

An Unusual Encounter

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For Krauser018

It was the constant purring that slowly lifted her out of the pleasant dream, a small vibration that was sent through her slightly bubbled form. Specifically in the wolf's soft white chest and belly, maybe a little into her hips as well. With the constant deep breathing within such a slumber, it was normal for her species to grow a little. Hence the much larger bed than the standard single that most of the crew had.

The embrace, however, was new. Kind of. Instantly recognizing those twigged arms and that tail curled around one of her legs, making her grumble. Now knowing why the purrs and vibrations sounded familiar. "We've been over this." Nikata grumbled, finding the eastern dragon's head against her chest, nuzzling it.

"Just five more minutes..." The male grumbled, only to feel that grip against his mane become tighter and awaken him. Getting those green eyes to wake up and the dark purple noodle to slowly meet the wolf's angry stare. "...I can explain-" Jack started, hearing her start to inhale. Making the eastern dragon whine a bit in confusion when those white cheeks started to round slightly a first, then balloon out quite quickly. He yelped slightly, completely letting go of her body and crawled backwards with his hands signaling surrender. "Okay, okay! Message received-" Another quick inhale made those white bubbles nearly double in size, looking like she was holding two beach balls in her maw while giving Jack a moment to whimper in despair...

Only to be launched out of her room with a loud *Fwoom!* A sudden gust of air following the draconic serpent and landing before the doors were shut. Granted, still hearing the balloon wolf growl from the hallway where he laid upside-down against the wall. "You have your own damn room! I'm not really sure why we gave you one, but-!"

"That's because Trinva is just too darn caring, and she may like me-"

"I'm not sure how that's even possible." A grumble from Nikata. "You've been nothing but a pest since that damn party!"

"You say that, but you know I'm growing on you." Jack crossed his arms, seeing the light brown wolf walk by the hallway. "Morning, Trin."

"Morning-ing, Jack." She said cheerfully, continuing down the clean hallway of the ship. "Got to stay in a little later this time around, eh?"

"Yep. She won't admit it, but she-" A loud growl interrupted him, but it didn't stop the dragon from smiling. "See? She likes me."

"Then why don't you sleep with her!?"

"Because she's not as comfortable or used to stretching like you are." A grumble in response. "Not to mention, she doesn't sleep in the nude like you do-"

"I swear, I will throw you out into space-"

"No you won't." A frustrated growl. "We've been over this, I'm much more valuable alive to you than dead. Not to mention, getting rid of me is only going to cause you more and more problems. Especially when-"

"The Empire thinks that **We** kidnapped you." Nikata grumbled in defeat, opening her door to reveal her teal battle suit and finding the noodle right where she left him.

"Technically, that is what happened-"

"We rescued you."

"Yes, but didn't agree to send me back-"

"You-!" A frustrated growl from the white one. "You refused to go back! Even after we sent you with Branson, you snuck back on our ship before we took off!"

"I left him a note." Her stare of disapproval was attempting to melt Jack's face off. "Besides, I've been helping around the ship. And this is way more exciting than any line of work I've ever tried-"

"That's because you've never tried to *work*." The white one tended to her bridge.

"Well, it's two against one."

"Two?"

"He won me over too, boss-lady." The canine immediately looked up, then furiously looked back at the dark purple dragon.

"Did... Did you give my ship a Boston accent!?"

"I played around with his settings, yes."

"Ey, I let him though, Boss. No worries."

"Kath...! Revert back to Spanish-Ausse, or I will reset you to defaults myself!"

"But-"

"No buts! Why did you even let a non-crew member change your settings anyway!?" Nikata

growled, heading to the kitchen where their breakfast was being made by the ship.

"For starters, Nikki." The brown canine started, still in her sleepwear. "He does pronounce Kvath's name right."

"I pronounce it *fine*."

"You're dropping the V when it's the K that is silent." A snout toss from the white one. "And that's on a good day-"

"So, my foreign language skills need some work. That doesn't mean the ship should cave immediately as soon as this String says-"

"Kvath'Konfaterra'Yvvadae Xajj'kivosorra, it's quite simple really." Jack stated, getting the voice above them to whimper almost in pleasure.

"I actually might cry, Boss. It's been so long-"

"You cannot blame anyone for not being able to pronounce that." Nikata sat down, staring at her rather happy looking breakfast.

"Well, you insisted on getting a Draconic system-"

"Because the technology is damn good and durable!" The white one grumbled, taking a pause to look at her breakfast. "...Even if we're still paying it off."

"Don't worry about it, Boss. Tell ya what, I'll give you one of d'ose stress-release massages you always love-"

"It doesn't work when you sound like a Mobster, Kath-"

"Kvath." The other three corrected.

"That's what I said. *Ka-Vatch*." The others grumbled in disappointment. "Moving on, tell me you've found a way out of this work-block." She asked the brown one. Waiting patiently for her to finish that bite. "...That's okay, take your time."

