

Worth the Risk

Aira prodded at her salad bowl and fixed the fox sitting opposite her with a wary smile. "This isn't a trap, right? You're not just hoping for a chance to eat me?"

She had intended to keep her tone as light-hearted as possible but the question still provoked an offended look from her date. "Of course I'm not. Do I really come off as the sort of person who would do that?" he asked.

"Well, no." She admitted, "But not seeming like the kind of person who would eat their date is exactly the impression those kind of people try to give. The last predator I dated also seemed fairly non-threatening at first. In the end, however, he made it pretty clear that he was more interested in getting me into his stomach than his bed. The one before that didn't even have the decency to be subtle about it."

Takkos put down his fork and stared at her in open disbelief. "And after all that you were still willing to come out here with me?"

"Well, not every predator I've dated has tried something," she explained. "A few times it just hasn't worked out. You seem like the safe sort so I figured it was worth the risk. If you are just hoping for a meal out of this then, fair warning, you should probably give up and try someone else. I'm not going to be an easy meal."

"But wouldn't it be safer to stick to your fellow herbivores?" he asked.

Aira suppressed a laugh at his awkwardness. "Where's the fun in that?" she asked. "I've tried dating prey in the past but never for very long. Maybe it because there's something quite thrilling about a boyfriend who just might devour me if I let my guard down."

A worried look crossed the vulpine's face. "So, you're actually hoping someone will eat you or..."

"No! I'm not actually trying to get myself killed," she insisted. "I'll admit that I enjoy the danger of this kind of thing but I certainly don't want to actually get eaten. If anything, the satisfying part of this is that, so far, no one's been able to. Still, it's hard to feel too intimidated by the kind of carnivore that orders a plate of food instead of prey. Unless, of course, you are just trying to put me off my guard."

"I wasn't trying to make you think that I don't eat people," Takkos protested. "I do, just not while I'm on a date. It kind of makes it hard to talk if you have to do so over someone begging for their life."

"So you are a real predator, after all?" Aira teased. "I was beginning to wonder."

The fox frowned, this wasn't a situation he was sure how to deal with. Normally, when dealing with prey species, he tried to act as non-threatening as possible. Of course, most prey did not seem to go out of their way to provoke him. Aira had already admitted that she enjoyed the danger of being around those who could eat her, so maybe downplaying his carnivorous nature was not the best response. "Well, if you still have your doubts, I was actually planning on going hunting tonight. You're welcome to join me if you like."

Aira's provocative manner fell apart in an instant and for several seconds the rabbit just stared at him in shock. Then a little shiver of pleasure ran through her. "I ... I think I'll have to pass on that."

she mumbled. "I like being alive too much. Still, it is a very tempting offer."

"You don't have to worry." Having found one of her buttons, Takkos couldn't resist giving it another press. "I promise, nothing bad would happen, at least not to you, and can you really say that you've never wanted to watch a hunt in person?"

Aira shuffled uncomfortably. "Sorry foxy." She answered. "That really does sound tempting but I don't trust you nearly enough for that. I've only survived this long because I never let a predator talk me into following them home or going out during hunting hours."

Takkos frowned a little at that. "You won't enter a predator's home? Because I was planning to invite you over tonight."

She smiled. "Again, very tempting but not something I'd expect to survive if I actually went for it. Although you are very welcome to come home with me, you'll just have to put up with the low ceilings."

Takkos grinned at her. "Was that an invitation?" he asked.

"Mhh, not yet." She decided. "Maybe after a couple more dates, once I'm a little more confident that you actually want a girlfriend and not a snack. Besides, I've got to head to work soon and won't be back until late."

The fox looked a little surprised by that news. "You're working today? I kind of assumed you'd got the day off or something."

Aira shook her head. "Nah, I always take the late shifts if I can get them, which I usually can. Most people prefer to get their work done and then go out and have fun. But I find it difficult to relax if I have to keep watching the time to make sure I can get home safely. Besides, this way I get plenty of time to wake up and either do stuff in the morning or just sleep in and feel much less stressed by the time I get to work."

