

The grey and black furred fox, Berlor was already on the run, cackling as he bounced with each step, flailing his arms and taunting his pursuer while making a clean getaway into the night.

The target of his taunts staggered, out of breath, watching the pink tips of Berlors paws, the most visible part in the dusky gloom. "Damned... fox... Stay out... next *phew* next time. Or I'll get yah!"

Berlor did not stay out. To Berlor's mind the target of his pranks and bothering runs had brought it on himself, a dour greying deer who took every chance to spread his misanthropic misery to anyone he walked by, insulting anyone who even shared the same road as an 'ignorant youth with no respect, blocking the path of their elders and betters'.

Berlor's taunting spree had begun mid September and had carried on throughout the month. One more scare would do it. It was October after all, the perfect season to give him a shock.

As Berlor approached his cabin, the fox felt a change in the air. Gourds and vines snaked across the lawn, he hadn't approached from this angle so he'd never known the old miser was growing a garden. Still, the crops looked decidedly unwell. The vines were twisted and dishevelled, thin and ominous.

He strode in, for all the deer's anger and paranoia, plus his constant threats of one day paying the fox back, he still left himself vulnerable. In this case leaving a window ajar enough for the fox to sneak in.

He heard the deer muttering under his breath. It was enough to make Berlor want to laugh, did the old man resent the world so much that he spent all his time mumbling, even when alone?

The fox ducked into the shadow as the deer left the room he'd been in. Berlor slunk out in his wake to see what he'd been up to.

Before him waited an aged wooden writing desk, scratched dented and ink stained. It had a large sheet of paper with an inkwell beside it. An inkwell?? This man still used that?! The cocky fox craned over, having a peek in the dim light.

An illustration stared back at him from the page, the deer certainly didn't lack for artistry, though it was an image of Berlor's face, grinning in a wicked way, with the phrase 'Local Menace' written above it.

"I'm not the menace, you old fart." The fox said, his eyes shifted left and right, looking outside as he thought up how to prank him. Berlor looked for something thin, finding a book

edge that would do, then he dipped the pen the deer had been using into the inkwell and tilted it to rest, it was just barely stable, liable to spill all over the poster in progress.

With that done Berlor scurried to a dark corner, watching and waiting.

The deer returned, though heavily dressed. His spindly hand emerged from an aged night robe, threadbare, patched and littered with holes. The top of it was draped so it covered his head, retaining the heat that the gaps couldn't hold. There was something strange, though, the way it draped looked like he only had the one antler. Had the man had an accident or an unseasonal shedding of the other?

The fox was so caught up in the creepy detail that he missed the dipping of the pen and the continued writing. No spill, no mistake. He huffed to himself angrily, no pay off and now he was here having to just wait. He could jump out and go boo now, but the only door was through the deer's path and the man would be on him before he could open the narrow window and scurry through.

The muttering continued, low and rumbling before the deer tapped the loose ink off the pen, set it down and turned away again.

If it wasn't going to happen on its own, the scales needed tipping.

Berlor snuck closer, waiting for the sounds to fade before he flicked the inkwell, spilling the black gloss over the poster, a new word had been added but he didn't see it before the ink claimed it. "Hehehe... that'll-"

The door slammed open, the deer hadn't gone far at all, instead his hand extended toward the ruined poster and the fox. The ink itself quivered before defying physics, a splash lashing out, wetting some of Berlor's face. "Phah, what the, it's in my mouth." No, it wasn't time to be worried over that he had to bolt. "Heh, nice try old fart!" He said, picking up speed and rushing to the doorway.

The ink felt like it was moving but that was probably just the cool air dragging over the wetness. He moved to shove the deer out of the way, his shoulder pushing gently- it wouldn't do to actually hurt the old man- but the deer didn't budge. Only his robe did.

As the cloth twitched, it revealed a body that looked entirely unlike before. As though the dishevelment and blight that twisted the pumpkins in his yard had afflicted his skin and bones, he was terrifyingly thin, and worse still, the fur had peeled back from his face on that antler-lacking side, even missing an eye. As though he were looking at a body that should have given up decades before but clung on as it deteriorated further.