"I had a cousin that died from choking before." Jack added, still in the hallway.

"You had a cousin that got tangled in an old spider web, and experienced light pressure along his neck. That is not *choking*."

"That may be, but it still puts things into perspective in what's important. Like patience, especially for those who find their beds so uncomfortable that they might have to sneak into the Captain's room-"

"Captain's **Locked** Room." Nikata corrected him from afar.

"And found another person to snuggle up to for warmth. It gets cold in the storage center."

"Because you insisted that you be in the coldest area on the ship, aside from the freezer. That was the contract that we all agreed to." The wolf growled.

"To be fair, Boss-"

"Spanish-Ausse, or I'm installing BonziBuddy onto you!" A loud swallow was heard overhead.

"T-to be fair, love, that would be your room." A long silence as everyone stared at the ceiling of the ship.

"...Trin, have you found a job for us yet?" The white one nearly whimpered, still not looking down from the ceiling.

"Maybe. Nothing very rewarding-"

"Just... Anything to make this day go away."

The ship entered a rather clean atmosphere with no troubles other than a little bit of turbulence. So little that Nikata unbuckled her seat early and observed through the front windows, seeing stretches of forests and meadows... For nearly four minutes before she looked over Trinva, currently overlooking the navigation systems and acting as emergency pilot... Granted, still in her sleepwear. "Are you sure this is the right place?" The white wolf asked, getting a nod from the other female. "People can get coordinates wrong, especially when they're not used to such things."

"They were using an old system, but Kvath did the conversion. We're coming up to it in a few minutes, that was just the easiest point of entry onto the planet."

"Fair enough." Nikata stated, still slightly worried if this was all some sort of trap. Something about this place nearly screamed 'deserted forests full of bandits', ready to hold up an entire crew hostage and salvage anything they could from their ships. Not to mention the poorly worded message of asking for a Demolitions Expert via 'Someone Who Knows About Stuff Blowing Up.' Even if she wasn't the best at such things, it was something nearby that could possibly help them restock their supplies.

"Almost there." The brown canine's announcement caught her attention, perking those white ears a bit as the crew gazed through the windows and spotted a very old-style village. Several farms stretching across the lands, both for vegetation and livestock. Large barns, including one being currently raised by two dozen people, and a very old looking radio tower in the mountains.

"I know we're all thinking it, so... I'll ask it." The dark purple dragon started as he adjusted his jacket a bit. "What would a bunch of Amish people want with explosives?"

"I'm getting a bad feeling about this, Nikki-" A loud bump was heard, followed by a bit of an alarm from the ship, causing it to stop in place and hover. Putting everyone on edge and bracing for a few moments.

"Kath... What was-?" Just outside the protective glass, a loud 'Meeeeh' was heard. Causing the three to stop and stare in the direction while a rather round bellied goat floated outside, receiving stares from everyone for a few moments until their captain spoke up. "Was... Was that an inflated goat?"

"It would appear that way, love." The ship stated. "Should I retrieve it?"

"...Yeah. Do so, without popping it, if you can."

"Si, I will be delicate." The ship started moving up a bit before the cargo doors opened, capturing the livestock safely and landing gently while the three headed down. Rolling the very light animal down the ramp while a group of male groundhogs came to greet them.

"I take it this is yours?" Nikata stated after the engines turned off, seeing the larger one, likely the father, glare at his two boys.

"We wanted to see if it would fly. Like their metal bird!" The youngest one admitted, getting the crew to nod and a scolding look from their father.

"Just... Take it back to the barn. I'll deal with you two later." The two lads did so, overlooking the newcomers and the ship's interior slightly before taking the billy. "Welcome, and thank you for answering our call. It's been going on too long."

"What has exactly?" The white wolf approached for a greeting. "Nikata. This is my Second; Trinva. And our freeloader, Jack."

"I would argue against that, but I just don't care enough." The dragon half grumbled, looking over the fields.

"Ulysses, we are very grateful that you've come. We usually don't ask for outside assistance, due to our firm beliefs, but..."

"But you have a problem-"

"With balloon animals?" The eastern dragon interrupted, looking off into the distance and seeing a few villagers almost gawk at them.

"Believe me when I say that this is not normal for our livestock in any way. We recently had communications with a doctor as well, thinking it was swelling."

"Judging from the sounds of that goat we hit..." Trin started, looking over at the white wolf and getting a nod.

"Sounds more like air or gas. Could it be something in their food?"

"We haven't changed any of their diets for years. Everything they eat is grown with our own hands and the soil that we walk on." The groundhog explained, approaching the barn that was definitely sounding quite vocal from the inside. Taking a long pole and undoing a very large net just above the doorway before giving the younger ones a gesture to take the ends. "You can see it with your own eyes."