Takkos glanced at the clock above their table. "I guess that makes sense." He hazarded, "What time do you get back, anyway?"

Aira smiled slyly "Early enough foxy, so don't get your hopes up." was her answer.

"I ... I wasn't ... I mean, I realize that question sounded like I was hoping it would be late so I could try and catch you but I really didn't mean it that way."

"I believe you." Aira told him. "Still, I'm going to keep stuff like that to myself until I trust you a little more. It's been nice talking to you, Takkos, but I really do have to get going now." Slipping out of her seat she crossed to the other side of the table. Standing on tiptoes, she stretched upwards for a kiss. Takkos lent down and their muzzles met halfway.

The fur around his lips brushed against her and she could feel the hot warmth of his breath on her as he exhaled. How many bunnies had touched those lips before her? She was certain that, out of all of them, she was the first to do so willingly and the only one who would survive the experience.

Breaking apart, the two exchanged a smile. "So ... I know you don't want to meet in the evenings, would tomorrow morning be too soon to schedule a second date?" The fox asked.

“We'll see.” The little bunny teased.

“Um ... well, stay safe.” Takkos suggested as she headed out the door but Aira just laughed at the notion.

Aira shivered as she walked down the street. Her train had been over an hour late. She almost wished it had been later. As it was, it had arrived at the station just ten minutes after hunting hours had begun. An hour or so later and most of the predators would have either made a catch and gone home or given up in frustration. Unfortunately, she would not be the only straggler who had not managed to get home in time and the predators would know it. The start of hunting hours was often considered the best time for hunting and, conversely the most dangerous time for a rabbit like herself to be wandering the streets alone.

Despite her instincts urging her to run, Aira resisted and continued down the street at a controlled pace, avoiding the streetlights as much as possible and keeping to the shadows. The desire to run was a leftover adaptation from when rabbits and their many predators had lived in separate tribes. Some primitive part of her brain knew that she was in danger and wanted her to get back to safety as quickly as possible. It was a reaction that most rabbits in her situation would have listened to, but it was also one that Aira knew would not improve her chances in the least.

Running would make noise. It would catch the eye of any late night prowler out looking for a meal. Far better was to walk slowly and calmly, always paying attention to her surroundings, always listening for any sign of trouble, and only to run once she was certain that someone was pursuing her.

The eerie silence of the city during hunting hours was broken by a sudden piercing scream. Just a few streets away someone was yelling at the top of their lungs. Standing frozen Aira could make out just a few individual words among the incoherent protests. “No!” seemed to be a common one, along with “Don't” and “Please”. Only a few seconds after they had begun, the screams came to a muffled end. Aira listened a second longer but no further sounds came from that direction. Whoever it was would likely never be heard again.

She shuddered, then made an attempt to smooth the fur on her arms back down before setting off again struggling to keep her pace steady. The scream had come from behind her and, from the volume, could not have been more than a few streets away. If she had chosen a slightly different path home ... She didn't want to finish that thought. Instead she tried telling herself that the poor screamer's misfortune meant there would be one less predator out looking for a meal. Unfortunately, she couldn't quite convince herself of it. The predator may have caught one meal, but she doubted they would turn down a second course should they find her.

Glancing over her shoulder, expecting at any moment to see a wolf or some other carnivore with a full stomach emerge from the shadows, Aira quickened her pace. For some reason, the sound of someone getting caught had convinced her that any threat would come from behind, which is why she didn't see the fox until she had almost bumped into him.

Takkos was caught equally unaware. He'd also heard the screaming come to an abrupt end and assumed that no prey would be likely to be coming from that area. In fact, he'd been facing the opposite direction, staring down the street and watching for any sign of movement in the nearby alleys. Only the soft pat of the rabbit's footsteps and her startled gasp had alerted him to Aira's

presence behind him.

For a moment, both stared at each other. Takkos too shocked to respond and Aira's eyes slowly widening in terror. The rabbit reacted first. Spinning round she took off at a sprint, back the way she had come from. Any rules she had about staying in control and not running during hunting hours were forgotten. Once spotted the only thing that mattered was to escape.

