitched against her innards. “Sorry, this path is rocky.”

“You’re doing it on purpose.”

Ink dragged her hand over his cock again. Dean let out a yelp.

“Of course not,” she drawled. “I would never seek to amuse myself on such an important mission. You just curl up and try to stay warm.”

“When I get out of here- ah!”

A clench put him over the edge. His knees mashed against her belly button as his body shuddered to a halt.

“What did I say about not moving?” Ink said. “Oh dear, my stomach is filling up fast!”

She snickered. It was somehow easier to talk to Dean with him locked away in her gut. If he sassed her, she squeezed. If he made a joke, she squeezed. If he breathed wrong, she squeezed. Much tidier than listening to him drivel on for hours about things that didn’t matter, and with his powerful presence muted by her stomach, she didn’t have to worry about his stare giving her goosebumps. She could just slosh him about a little and he’d cum. Simple, easy, elegant.

There was the fact that doing so made her increasingly wet,

however. She told herself that once she got down the mountain, the first thing she would do was find Gladdis. Dean would probably be happy to watch the two snakes plow each other and if he wanted to join-

Ink shook her head. There she went again. She squeezed Dean, earning another yell.

“Why! I didn’t say anything!”

“Just to remind you who’s boss,” Ink said.

She was halfway down the mountain. The fields were getting larger and the sun was high in the sky, beating down on her scales as she left the chill of the peaks behind. It was probably safe to let Dean out, but she didn’t want to risk it (or lose the gentle thrumming sensation building in her tail – gods, she couldn’t wait to get to Gladdis).

“Still okay in there?” she asked.

“Getting a little uncomfortable,” Dean said.

The venom had run its course. He was now face down in the mushy pit of Ink’s belly, holding himself above the flooded lower chambers. His muscles ached from being cramped for so long and the come-down from basilisk venom ended up being a sour and sticky shame. What had he been thinking while high on her body?

He was used to the thump of her heart overhead. It beat less often than a human heart and pounded like a drum when she was worked up.

She. That’s what he considered Ink to be now that he had spent so much time with her. Even in her stomach under the threat of digestion, he could no longer see her as a monster, which was inconvenient given the amount that she had teased him over the last two hours. Women that teased him were his weakness.

“Maybe I should send you into my tail,” Ink was saying. “Warm you up nice and good in my slushy guts while I get the taste of you out of my mouth. Urgh, how much did you cum? I didn’t know you liked

my stomach that much."

"Okay," Dean murmured to himself, thrusting his arm into a fold. "If that's how we're playing."

Fingers spread, he sent his hand gliding through her stomach. Ink stopped, spasmed, then clenched around him.

"Hey!"

"Ah," Dean smiled. "Sorry, I lost my balance."

"Okay," Ink grumbled.

His hand skittered over her stomach again. This time, Ink let out a high-pitched wail and clamped around him. He felt her tail twitch twice, then relax. Ink drove a hand into her pudge and found his crotch.

"So that's how we're going to play, huh?" she said, rubbing. Dean bit his lip as the familiar tightness took hold. "Can't blame my venom this time, pervert. If you get hard, it's because you like big, gooey basilisk guts clenching around your dick. I don't have to let you out, you know."

"Then you'll never, ungh, get the rest of the recipe."

"...fuck!"

Ink left him squirming, staring up the road.

Augustus. How long had it been since she had petrified him? Longer than she had known him, surely, and yet his sweet words rang true in her ears. She tingled at the thought of holding him again. Perhaps she'd digest Dean as an interloper at their wedding, but then she'd miss his grating voice and his snobbish remarks. The realization made Ink sneer. When had she grown so soft?

***

The accident happened because Ink had gotten distracted. She had been imagining her life with Augustus, his strong hands wrapped

around her waist as his lower body dipped into hers. She'd take him in the pool and in her nest and in the fields and maybe, if he wanted, she'd give him the same treatment as Dean: biting him and gulping him down. Somehow, the image wasn't as appealing with Augustus' earnest nature. She much preferred Dean's stubborn refusal to admit that she had forced a fetish upon him. One they both shared.

She raised her hands to slap her flushed cheeks. In doing so, she removed them from her stomach, and in removing them from her stomach, she forgot to flex.

And because she forgot to flex, the knot beneath Dean's feet opened.

"Mmmph!"