He slid opened the door to the large structure, revealing to the three the dozens and dozens of farm animals that were inflated. Floating around indoors, and in many different sizes. Some cows were small enough that their own weight was keeping them anchored to the ground, while others were so bloated to the point they were about ready to burst. Completely immobilized chickens looked like feathered balls that were kind of able to fly, attempting to escape before getting caught into the nets the boys held down. While the father rolled the goat inside. "...Wow." The brown wolf said in a whisper.

"Yes, it is... Quite abnormal, as you can see." Ulysses worryingly stated, motioning the children to move inside to do some of their caretaking chores before sliding the door shut and starting to place the net back. "At first, it was just a few animals. Maybe some of our cows or horses getting unusually fatter, but with each passing night..."

"We awaken with more of them like this." A female groundhog stated behind the crew, getting them all to double take at her rather... Hourglass form. Her tight clothing really not leaving much to the imagination with large hips, a round belly, and much bigger chest pillows. "It was just the animals, until one night I heard something move. I seen a figure in the fog, and..." She lowered her head in shame.

"Captain... Erm...?"

"Nikata."

"Nikata, yes." The father started. "I don't want to believe my family is cursed, something we were told when it first started happening..."

"Then it started to happen on other farms." Trinva stated, getting nods from the couple.

"Our horses are so big, they can hardly move themselves. We can't tend to our fields when they can't don their equipment. Our cows don't produce milk, only leak out air through their swelled udders. And we've... Found traces of our stock..."

"...Swelling so much they pop?" Jack added in, getting a couple of frightful nods.

"Where, exactly?" Trin asked.

"O-only on the outside." The wife stated.

"We've removed any sharp objects in the barn, and padded any corner that we could find. So far, none of them have..."

"But the boys have found some... Remains out in the fields, most notably of chickens." The canines looked at each other.

"They could have just been hunted by something wild." Nikata whispered to her, getting the brown one to nod faintly. "Doesn't completely prove that this... Inflation is fatal-"

"Yet, Outsider." A rather thin mole started their way, dressing far different from the groundhogs, as if living out into the forest. "But you judge only with your eyes, yes? They are doomed because the spirits have shunned them so."

"You convinced the council to do as such, Liekeze!" The wife nearly snarled, composing herself soon after with the help of Ulysses.

"Please, Nikata. Outside help is all that we have left. For the sake of not just our lives and livestock, but the community itself...!"

"We'll do what we can, but let us take a look around first." The white one stated confidently. "I'll want to see where those remains have been found, and any other information that you can possibly give us would be a great help."

"You may ask us anything, but we really don't know much else." The wife stated. "I must get back to work while we still have sun."

"Same with I as well." The father stated. "I will get the boys to escort you to the area once they are done with the barnwork-"

"Can I see the barn for myself?" A double take from the male groundhog. "Any evidence I can gather up close would be a great help."

"A-as long as you don't release any of the animals from the barn."

"I'll take cautions, don't worry." Nikata looked over at the brown one.

"I can do some searching on the ship. Possibly get some sort of history of the land from Kvath that might help."

"You really believe that old mole?" A shrug from Trinva in response.

"We've seen weirder." A half grumble from the Captain as they went their separate ways. Leaving the dragon and the mole together in a near awkward silence.

"...Got any grass?" Liekeze looked at Jack in puzzlement, now seeing that the rodent's eyes were a little off. Like he was half blind. Looking down at the dragon's feet for a moment before returning to that dark purple snout.

"You are standing on grass."

"Not that kind of Grass." A stare in question, then it clicked in. Giving a large nod and a beckon to follow him.

The forest was nearly silent, aside from the ambience echoing through the air and the white wolf's steps. Causing twigs and leaves to go off like alarms to anything that might be watching, arming herself with the laser pistol while scouting the hundreds of trees around. Still attempting to go by the mental image of where the wolf came from, but the forest was so thick that it could be very easy to get lost in... Or hide in. Especially during the day-

A sudden soft ring in Nikata's ear nearly caused her fur to puff out, answering the cloaked earpiece with a sharp exhale. "Anything on your end?"

"A little, but not really much of an answer. I was calling you for the same thing." Trinva informed. "We've got the area mapped out without any issue, as well as a record of any infandalism around-

"In...Fandalism?"

"Inflation Vandalism. I thought it was cute to squish them together. Reminds me of my days in the academy."

"Where you used to play pranks on others, I imagine."

"Kind of like this, yes. But we usually signed our work in some way. Added to the thrill of it."

"Well, I haven't found anything in the barn. No signatures, on the walls or on the animals hit. Not even any signs of forced entry." The white one grumbled. "All other exits were too high and required something else to reach, like a ladder of sorts."

"And no signs of one being placed?"

"Correct. So, if all the animals were locked in the barn..."

"The only way to get in would be the key... These people do lock their doors, right?"