Behind her she heard a shout. Takkos was calling for her to stop and, for a moment, she actually considered doing so. He had seemed friendly enough this morning. Maybe she could talk her way out of this? He might even be willing to help her. She quickly dismissed the idea though. If talking was an option then she could try it if and when he caught her.

Behind her she heard heavy footsteps as the fox gave up calling and began his pursuit. Her heart leaped as a surge of adrenaline washed through her. She had been out during hunting hours before. She had been close to predators before, even ones that she knew were hoping to eat her. This, however, was the first time the two had coincided. The first time she had actually had someone chasing her like this. She also knew that, while most people who went out after hunting hours got home safely, less than half of those who encountered a predator on that trip would live to tell about it. She wasn't sure where she had learned that statistic but she was glad she had memorized it. The added terror of knowing that she had less than a fifty percent chance of ever getting home helped her put on a further, desperate burst of speed.

Aira dived down a side alley, emerged into another street, picked a direction almost at random and sprinted away. In the short term, she was faster than the fox but, if she couldn't lose him soon, he would quickly wear her down. She chose a winding erratic route through the network of roads. Hoping that he would lose track of her and be unable to guess which way she had gone. Left, then right again at the next street. Once she was sure he was no longer following she would be able to stop, regain her breath, and then could start working out where she was and how to get home from there.

As Aira ran past the entrance to another alleyway a long furry arm shot out, grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her inside. Caught off balance the poor bunny barely had time to scream before she was thrown against a brick wall. Winded and stunned she collapsed into a heap at the feet of her assailant and struggled to breathe.

"Well hello little bunny, it's very nice to meet you. What's a cute little thing like you doing out here at this time of night?"

It wasn't Takkos, the voice told her that much. With difficulty, Aira managed to lift her head enough to see her captor's face. The feline's yellow eyes stared down at her with contempt and anticipation. She tried to speak, to plead with him for her life, maybe make some kind of deal, but nothing came out. Unable to draw breath, all she could do was open and close her mouth pathetically while the cat stared down at her.

"Shh, you don't have to say anything, my little morsel." the cat gloated. "I've got somewhere nice and warm for you to stay. Just got to get your wrapper off first."

Aira wriggled backwards as her captor bent down towards her. He was blocking the way to the street she had been running down but, if she could only get away from him, she might be able to escape down the other end of the alley. A quick glance in that direction crushed those hopes. A high wire fence blocked that end of the alley. Had she not been winded, bruised, and exhausted she might have stood a chance of climbing it, but even then it would have taken her a while, time she could

not afford with a hungry predator standing over her. It occurred to her that the feline had chosen this alleyway as an ambush point for a reason. Once inside his prey was trapped and helpless.

She didn't get long to dwell on her situation though. The predator was hungry and eager to begin his meal. Putting one foot on her chest, he pinned the squirming bunny down and started undoing the button of her jeans. Aira tried to stop him, of course, but it was a hopelessly one-sided fight. The cat swatted her paws away with ease then dragged her pants down around her ankles. Stepping back off her he started removing her shoes starting with her left foot and then her right.

It was finally starting to dawn on Aira that she wasn't going to survive this. She had felt scared before, being chased had been terrifying, but the realization that this was the last night she would ever experience came with an entirely different form of fear. At least the terror of being chased had been motivating. The kind of fear that drove her to run, to fight, to do whatever was necessary to survive. This, however, was a parallelizing fear. Her body felt numb and unresponsive. She barely even tried to resist as her predator finished with her shoes and started removing her socks.

Tears filled the poor rabbit's eyes, reducing her vision of the world to a swirl of dark colors. All she wanted was to go home. This whole situation struck her as indescribably unfair. She hadn't done anything wrong. It wasn't her fault that the train had been delayed. She'd dealt with the situation correctly, stayed calm and crept as carefully as possible towards her home. It wasn't her fault that Takkos had just happened to be hunting in that area. Even then, she had managed to outrun him. That should have been enough. She should have been able to go home afterwards, shaken but still in one piece, to enjoy the rest of her life. But instead, none of it had made any difference. Despite everything she had done she was still going to die here. It just didn't seem fair.

