

The local museum had prepared for the season, refurbishing a wing for the sake of their 'Horror's Through History' exhibit. Ranging from the past to the present, with the latter being mostly features on newer cryptids and the ghostly stories linked to them.

That had been the reason for Ciria's visit, the brightly yellow furred rabbit, with dark black fur running up the thighs and over the elbows. She was just intrigued by the exhibit and the spirit of the holiday, yet something had caught her eye; a branch of the exhibit centred around torture and the tools that had been devised for cruel means, some historical, some extrapolated tools which never truly saw use but had been ingrained in popular culture.

Ciria had seen the display in passing, soaking the whole exhibit in before doubling back, returning to look in more detail. While her eyes were taken in by a pillory, decorated with irksome if not overly sharp spikes at the wrists and where the feet would go, it was the rack that really seized her attention.

The room had emptied around her, just her and the exhibit, almost enough to tempt her to touch the displays. She took a breath, clearing her head and stepping back, that was when she spotted something new, a door at the back. Old wood, studded metal, like something one might imagine in an old castle, reinforced against entry. It stood out enough for it to be peculiar that she hadn't noticed it previously.

It also seemed signposted like other passageways. The exhibit had taken strides to show which doors one *couldn't* take. It seemed to be without obstructions or locks. There was no reason for her to not at least look.

The door swung with the lightest of pushes, it felt impeccably well replicated, even the stone walls felt genuine, thick and heavy rather than a facade put up for the display, leading to a dingy flame-torch lit room with only the smallest barred window at the back.

Another figure was waiting in the room, not a guest from their garb, perhaps a performer? Dark clothing hid their features, simple leather boots and a black cloth executioner's hood adorned his head. He seemed just as taken aback to see Ciria as she had been to find the room to begin with.

More alarming, the room had been decorated as if it were usable. No barriers to the exhibited tools, no descriptive plaques. A cramped body shaped gibbet hung, half lowered into an oubliette. Inside the room was another devious rack, mirroring the one outside. There was even an iron maiden, lacking spikes but festooned with locks and bolts that showed it had multiple access points. Beyond that a standing pillory, a stockade for all limbs and a rolled up holder that glinted with metal, likely wicked tools with which to interrogate or simply torture for the twisted joy of it.

The figure stepped towards her, this close she could see him for a fox. "A stranger in my dungeon, can it be? After so long?" He said, excitement and hope dripping in his voice before it

turned to disappointment, a reaching hand falling still and then dropping. “But you are no criminal... There has been no order...”

“Order? Criminal? Oh, are you a punisher of some kind?” Ciria asked, tilting her head as she looked him over in return.

“Aye. Assigned to this room, with promise of use, only for the city to prove too peaceful. None earned a stay in my care.” He said, almost forlorn.

“So you had all this equipment brought here, for actual legitimate use and no one was interested? That sounds like a shame!”

The fox shot a look at her, as if confused by her choice of words. “They are unused, certainly. None earned such treatment.”

The bunny chuckled softly, he was certainly playing the character well. “Well... if it still works, how would you like a volunteer?”

That provoked a silence which drifted for a few seconds, the fox seemingly questioning what he’d been hearing. “But you’ve not done anything villainous?” He said, reaching to stop her as she walked across the room to the rack, her hands brushing over it. Again he faltered as he drew near showing growing uncertainty. “I could perhaps demonstrate its workings.”

Ciria’s grin put his concerns to rest, she was practically quivering with the idea of seeing the rack in use.

The fox obliged and helping Ciria shed her sandals, he led her arms and legs to the already quite stretching bands that made her raise her arms straight over her head. He adjusted the cuffs using some built in tools before clamping them down on the rabbit.

She let out a small squeak of excitement in response, waiting for all four limbs to be secured before tugging, her fingers and toes reaching for the catches, finding them quite out of range.

“Now were you a real villain, I would simply need to haul this handle.” He pulled it lightly, adding pressure without committing enough that it grew tighter. “On and on depending on the severity of your actions.” He mulled to himself, shoulders tensing as his fingers danced over it. It hinted that there was a sadistic side to him, though one kept in check by a perception of justice and good manners.

“Go on, show me!” Cirica replied smiling.

“No, it will not just hurt, it could damage you.” The fox replied.

With a light chuckle the rabbit shook her head. “I’ll be fine, I could use a good stretch.”