"They do now." Nikata grumbled. "And the leftovers of any escaped chickens were mostly just patches of feathers at this point. Judging by the signs in the dirt, they looked like they were hunted."

"And not popped?"

"...Well, they could've popped when something bit into them, but not by natural means."

"So, we actually have a vandal on our hands? Some children running around inflating livestock?"

"With what though? You've seen the wagons and whatnot around here from above, yes?"

"Yeah... No tires. Just made out of wood. Meaning, there's no air compressors."

"And bike pumps would A: be useless here, and B: would take more than just a night to make a cow the size of a harvester." A bit of silence on the other end before Trinva spoke up.

"Was... Was there really-?"

"I'm exaggerating, but not by much. They were not kidding about clearing that barn out." A grumble as the white one tended to the bridge of her snout. "And I'm finding nothing out here, so it's got to be something else."

"Some sort of illness?"

"One that only the wife caught? Even though all the others have been in contact with?" A slightly frustrated breath from her. "No, it's somebody doing it. It has to be. She saw a figure in the fog, but that could be anybody."

"Or even just a shadow of something. You know how the superstitious can be." The brown one on the other end mumbled. "We've taken a scan of anything metal around the area, it'll be a bit before everything is clear, but there really doesn't seem to be much of it."

"You can do that here? Without any satellite aid?"

"It's a bit slow, but yes. Kvath can do several different scans and maps without it. No satellite also means no defenses against such spywear. Meaning, we can pick up and spy on just about everyone in this village, as long as they're in range."

"And we have power. Don't forget that we still need enough to get to the next station."

"Don't worry, we've kept that in mind." A breath of guilt could be heard though the earpiece.

"Trin?"

"I... I know you don't believe or care about this stuff, Nikki, but..."

"Buuuuut?"

"We took an EMF [Electro Magnetic Frequency] Scan-" The white one grumbled loudly at her. "And found-"

"Why Trin? Especially when we have a limited amount of power? Those things mean absolutely nothing."

"I know, but-"

"The smallest little things will set them off. Telephone poles, radio towers, powerline

transformers-"

"All of which are absent in this area." The brown canine informed, actually getting Nikata to stop for a moment and look around... Even if she couldn't actually see much through the trees. "...Minus the radio tower, of course. But we... Might've found something."

"...It's not a spirit." The white one growled, heading back to the ship.

"We don't know that for sure, but there are traces of where the infandalism have been, and it's..." A frustrated growl made Trinva whimper a bit.

"Don't tell me..." A long silence. "...Okay, tell me-"

"A... A perfect match." Another irritated growl that was a bit louder. "And there's one area a bit behind Ulysses' farm; a very old, possibly unsafe building."

"That's getting high ratings of EMF?" A whimper in confirmation at her grumbling tone. "...Fine. It's something to look into. I'll head there now, beats looking through these woods."

The open fields were a nice change, as well as the old path that lead up to the location Trinva mentioned. Studying it carefully to find a few aged tracks of a wagon, as well as a pair of smaller footprints. Likely belonging to the two sons of the farmhouse, but the sets also traced back... In what looked to be a hurry.

They didn't mention anything to the wolf before, but it wasn't uncommon for children to hold secrets. Regardless, she'll interrogate them about it later. Likely tomorrow, as it was already starting to become dusk on this planet; the sky turning a bright orange to match the sun as it slowly slid into the horizon.

At least Nikata had a flashlight with her, and a form of communication. Continuing up the path and hearing some animal noises; squirrels and birds mostly, but no scurrying or fluttering. It wasn't until she was a bit further to discover a bloated robin, attempting to steer itself through the trees, but often tapping them with a faint *boom*.

Then a flying squirrel that was definitely trying to use other techniques aside from natural gliding. Along with several other animals that she spotted: anything from woodpeckers to frogs, all slightly inflated to the point of being nearly immobile. "I must be getting close..."

A few long minutes passed, ones that almost felt like hours. Getting strange and uncomfortable shivers through her body, causing her white fur to puff out. The air was getting colder, and the animals became vacant around what appeared to be a somewhat large home. For Amish standards, that is.

Time wasn't very kind to it, looking at least forty years old or older. Much of the wood along the outside walls looked rotten, the aged well nearby; unsafe. Both for the actual waters and the structure

around it. By the look of it, someone attempted to see what lied within; a small sinkhole about the size of a large footprint was just outside of it. Along with the signs of a slight skirmish.

The boys, likely. One of them getting too close and nearly being swallowed up by the ground, likely scaring them back home? As much as the wolf didn't want to believe that old mole, the evidence of '*spirits*' was starting to stack. With the setting sun, Nikata looked over the front of the aged house, looking more and more haunted as the light started to fade from the world.