"Hush," Ink said, annoyed. Dean was sliding through her stomach again. Were her acids getting painful? Good. She wasn't heavy enough to have even started digesting him, so he had nothing to complain about. Then she felt his toes brush the nerves inside of her tail and she squeezed, but it was too late. Her tail clamped around Dean's feet, tugging him deeper.

"Uh, Ink? Is this supposed to happen?" Dean called.

The wall above him was closing, pushing him down into the new, smoother depths. There were less wrinkles in Ink's tail, which meant less friction to keep him from sliding along. Enormous muscles kneaded his calves.

"Give me, um. Give me a second!"

Well that wasn't reassuring.

Ink frantically pawed at her tail, wondering what to do. She had never tried to eject something from her tail before; that's where her body sent her prey to digest in earnest. She focused on her muscles and willed them to work backwards, but habit was stronger than desperation. She moaned as Dean's waist got caught in the sphincter. She could feel his cock vividly against her underbelly.

"Ink!" Dean sputtered. "Ink, that's a lot of liquid you're pushing

me into!”

“Right, uh, hmm. That’s…ah! Ah! That’s nice!”

“Nice? Oh, wait, Ink don’t!”

Ink couldn’t help it: she clenched, sending him squirting into her tail.

“Ah, ah, ah!”

Ink’s huge belly had converged around Dean at once. Its soft walls had pummeled him down into a narrower tube where instead of skin and fat, hard muscle was packed around him, holding his arms



steady above his head, carrying his body lower and lower. Worse yet was the fact that, with all of his limbs otherwise occupied, there was nothing he could do about the way his cock was being pressed into the basilisk's lower stomach, nor was her obvious orgasm helping. He slid until his feet hit something solid. Another knot. The liquid was higher here and prone, he could just barely keep his face above it.

"Ink!"

His call was barely audible. Ink twisted to look at her tail, concern written on her brow.

She was in the forest, close to the human villages. Should she seek the humans for help? No, they'd kill her. She needed Gladdis, but she was an hour from their cave. Could Dean last an hour in her lower stomach? He'd have to, because there was no way that she could get him out without Gladdis' intervention.

"Hold on!" Ink called, bunching her muscles. "This is going to get uncomfortable!"

Dean wasn't sure how much more uncomfortable it could get. His upper half was being wrenched upward, only an inch from the bubbling liquid, and his lower half was crunched against the forest floor as Ink slithered as fast as she could, bending his body. His ears were filled with the rustle of scales on dirt; the hiss of acids stinging his skin. How close were they to safety?

Ink broke from the forest into the fields. She thought she caught the glimmer of a lamia's scales through the long grass, but any lamia aside from Gladdis would swallow Dean on sight. Only Gladdis knew why she had been away from her cave for so long. Only Gladdis would be able to help her.

Her lower stomach fizzled. Was Dean still moving? Yes, but barely, and her cave was in sight. Ink almost cried as she saw the statue of the farmer; her dickless sentinel. Putting on a final burst of speed, she flew into the cave and smacked against something very soft and very, very jiggly.



“Ouch!” Gladdis said, rubbing her waist. “Ink?”

“Gladdis! Gladdis?”

The lamia looked away as Ink stared incredulously at her stomach. It had doubled, tripled in size, and that wasn’t the only thing: Gladdis herself was bigger. She had grown in length so that Ink, standing beneath her, was dwarfed by the lamia who laughed bashfully, scratching her head.

“You had a lot of…guests while you were away,” Gladdis said. “Don’t worry. I serviced all of them.”

“I can see that,” Ink huffed.

“Where’s the man you left with?”

Ink slapped her tail on the ground in front of her. Gladdis smirked at the lump.

“Yeah, I thought that might happen.”

“I know,” Ink said, ignoring her, “but I actually do need to get him out of there. He’s so deep that he’ll drown in a second if we don’t save him.”

“You can’t spit people out of your tail?”

“You can?!”

Gladdis returned her gaze to the ceiling. It was taboo among lamia to ‘waste’ food. Snakes that spit up their meals to torment them longer were seen to be in bad taste and most wouldn’t admit to the breach in etiquette. Gladdis scratched her stomach self-consciously. Someone was still moving inside of it, buried under a veritable mountain of thick, brown chub.

“No comment.”

“Why am I even surprised?”

“Oh come on!” Gladdis said, throwing her hands up. “My husband loves it. Or, well, loved it. Anthony came by to visit while you were gone and I thought he was another intruder. He’s right where he belongs now, the ingrate.”