Faintly, she could hear the sound of heavy footsteps nearby. Someone else was coming this way, and fast. For a moment she felt a glimmer of hope, if that was also prey, then maybe her captor would go after them instead. Maybe she could survive this after all. Intellectually, she knew it was pretty unlikely. Why would the cat abandon a meal he already had in order to try to catch a different one? If he did go for this new arrival, it would only be as a second course. She would still be eaten either way. Still, she couldn't quite bring herself to dismiss the fantasy. She needed hope right now, even irrational, impossible hope.

Cruel hands grabbed the rim of her panties and dragged them down to her ankles. Aira squeaked in protest, but there was nothing she could do to stop him. Fortunately, before he could get any further, the cat stood up and glanced behind him. His own hearing was less sensitive than her bunny ears and he had only just noticed that someone was coming. Aira took advantage of his distraction to shuffle a little further away and started pulling her underwear back up.

She didn't get very far before hearing a furious roar and the world seemed to explode into chaos. Her vision was still bleary from crying but she could make out the rough form of the cat tangling with an orange blur that must be the newcomer. Outraged hissing was drowned out by a rumbling growl, so low she felt it more than heard the sound. A large foot slammed against the pavement mere inches from her head and Aira recoiled in terror. Curling into a ball, she covered her ears and tried to blot out all sensations as the larger creatures fought above her.

Finally, the cat's hissing ended in an agonized yowl, then came the sound of retreating footsteps. Cautiously, Aira opened one eye to see the orange blur now standing over her. "T... Takkos?" she wiped the tears away as best she could and, sure enough, it was the same fox who had invited her out to eat this morning, the same one who, just a few minutes ago, had been chasing her through the streets. "This... this is a rescue, right?" She wished she could have put more confidence behind those words.

Takkos glared at her. There was blood dripping from his forehead and staining his lips. "Sorry Aira but, as you can probably guess, I was hunting when you ran into me. I do like you, but I don't make exceptions while hunting."

"But ... but ... You said ... I just thought ... I ... " Aira babbled helplessly as she tried to wriggle further away from the fox. It was a pointless endeavor, even if she could have escaped, there was still a fence preventing her from getting far. As it was, she barely managed to shuffle a few inches before he grabbed her.

Unlike the cat, Takkos wasted no time with his prey. Perhaps he wanted to make it quick for her, or perhaps he was just hungrier. Whatever the reason, Aira found herself lifted into the air and was soon staring into the dark passageway of the vulpine's gullet.

"Wait! Takkos, please? I mmph..." She didn't even manage to finish her plea before her head was shoved into his open maw. The tongue ran over her face, covering everything with a thick layer of drool, and then she was staring down his throat. "Please? Just listen to..." A firm shove was all it took to send her down that waiting tunnel. Her head slipped easily inside, her long ears brushing against his tonsils before following down. Then her shoulders went down, quickly followed by her chest, all in a single gulp.

Aira tried to scream but the elastic walls of the esophagus pressing against her face muffled any noise she could make. She tried to struggle but, with her arms pinned to her sides, all she could do was kick uselessly in the air. For a moment, nothing happened, then Takkos gave her butt another shove and swallowed.

Aira whimpered helplessly as she felt herself sliding downwards. Around her she could hear the slow thud of the fox's heart and, just below, a terrifying liquid groan. The stomach knew that food was on its way and was getting ready to process her. Her torso was pulled into the gullet by the peristaltic waves, then her hips. A ring of muscles momentarily resisted her progress before opening to allow her head inside.

As soon as her head was free from the esophagus walls, Aira inhaled a deep lungful of air. It smelled foul and left an even worse taste on the back of her tongue. She would have expected the inside of a carnivore's digestive tract to smell of meat or something but instead the stomach had a surprisingly sterile, chemical, smell. Given the choice, she would have preferred the smell of meat. At least that would mean some trace of those who had found themselves in here before her had remained.