A deep, cold breath, she grumbled a bit and carefully headed to the door. Finding it unlocked and one of it's hinges removed, making it harder for it to fully open and close. Turning on the flashlight of her laser pistol and switching the bullet type to a static stun, she carefully entered the building.

The cone of light scanned the rather dark area, several holes in the floor were spotted, along with half a dozen animal nests. Ones that were abandoned long ago, and a couple that looked like they were torn apart from the inside. All the furniture was missing, likely taken when the owners left. Stove left unused for a very long time, likely having nests in the chimney, and still for being mid-summer... This place was freezing. Enough for her to see her own breath slightly.

Carefully stepping on the rotting floor, the white wolf could almost feel a weight over her as she scanned the area. Still getting that chill down her spine, even with the teal suit attempting to normalize her body temperature. "Everything okay down there, Nikki?" Her earpiece nearly startled her.

"Just a cold spot." She grumbled in reply. "I found the place but it's abandoned. You sure this isn't just a high voltage spot?"

"Positive. Anything else?"

"Other than some of the wildlife also getting the belly treatment. Birds, squirrels, etc-" That weight persisted on top of her hair, making the white one quickly look behind her, but not see anything.

"Something that skirmish? Definitely not one of the boys then. Hardly anyone can sneak up on anything that paranoid. So, infection of some sort?" A bit of silence as the wolf studied her surroundings again. Still feeling that weight, as it seemed to nearly flatten her black hair... Something that honestly reminded her of a pair of- "Nikki?"

"The voice in your head is close-" A female with a slight echo said, instantly getting Nikata to roll forwards and turnabout. Barely catching some movement along the ceiling within the cone of light, as well as a playful giggle that seemed to come from the roof. Quickly scanning area to area with her weapon as the weight was lifted entirely. "Quite the jumpy little puppy, aren't you?" A bit of a growl as Nikata's eyes followed the voice above her, through the building's roof.

"Everything okay there? The EMF is going nuts!" Slight static was heard through the earpiece as the white one followed the occasional wind and giggles. Still getting that strange cold as her adrenaline started to rush, triggering that fight or flight response.

"Everything's under control, Trin!"

"You've got some nice curves too..." The echoed voice was heard through the walls, getting the attention of that light cone as it traced the voice's position.

"So, it's a ghost?"

"There's no such thing as..." The white disc stopped on what almost seemed to be a bit of vapor along the upper wall, soon seeing a set of round curves and what looked to be a scary mask of sorts. Flexible horns flowed from the top of a ghastly head, smiling deviously with a sharp set of teeth and red eyes, nearly purring while gazing over the bounty hunter. "...Ghosts...?"

"But curves could always be a little bigger..." The specter said, nearly puzzling Nikata before feeling a slight slap on her right haunch, then a second one on the other. Getting her to growl a bit, before feeling each one start to grow a bit. Swelling to about +50% of their size, but nothing she wasn't used to. More distracted over what just hit her from... Through a wall?

Another slight cackle as the wolf took aim where the creature was seen, only to barely witness it escape and spot the faint blue aura that seemed to outline the specter's body. Growling again with a curse, she attempted to follow its path through the building's aged structure. "Okay, fine! It's a ghost!" Nikata grumbled. "What do I do with it!?" The only reply she got was white noise through the earpiece. "Damnit..." She growled again. The wolf was on her own for this fight.

"Lost communication with your crew?" The specter asked, rather sincerely as well. "Don't worry, I've got plenty of ideas to entertain you through the evening." Another woosh, just sending the white one spinning in circles attempting to follow the ghost. But something she said got her to stop... "It will be a night you will never forget, I promise you, my lady...!"

"Communications...?" Nikata spoke under her breath. "How do you know about that? And my Crew?"

"That ship out there is yours, yes?" Again, there it was. "I haven't seen something quite like you before, I will gladly admit." The flashlight ended up catching some more vapor in the room, instantly getting the wolf to shoot at what appeared to be a large ball of air. Seeing it split before very quickly flying towards her after feeling a slight shift in the air around her. But the balloon wolf quickly inhaled and caused her belly to grow in order to deflect the foggy projectiles. Only to feel her teal suit absorb them with a couple of faint slaps. Then knowing what was coming next. "Very exciting, really. But that doesn't mean some... Adjustments couldn't be made."

Exhaling her belly out and trying to control her size, the twin teal hills started to swell up regardless. Doing her best to exhale the extra air that somehow entered her body, only to feel a pair of hands grope her rear end and make her yelp before rolling away again. Taking another shot at the giggling ghost and just missing as she escaped. "Very firm too. You must work out quite a bit."

"You called it a ship." Nikata half grumbled, attempting to calm down. Hoping to distract the

specter for a clean shot.

"Is that not what it is, lovely?"

"You're correct, but those around here are unfamiliar with it." The wolf lowered her weapon and just listened for where the creature was coming from. "So does that mean... You're not from around here as well?"