“You literally just said you could spit him up,” Ink pointed out.

“Eh…don’t wanna.”

Ink waved a hand in front of her face. That wasn’t important. Dean wasn’t moving anymore.

“Whatever, whatever,” she said. “Can you help?”

Gladdis grinned, looming over her friend.

“I can,” she said, “but you’re not going to like how.”

Ink tilted her head, confused, until Gladdis hooked her hands around her waist and lifted her. The lamia’s cunt opened, releasing the humidity locked within. Ink looked down into the twisting, pink labyrinth, then back up at Gladdis.

“You can’t be serious,” she said.

“Deadly,” Gladdis said, wrapping the tip of Ink’s tail around her finger. She inserted it into her cunt, slurping it up to the point where

Dean’s bulge began. “We’re going to squeeze him out of you.”

The muscles in Gladdis’ cunt closed around Dean’s feet. Ink was afraid that she would crush him, sighing as the muscles clenched and kneaded, but Gladdis had full control, pulling Ink down as she pushed Dean up. Ink felt him rise in her lower stomach. A tentative hand scraped against her innards.

"It's working," Ink cried.

"Of course it is," Gladdis soothed, brushing her knuckles against Ink's neck. "Now relax and let me handle this. There you go. How are you? Did you find what you are looking for?"

Ink took the bottle out of her chest wrap and placed it on the ground along with Dean's satchel, hiding her relief behind a moan. She was home now. Dean was going to be safe and they had two ingredients, potentially three ingredients for the potion that would save Augustus. His statue had been moved to the center of the cave. Gladdis had used him to hang towels on.

"Oh yeah," Gladdis said, following her eyes. "Yeah, I couldn't take his lovey-dovey expression for much longer. Anthony never looked at me like that unless we were having sex."

Her stomach thumped against Ink's chest. Apparently, Anthony didn't like that.

"Looks like you've had some run-ins with villagers as well," Gladdis said, poking Ink's tits. “You look good, girl.”

"It was a troll, actually," Ink said. Gladdis squeezed hard around her tail, causing her to bite her lip. "It's a long story."

Dean's bulge was rising, slowly, but surely, ascending up the widening length of Ink's underbelly. The higher he got, the more animated he became, and the more Ink and Gladdis began to feel the effects of his squirms. Both of them let out a hiss. Gladdis licked Ink’s neck, tongue weaving to lap at her breasts.

"He's really moving," Gladdis said. "Are you sure you don't want me to leave him in there? Isn't he annoying?"



"Infinitely," Ink said. "But he has also been helpful, so I think he's earned his freedom."

"You're a strange snake, Ink."

When Dean reached the knot leading into Ink's stomach, Gladdis kissed her. Ink's tail had been completely subsumed by Gladdis' cunt, making her privy to her friend's arousal. In return, Ink kissed Gladdis' stomach. She could hardly wrap her arms around the entire thing.

"Now that I'm husbandless, you and I should move in together," Gladdis said.

"You're only saying that because you're horny."

"No, no, think about it. It will be you, me, and your husband, and we can take turns using him. You just give him a little nibble and then

he'll go to town. When we get tired of that, I can eat him, and then we can go at it! It's the perfect plan."

"Where does Dean fit into all of that?" Ink asked, drumming her fingers against his head. He was in her stomach, nestled between her breasts, and now that the danger was through, she was in a teasing mood. "A servant, perhaps?"