Caught off guard, the fox thought for a moment, yet realised he wanted to, he needed to. Surely permission was reason enough. His fingers twitched, settling on the wooden bar, breathing slowly before his muscles tensed and he hauled.

“Aaaahh~” Ciria mumbled, sounding happily interested in the otherwise cruel treatment.

The fox was intrigued at first by how little resistance the winch was offering, perhaps it had loosened over time, needing a greater tug to really climb, yet, when he turned back it was his turn to be surprised.

The rabbit’s limbs were stretching beyond what was usual. She caught him looking, met his gaze and then winked in encouragement. “See? Now let’s see how far you can go!” She quipped.

The fox grinned in response. His duty and thoughts on justice pushed away, it now seemed like a challenge. He drew the winch on and on, cycling it, watching those arms stretch at first then the rabbit’s torso shared the elasticated slack. Her whole frame slowly stretched out with it.

“What are you?” He asked in wonder, as opposed to the fear that the character he was portraying might show.

“Hard to say, just that I know I’m rare but not alone in this.” She replied with a pressured tone, like one enjoying a good stretch or massage. The cuffs had reached their maximum limit before the rabbit’s body. The fox turned to have a look at the rack and with an idea forming he left her for a moment, plucking out some of the torturer’s tools. He took them not to the rabbit’s fur but to the wood, damaging the rack to the point that he could prise the shackles off the sliding scale while still leaving them on Ciria’s arms.

It worked, the metal held by the ropes that were stretched with each tug of the winch. She still wasn’t objecting so he pulled it round, finding it was indeed starting to resist further turns now.

Ciria’s arms had stretched beyond the table’s limits, instead rolling up in the wooden haft that turned the rack tighter and still she was gasping, inviting more. The elastic limbs stretched, doubling up on themselves until she was at her shoulders, head too thin to fit the gap. The torturer finally slowed, satisfied himself that he’d reached a point of progress.

“Nmmmh. G-goodness.” Ciria groaned, tugging and pulling but unable to budge or hide the blush she felt.

“So this is how it feels.” The fox murmured, looking down at his gloved hands. Smiling, chuckling as though on the verge of tears. “It has been... so long. Thank you.” He said, slowly. “I... let me let you out.”

His hands turned to the brake, slapping it out of the way and watching as the rack seemed more taxed than the rabbit in unravelling, needing a hand pushing the wheel in reverse to start unfurling.

“That does not look healthy.” The fox said on seeing the limbs flopping, not contracting back to their former shape, as though Ciria had been wrung out and flattened.

“It’ll fix itself soon... you don’t need to close the exhibit too soon, I hope?” She said in a dreamy relaxed haze, seconds from dozing off if she was of a mind to.

“Exhibit?” The fox asked.

Ciria raised her brows and chuckled. “Ah... I think I see.”

As her body returned to its normal shape, she spoke with the fox, learning about him, how he said he’d been waiting. It was no figure of speech or exaggeration. The fox had been from the era that the rack on display in the main hall had been built. Yet as he had said, the kingdom in which he was employed never found a use for his tools. A strange thing to haunt a world over, yet haunt he had, alone and hidden except for these rare moments. He’d met others, none of whom had been interested in experiencing the torments.

And so, with Ciria’s arrival, he was finally satisfied, able to carry out his promised purpose at last.

“You know.” Ciria said, looking the room over. “I know a friend or two I might be able to persuade to visit. The exhibit is in town for several weeks. Provided this doorway remains... how would you like more willing and sturdy figures to try as many of the tools as possible. It might even give you peace.” She suggested, feeling that there was indeed something more to this fox. Perhaps that was the reason he was dressed without an inch on show.

“That- That might be something I could entertain.” The fox said, not wanting to come off as too eager.

The rabbit smirked as she finally was in a position she could walk without concerning strangers. “At any rate, even if they don’t want to come. I’ll be sure to swing by for a visit, myself.”

Ciria wandered forward, stepping out of the dungeon with the fox happy to let her leave. Behind her the door swung gently shut, the room in exactly the same display it had been before. Not even the shadows cast by the windows had moved.

She glanced at the clock, unsure if time had truly stood still during her exploration beyond that door. Either way, it would be this time she aimed to visit again, to see if she could find the hidden chamber once more.