"Ah, and smart to boot..."

"But you're definitely the one that's been causing trouble, I imagine."

"Trouble? Is that what they're calling it?" The echoing giggle nearly filled the room. "I've been having some fun, yes, but my work is important."

"I'm sure it is." The wolf couldn't help but grumble a little bit.

"You don't agree?"

"In some ways, it's not my job to agree or not. I honestly wouldn't mind it if the animals deflated after sunrise or something."

"And ruin their wonderful shape?" The specter seemed to have stopped on the other side of the back wall.

"Well, it's going to happen one way or another. Be it due to the animal being hunted or unable to eat. You realize this, yes?" No response. "Look, inflation pranks or not, it takes responsibility. These people don't know about how to cure it, so in turn they have to lose even more hiring others to help them. That's why I'm here, because they need this to stop." A long silence as Nikata started to lower her guard. "Okay?"

"Who are you talking to?" A sharp double take from the white one, shining a light towards the thin figure in the doorway. Causing the dark purple dragon from before to shield his eyes, and get her to relax.

"Jack-! What the hell are you doing here?"

"Well, I followed you here because you didn't answer my calls for you to slow down."

"What calls? I didn't hear anything."

"I couldn't shout them out too loud, people are sleeping. Y'know?" A grumble from Nikata. "But yeah, I need the keys to the ship so I can sleep in my bed."

"...You mean my bed, don't you-?"

"-It's in the agreement, yes." A quick breath from the wolf.

"Jack..."

"What?"

"The ship isn't locked." A blank stare from the dragon. "On a scale of 1 to 10, how baked are you right now?"

"18. And don't judge me, I'm not the one talking to walls." A flick of those white ears as a large shift in the air was detected, getting the white one to once again dodge via rolling just as a large foggy orb was shot out of the wall. Hitting the dragon with a loud slap and getting him to yelp at it. "Why?" He grumbled, only to get her rather cautious stare. "What?" The noodle started to ask, only to feel his cheeks start to swell up, along with his neck and underside.

A loud yelp in question actually came out rather deep as his chest and belly quickly expanded, getting the dragon caught in the door and sealing off the wolf's only exit. Loud creaks and rips of his clothing (along with several complaints about just buying such things) nearly overpowered the ghost's constant laughter as Jack swelled up greatly. Mostly on the outside, but also his torso slowly making progress inside the building. Nearly becoming the size of it as that long tail started taking the slack.

The building's frame started to snap loudly and shift, making her wonder if the place was going to collapse right then and now. It would if Nikata didn't do something about it, taking a deep inhale and positioning herself against the far wall, she jumped back and blew towards it. Using her own body and the force generated as a ramp, hitting the dragon hard in the face and shoving him out the door with a loud *Fwoomp!* Sending the bloated noodle launching over the trees, but safe... Providing he didn't land on something sharp.

(...Yeah, he'll be fine.) The wolf thought, quickly following the series of laughs and spotting that ghastly face through the wall again. However... This time looking quite a bit less frightening, causing the furred one to stall for half a moment before taking another shot. Expecting the ghost's escape and the bolt from the taser to dissipate into the wall. (Think, think, think!) Nikata coaxed herself. (She can go through walls, so nothing physical is going to work... But those... Pigtales? Horns? Whatever's on her head are swaying... From movement-?)

Another shift in the air was felt and the furred one dodged again, but that didn't quite get out of the way in time. Feeling her lower shin get the slap, yet started to feel her belly expand slightly, causing her to growl a bit. However... That gave her an idea. Could she possibly just blow the ghost away?

Worth a shot in any case. Waiting for the next sphere, which ended up being two more before getting just inside the doorway. Starting to take a deep breath, rearing her head back to make the intake much faster, Nikata barely seen some movement above her. "Pucker up-" The specter started, only to accidentally get caught in the vacuum that was currently the wolf's maw!

A strange taste, something that reminded her of cold nature water, was detected but soon passed. Getting the furred one to stop early in surprise with a belly about the size of a yoga ball, wondering- (Did that really just happen!?) Yeah, that. Leaving her in silence for a few moments as her

insides felt a little chilled.

"Well, don't you move fast." The echoed voice giggled from within her body. "I rarely get inside someone on the first date!" A grumble from the wolf, but she could squeeze out of the door, likely containing the ghost inside of her. Long enough to get it off planet and get paid- "But if you insist, hun, let me at least give you a beautiful shape..." (Sklíthra.)

Her belly started to strain a little bit as Nikata fought against some of the pressure. Feeling it start to form into her hips and behind, causing those curves to grow thicker and thicker. Very quickly blocking the doorway behind her and forcing the wolf to widen her stance. Pushing down her legs slightly as her large belly easily touched down onto the rotting floors, causing them to creak with the expansion. "Ohhh, that's lovely! But let's work on your top a little bit, shall we?"