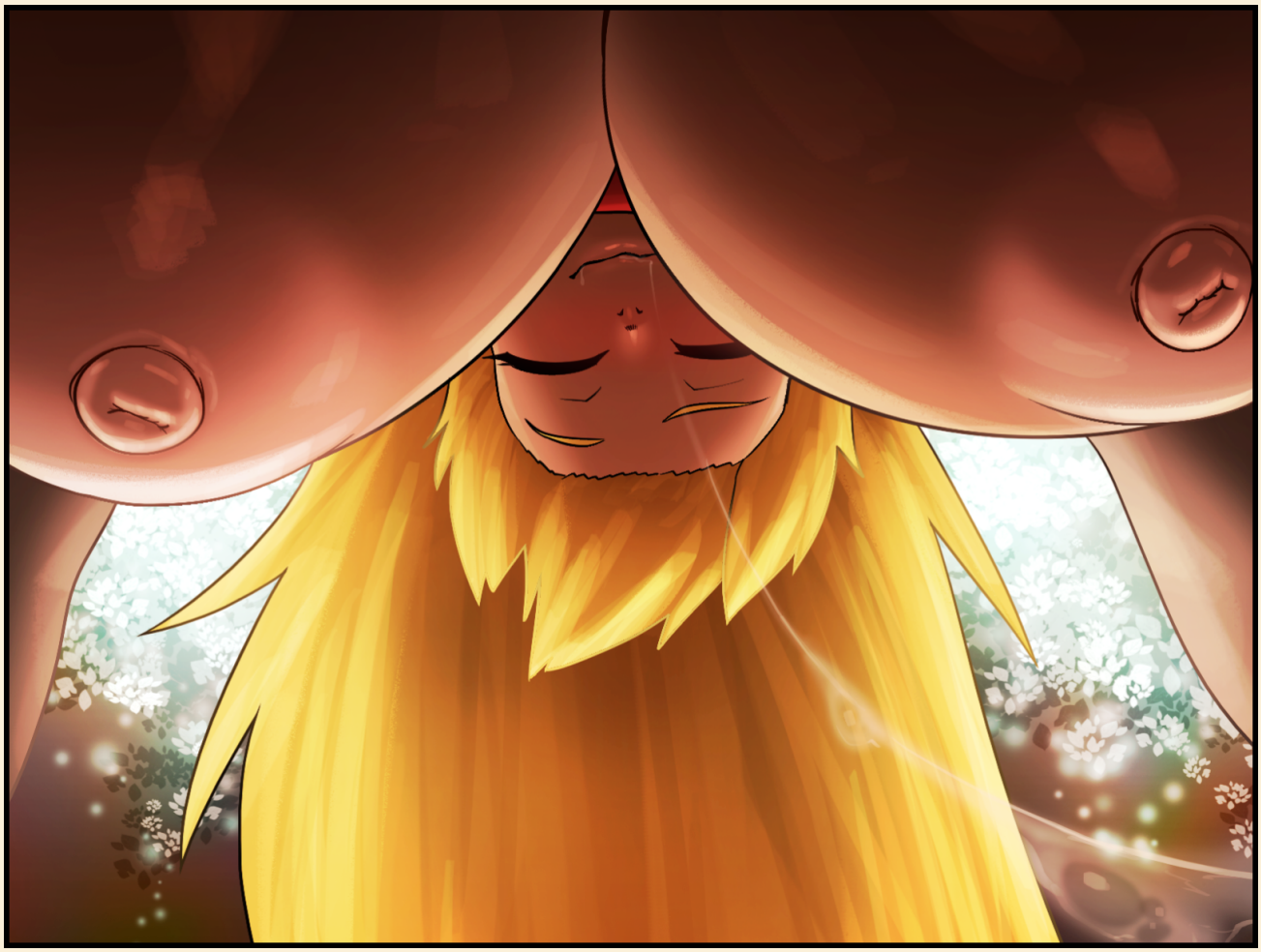
"In hors d'oeuvre more like," Gladdis snorted. "Honestly, Ink, he's already in your belly."

"I can hear you!" Dean yelled.

"And he's about to be in my cunt," Gladdis continued, ignoring him. "He will be the first man I've swallowed that way, but if he doesn't behave himself then I will have to punish him."

"Go ahead," Ink said.

Locking lips, they squirmed together, Gladdis' cunt inching over the bulge in her stomach, bringing it right up to her esophagus. Ink felt



her throat part as Dean entered from the bottom. She swallowed him back down only for Gladdis to push them back up again.

"Which do you think is stronger," Gladdis asked, "my cunt or your gullet?"

"Your cunt, but only because you have 500 pounds on me right now."

"You bitch!"

Gladdis laughed, giving Ink a mighty squeeze. Dean shot out of Ink's throat onto her tongue and found himself facing the grinning lamia. Gladdis kissed his soggy forehead. He blinked blearily in the light.



"Rise and shine, sweetheart," Gladdis said. "It's not often that a man gets to be in two beautiful ladies at once."

Gladdis pressed her mouth to Ink's, creating one long tunnel of pulsing flesh for Dean to stare into. She pushed her tongue against his face, sending him down Ink's throat, then rolled him up into her own mouth, sucked at his shoulders, letting his torso come loose with a pop. He sagged against Ink's lips.

"You've gotten fatter," he panted.