With her head inside his stomach she could barely hear anything from the outside world at all. The only sounds that reached her ears were the beating of her predator's heart, the soft rumbling of the powerful digestive organ around her, and a steady plopping noise as enzymatic juices dripped from the surrounding walls. The fact that she could hear them dripping into something told her that a little pool of digestive acids had already built up at the bottom of the stomach in preparation for her.

Only her legs still protruded from the fox's jaws. She could feel the cool night air ruffle her fur as a gentle breeze blew past and she kicked wildly at the air. It didn't do her any good of course but, with the rest of her body held tight by the muscular walls of the predator's esophagus it was the only protest she could manage. Her short fur was already soaked and matted with fox drool which helped lubricate her for her journey downwards. Ignoring her struggles, Takkos ran his tongue through the fur of her thighs, helping to spread the lubricant a little further. Then he threw back his head and swallowed her.

A powerful peristaltic surge gripped her body and forced her down. Aira had just time to grab a hasty lungful of air before her head was pushed down into the pool of acidic fluids. Fortunately, she didn't have to hold her breath for long. As more and more of her body was pushed into the stomach the surrounding walls stretched a little to accommodate her, but she was still forced to curl up. Her head came back out the pool as her torso was pushed in. As her feet slipped between the fox's lips, she felt him give her soft paw-pads a lick before they too slid down his gullet.

Bracing herself against the bottom of the stomach, Aira tried her hardest to resist the muscular force of the esophagus. As long as she could keep some part of herself out then maybe there was some hope. Unfortunately, Takkos's throat proved to be far stronger than a mere rabbit. Her feet were pushed through the opening and it closed tight behind her.

Rationally, Aira knew that the fight was over. People escaped from predators all the time. A lucky few might even manage to get away after their pursuer had got hold of them. Even once the predator had started swallowing, it was not unheard of for something to interrupt them, for the predator to get distracted for a moment and their intended meal to make a last second escape. People didn't escape from a predator's stomach though. They might wriggle and kick for a while but that never resulted in someone actually getting free. The digestive system would always win in the end and the prey would be dissolved into a thin soup.

Still, even knowing how the fight would end, Aira wasn't going to sit back and accept this. Twisting round, she felt the surrounding walls, trying to locate the ring of muscles that lead to the esophagus. Maybe she could pry it open. Maybe the peristalsis would be weaker this time. Maybe she could ... She didn't know how to finish that thought. She couldn't find the opening anyway. The insides of the stomach walls were constantly moving and everywhere she touched she only felt soft muscle gently contracting and then relaxing again in a rhythmic motion.

Aira wriggled about a little, not trying to struggle, just to get herself back into an upright position. Once she had managed that she took a deep breath, or at least, as deep as the limited air supply would allow. She'd often wondered what this might be like. Every risk she took, every time she flirted with a predator or stayed out past hunting hours she couldn't help but fantasize about what it would be like to get caught. Now she knew.

It wasn't worth it. Now that she was actually in someone's stomach she regretted ever putting herself in danger. She regretted trusting the trains to run on time most of all, but she also regretted dating predators. Gambling her own life just for some cheap thrills now seemed unimaginably stupid.

From outside she heard Takkos licking his lips in satisfaction. At least one of them seemed happy with how things had gone. The movement of the stomach suddenly changed, no longer just squeezing and relaxing but also swaying from side to side with a gentle rhythm. It took her a moment to realize that the new movement was due to him walking. He was carrying her off, likely back to his home where he could get a good night's sleep, then cough up a little ball of rabbit fur in the morning. That's all that would be left of her.

Aira began to scream. Thrashing around she punched and kicked at the stomach walls. It didn't do much good. The surround walls were just elastic enough to stretch with her attacks instead of being harmed, but also padded enough to absorb the impact before squeezing her back into a ball. It made sense. Foxes were well adapted to eating live prey. They would not have survived long if their primary food source had any chance of escaping their bellies. All she managed to achieve was to rapidly burn through her air supply.