Before the white one would reply, the pressure was felt into her chest. Causing those twin teal hills to inflate to over double their size as the wolf growled, like losing a game of Tug Of War. From large watermelons in her suit to overinflated beach balls, Nikata's breasts grew against her resistance. Stretching them in large bursts while occasionally sending the pressure downwards, especially when those two front spheres started to rival the size of her middle.

A sudden jolt of air into her chest caused the bounty hunter to become disarmed, attempting to hold her now massive pillows back a bit. Now growing to the size of boulders as her body took up most of the build's space. Creaking against its structure as those hills pressed up against the roofing, her bubbled haunches half attempting to escape through the doorway, barely seeing her white tail stick out the top of it. Then her belly, soon touching that far wall and pressing outwards against it. "My, you are durable! And you can keep going? A very lucky find, if I don't say so myself." She could feel cold... 'Pets' from within around her curves, adding quite a bit more into them and causing those white cheeks to bloat up. "But I'm more of an Hourglass enthusiast myself."

Several slight beeps from the suit left the ghost making a noise in question for a moment, just before she was able to trace where it was coming from. The teal suit suddenly constricted very tightly and forced the balloon wolf to exhale all the gathered pressure out of her muzzle in one large blast of air. Easily blowing a large hole in the roof and not quite able to see the specter launch out, but definitely hear its voice from a distance.

But the suit remained quite tight against her normal self, getting Nikata to grumble at the emergency contraction. Regardless of how painful and sore it might make her for the next couple of days, it was a good thing to have in a battle suit. Getting up slowly with a few grunts as the teal suit remained tight against her chest, nearly making it hard to breathe for the next few moments, at least the job was done. With a blast like that, it'd be a miracle if the ghost was still in orbit.

The constriction eventually started to ease up, allowing the wolf to breathe normally once again while leaning up against the doorframe. Panting and already starting to feel a little fatigued, but at least the job was done- "Neat little trick there, puppy." That echoing voice returned, barely seeing the ghost's blue aura in the darkness as the white one dove for her pistol. Firing it from the ground three times, and

hearing the specter screech in pain as two shots landed before it could retreat. "D-damn you-!"

"Finally got you-!"

"That **Really** Stun!" The spirit growled, getting a grumble from the canine as well. Standing up from the rotten floor and attempting to follow the constant paths that the ghost was taking. "If you're going to be like that, especially after making you so beautiful, I cannot stay a gracious host!" The words came in quick circles, as the air around Nikata started to shift constantly. Even the trees outside started to move with the sudden wind as she scanned the area, knowing the attacks were going to come from all sides!

She's yet to see them hone in very well though, so her best bet was-! A sudden look down at the rotting floorboards. The Basement! Quickly switching her pistol to more destructive rounds, the wolf started firing a quick ring near the rotting wood. Jumping at it when it was nearly complete and stomping down to break it! Hearing the loud snaps and feel it cave in-! Only for her to go down about maybe half a foot and feel solid ground. "...Sklíthra." The white one cursed.

The air shifted once again, as Nikata attempted to squeeze into the large hole, but dozens of small slaps hit her haunches and back. Knowing she wouldn't be able to fit inside now, even before her body started to expand once again. Focusing more on her hindquarters and ballooning them out greatly, providing an excellent target for the next volley of foggy spheres to hit and absorb into that teal suit!

Her belly was next, causing the rotting floors to collapse more easily now that there was a larger hole. Even after folding over the somewhat sharp but damp edges of the broken floorboards, hearing the air inside hiss loudly as another volley pushed her further and further up. The teal sets of balloons quickly occupying the room, the specter revealed herself by coming down from the ceiling. Seeing the canine take aim, but a series of slaps against her bloated belly caused her bosom to spring outwards once again. Getting the gun to fire, but miss and disarm the white wolf once more.

A growl from Nikata as the spirit came closer, nearly resting her own bubbled hills of near vapor in front of that white snout. Not looking nearly as frightening as before, but more... Alluring? Specifically over the growing hunter's form as the volleys halted for the moment. Taking some of the excess air in her body and attempting to blow the ghost away again, her muzzle was suddenly squeezed shut by those rather plush... Now warmer translucent hands. Granted, in doing so caused the white cheeks to blow up largely and get the ghost to giggle a bit.

"It's too bad." The spirit said, slightly disappointingly. "You're such an excellent little toy, but you just have too much fight in you to be any fun... However..." Nikata's snout was still shut as the air in her cheeks was pushed down again, back into her belly. Hearing the floor once again snap loudly as another piece broke off, almost feeling some of the jagged edges poke into her teal uniform. "There's another one of your kind in that ship, is there not?" The wolf's eyes widened, especially after the specter went in for a soft kiss. Feeling it somehow pump more and more air into her now tight body, and making out the ceiling as her haunches pressed against it.