"Aww, that's so sweet!" Gladdis said, genuinely flattered. "You know what, honey? I was going to let you out so that you could watch Ink and I have some fun, but I'm a sucker for compliments and you seemed to squirm real good in Ink's stomach, so I think we can all have some fun together."

"What?" Ink and Dean said. Ink spat him out onto Gladdis' stomach where he sank into her heavy flesh. Ink herself was buried up to her neck in Gladdis' thick pussy lips.

"Sure," Gladdis said, letting Ink out up to her chest. She took Dean and stuffed him down between the basilisk's breasts, sandwiching them as she sent Ink back into her tail. Dean gasped against Ink's throat. Ink, responding to the hardness rubbing against her stomach, took his cock in her hand, lubricating it with Gladdis' juices. "I've never had two people in my cunt before, so behave yourselves, or I'm burying you for a long time, got it?"

Ink spasmed against Dean. Dean gripped her by the waist.

"Consider this your reward," she whispered down to him.

"I shall," Dean said, smiling up at her. "Thank you for saving me."

She met his eyes. How had she never noticed what a beautiful shade of brown they were? He gazed into her face with no fear, lips slightly parted as he stroked her cheek. Her skin tingled. No man had ever looked at her that way.

No man had ever looked at her that way.

No man had ever looked at her.



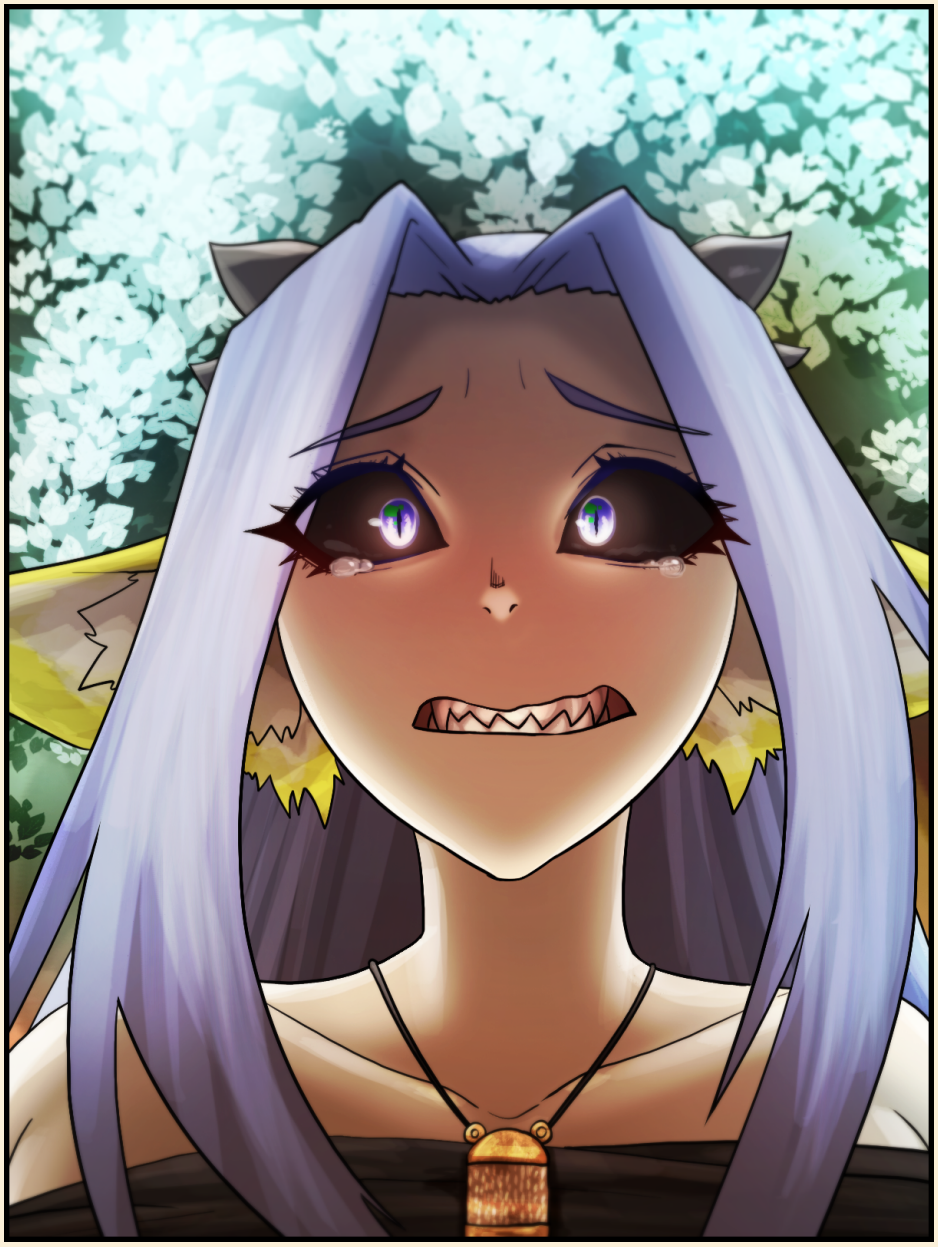
Ink screamed. Gladdis ejected her onto the cave floor, tail whipping, looking for the source of her pain, but Dean remained on Ink's chest, head tilted, watching as scrambled backwards. Her shoulders hit a statue. Her lips quivered.