The mutterings rose in pitch, the deer's teeth half missing and intimidating just to look at. He wasn't speaking any language that Berlor even recognised. "Wh-what?" He gasped stunned in fear at the unnatural sight.

He felt a tightness on his cheeks, the ink had been moving indeed and it suddenly clamped over Berlor's mouth, snout and cheeks, wrapping them in a muzzling mass.

He backed away from the deer, hands moving to try and claw it off, but instead the ink covered his digits like the liquid it should have been, all while feeling solid and elastic enough to stop his lips moving.

The deer took a step toward Berlor, making him hop backward, foot hitting the puddle of spilled ink on the floor. His thoughts raced, oh no, what if it crawled over him, what if he'd doomed himself now, yet the ink on his hands and foot was dormant, wet, staining liquid at worst.

A gnarled hand shot out, missing a finger, grabbing Berlor by the fluffy ruff around his neck and pushing him against the desk. The old deer was stronger and faster than before. "Mmmh! Mmmhph!" Berlor grunted, to no avail trying to prise the deer's grip off or squirm out from underneath.

The deer's other hand moved to the desk, lifting the pen. The nib pressed into Berlor's fur as the deer wrote on him. The pen itched as it scraped out the word 'tickled' in ink. As soon as the word was formed, artistic vine-like ink trails shot out, tracing all over Berlor's body, under his clothing. Wherever the ink rolled it did as the word commanded, tickling the hell out of Berlor. "Mmh! Mhhh hmmmhm mmmhph!"

He flailed, kicking and shaking, he wasn't ticklish! At least not to this level, so why?! It was bad enough he couldn't even focus on his own limbs!

Another dip, and the pen returned again, 'Weak'. It wrote, and again, as soon as it was done, all the fight and energy left Berlor's muscles. The deer released his grip, instead just pushing with his knee to lightly hold the fox still beyond the unignorable need to squirm that the tickling prompted within him.

'Weightless'. The deer wrote on another patch of fur. It didn't do anything to remove gravity's hold on the fox, however the deer was able to grab the squirming, gagged-laughing fox into the air with no effort. "W-hhmh? Whhhmhmhmmhmmph!"

The terrifying monster of a man that had seemed like a grumpy old fart just the week before carried the helpless fox out of the room, out of the house itself and into the garden.

"Mmhm, shnmpmhmhm, mhmhmhmmh!!" He tried to plead, trying to yell louder into the air.

The deer still held the pen, taking Berlor to the front gate before writing another command. 'Static'.

Like that, Berlor couldn't move his limbs or body. As a mercy he could still breathe and blink, though conversely; it did nothing to stop the feeling of tickling or his need to laugh in response.

The deer took hold of Berlor's legs, bending the knees, dropping him onto them then, after stripping off his shirt, he pushed the fox to rest on hands and knees, stuck alongside the gate like a disturbing lawn ornament.

The deer turned away, yet Berlor couldn't watch. "Whhm. C-chmm bhhhhmhmh. Mmnhhmmmmhmmmm!" Only able to see his shadow pulling back. Several minutes later he returned carrying a small desk with the inkwell and pen ready and a poster affixed. It was identical to the one Berlor saw earlier. Labelling him as a menace, with written instructions to write whatever the reader wanted on the fox.

In a voice that resonated from within his chest, the deer fixed the one good eye on Berlor. "I told you how many times I would get you, pest. Here you will stay, every morning I will add a new word. If anyone cares enough to come looking for you, we will see if they want to aid you or punish you. Perhaps they might even 'adopt' you. If you are still here by Hallow's Eve... then I shall return with a needle to tattoo the magic in place." He threatened, before walking away.

All Berlor could do was laugh, despite the freaked out anguish on his face. He hoped it was all an exaggeration, as payback for his own antagonising. Yet, with how completely the deer hand changed, revealing to be some eldritch monster, Berlor feared he had fallen into a horror movie, one where he was the victim whose fate was sealed from the beginning...

Inside the cottage, the deer collected a chemical soaked cloth, rubbing the word 'Horrrifying' off his own skin. He was no monster, but nor was he powerless. Hopefully this would serve as a sufficient deterrent to the pest. If not maybe he actually would look into tattooing a few less severe words. 'Stubs his toe once a month' would be a good start...