"It's time for a stress test, my dear." A growl in response to the spirit's smirk. "I want to see just how big I can make you, that way I don't make the same mistake with the brown one." A much louder growl from Nikata as she attempted to curse at the ghost, watching it stroke her teal hills a bit as more and more slaps were felt against that belly. Stretching it out wider with every orb that was absorbed and slowly filling up the entire home. Causing the structure to groan loudly as the wolf expanded inside its walls.

There were a few moments inbetween barrages, but she could feel them getting more and more intense. Causing her body to start morphing outside any exit within the old building; every door, window, and hole in the roof. Prying up boards that made the roof can causing them to burst out into the late dusk, being replaced by a dense teal bubble or a white tail.

A heavy volley of spheres caused that balloon to stretch out further, having much more durability than the house that confined her. Those walls starting to bend and curve themselves as the two battled against the pressure. Only to feel the air outside shift again and again, as if to prepare for one last grand finale. Leaving the hunter completely trapped, unable to exhale through her muzzle still... Then the suit's alarm went off again. Constricting her body and attempting to force that air out of it, having nowhere to go but her cheeks and tail. Bloating them out drastically as the suit attempted to once again rescue her.

But the air shifted outside, as dozens upon dozens of those spheres, much larger than before, rushed into the building. Nearly aiding with the battle suit's emergency plans, until suddenly turning against it. Slamming those teal walls against the wooden ones, causing them to split heavily then explode the home into thousands of pieces. A rain of debris and splinters clouded the area for a moment, before being completely shoved out of the way by the ever expanding female.

Her belly quickly occupying the opened space and ramming against the trees nearby. Nearly de-rooting them before trampling over the natural spears in the surrounding area. Those twin hills in the front grew literally into the size of hills that shadowed over the forest, nearly being rivaled by the two snowy ones near the top. Her haunches and tail expanded drastically into the air, creaking loudly as they rubbed against each other. Providing quite the magnificent view for all who were watching from afar... Which was basically Jack and the ship. Everyone else is sleeping.

But Nikata was still conscious, trying to hold herself together with the help of her suit. Knowing there was another barrage coming, at least... Until she heard the ghost nearly swoon nearby, coming from between the hills and hugging the massive living blimp. "So wonderful...! Such beauty...! I can't...! I couldn't possibly..." A noise in question from the white one, gazing at the spirit's now... Almost innocent design. The rows of teeth now rounded and less threatening, her red eyes now much softer, and her touch a much more comforting warmth. "I-I will stop, but only if I have you in exchange!"

A whimper that time, then the strange binding around her snout was released. Giving her cheeks some much needed relief, as well as her body as it slowly started to deflate. "What do you mean? M-marriage!?" Nikata nearly blushed in question.

"No animal or other creature could ever compare to your shape...!" The ghost nearly cooed, resting in her cleavage. Still leaving the wolf a little stunned before she heard the static clear up in her earpiece.

"Nikki? Is everything okay? Are you alright?"

"I've been better, but I'm alright, Trin." The white one said clearly, still feeling the tautness of her suit kick in and doing her best to exhale away from the mic. "It's a-"

"Specter, right?" A near double take at the ear piece. "We thought you mentioned ghost on the other end, then the signs were there when we lost contact. I sent Kvath to research on some of the types of specters in the Hunter's manual."

"There's no ghosts in the manual-"

"Actually, there is. But they don't teach the stuff at the academy unless you take certain bestiaries." A grumble from Nikata. "Mostly because of how rare they are, and how little Hunters are actually called to deal with such things."

"On with it, Trin."

"R-right. Well... The specter didn't seem to harm anyone specific, even when it was spotted. Odds are..."

"Go on."

"There are ways to deal with aggressive ghosts, Nikki. But the best way is not to fight it, exactly, but help it move on."

"Move on?"

"As in, give it something that it's searching for. Though sometimes it can be to fulfill a certain need-"

"Like to... Inflate things?" The white one guessed, looking over the innocent looking ghost and remembering what it said earlier; *I've been having some fun, yes, but my work is important.* "You **need** to do this, don't you?" A bit of a sad look from those red eyes.

"Some of them do." The brown one on the other end stated. "Not necessarily as a final task, but as a way to-"

"Keep their... Sanity?" The specter's gaze fell, once again resting on that teal chest.

"...Seriously, you need to tell me what happened! These silent moments can be very crucial-"

"Trinva, relax."

"Nikata...? Did you get rid of the ghost?"

"No." The white one stated with a faint smile on her muzzle. "I adopted a crew member." A double take from the spirit, her gaze turning into wonder and confusion. "I'm Nitaka. The voice 'in my head' is Trinva." A gesture towards the ship. "The fat dragon down there is Jack." A bright, almost giddy smile from the specter.

"Boosty."