"No," she said, pushing him away. "That can't be right. No, I refuse to believe it. This is…please don't let this be happening."

Dean looked at his arms and legs, then looked back at Ink, meeting her eyes once more.

"Sorry," he said. "I didn't realize you'd taken your blindfold off."

"That's impossible."



Gladdis slithered up, pissy at having their ménage à trois interrupted, but stopped short when she saw what Ink saw. A slow smile crept onto her face. She folded her arms beneath her breasts and nudged Dean with her tail.

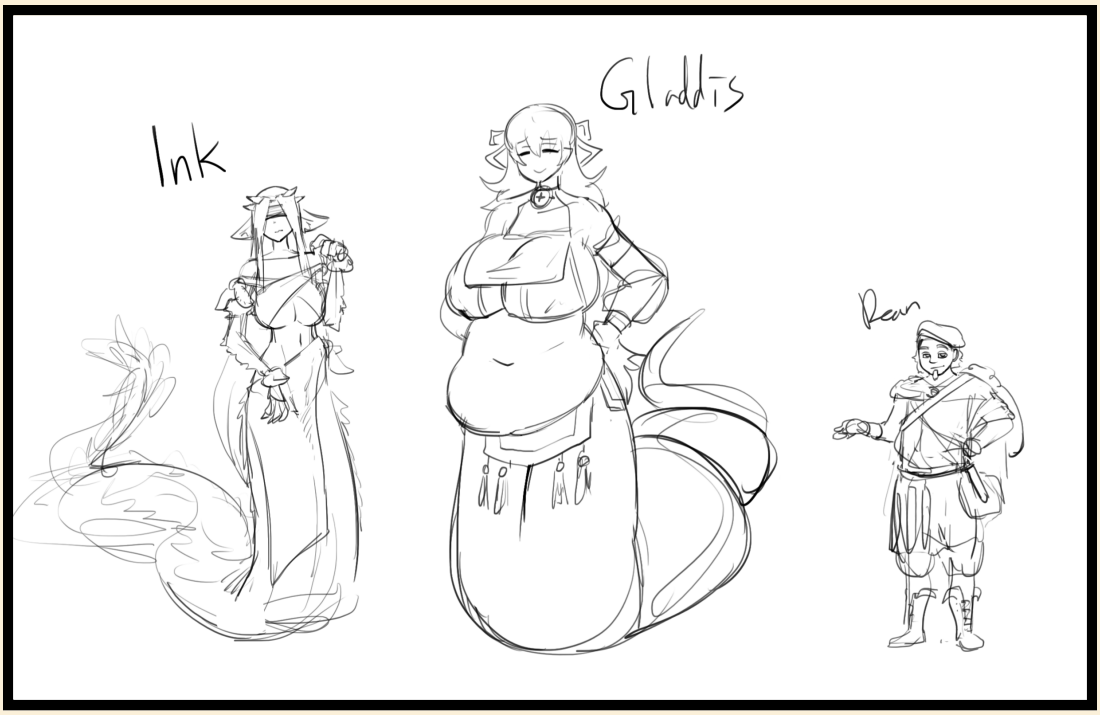
"Well I'll be damned," she said. "You found him."

"Found who?" Dean asked, confused. "What is happening right now?"

Ink stared at Dean in horror and he stared back, unblinking.

"Her perfect match," Gladdis laughed. "Now can we please get back to the fun part?"

End of Book 1



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