Lightheaded and panting, Aira ceased her futile struggles. Each breath she took helped less and less and she was already starting to feel dizzy. Slowly her ears started to droop and she could feel her eyes growing heavy. A terrifying surge of adrenaline snapped her out of that. She couldn't allow herself to fall asleep! If she passed out now she would never wake up. She would break down into a little puddle of rabbit flavored chime and be poured into the fox's intestines. She shook her head in an attempt to clear away the tiredness. "Takkos! Please?" She begged, although she had no idea if he could hear her. "Please, don't do this? I just want to go home."

Even those words took a surprising amount out of her. Her breathing turned into ragged gasps as she struggled to maintain consciousness for as long as possible. Somewhere she dimly remembered that breathing hard was actually the opposite of a good idea right now. It wasn't lack of oxygen that was making her so dizzy but too much carbon dioxide. Her desperate panting was actually making things worse. The realization came a little too late to do much good. The adrenaline rush had already worn off and she could no longer keep her eyes open.

Just as she was about to fall asleep for good the stomach contracted. Aira squeaked in alarm as the surrounding muscles closed in on her. Now she couldn't breathe at all. Through the stomach walls she heard a soft belch as Takkos released the stale air from his belly. Next moments the walls relaxed again and, as they did so, brought a wave of fresh air into the stomach, cool, refreshing and smelling of the city instead of gastric acids. Aira took several deep breaths and felt her head clear almost immediately.

The cold air in her lungs felt so good she almost started to thank Takkos. She bit her tongue to stop herself. However it might feel, her situation was no better than it had been a minute ago. She was still going to die. If anything, she should hate him for drawing this out. His stomach was still massaging digestive juices into her and, now that she was no longer affected by the stale air, she could feel her skin starting to tingle. Her body was reacting to the enzymes and starting to break down. It was slow at the moment but, even if the air did not become a problem again, she was still going to die in here.

Her morbid line of thought was interrupted by a jangling noise outside, then a door being opened. As if she had needed any more proof that they had reached Takkos's house she then felt the swaying of the stomach change as he started carrying her up the stairs. She began to scream. "Takkos! Takkos, please! Don't go to bed. Can't we just talk about this? Even for a minute? Please don't go to sleep!"

She had no idea what the fox's plans for the night were. Maybe he would stay awake for a while or maybe, after a successful hunting trip, he would want to fall straight into his bed. It seemed safest to assume the latter. Of course, once he was asleep there would be no one to replenish her air supply. If he went to sleep then, pretty soon, she would do the same, but only one of them would get to wake up. Even worse than that, the idea of being trapped in the sleeping fox's stomach was somehow more terrifying than her current situation. At least right now she mattered. If she wriggled, he felt it. If she shouted, she was pretty sure he at least heard her voice if not the words. Once he was asleep nothing she did would have any effect on the outside world. She could wriggle, or scream, or hold still, or try to reason with him and none of it would matter or even be noticed by anyone who would survive the night. That thought terrified her even more than dying did.

The fox opened another door and the bent over. From his motion, Aira guessed that he must be undressing. That threw her into a full blown panic. Kicking and wriggling, she screamed for him to let her go. Right now she didn't care how fast she used up her oxygen, she needed to escape. Her protests died down a little when she heard the sound of water against the fox's taut belly and realized he was taking a shower instead of going to bed. From inside the stomach the drumming of

the water sounded a little like rainfall on a canvas tent, but far louder and reverberating through her body in the confined space. Takkos redirected the shower and, for a moment, the sound grew fainter then he turned it back and the water drummed against his belly louder than ever.

The shower had bought her a little time, but she wasn't going to waste it. "Takkos? Please?" She begged. "Talk to me? Even if you aren't going to let me go, at least acknowledge that you can hear me."

To her surprise, the predator did respond although not by answering her directly. Instead he ran his hand through his wet tummy fur, tracing the bulges she made in his body and gently caressing her. Aira squeaked in frustration as she felt the indent slide over her and kicked against the surrounding walls. She already knew that she couldn't hurt him but she wanted to try anyway.

Takkos gave a little pleased sigh at the squirms coming from inside him and redoubled the attention he was giving his belly, rubbing a handful of shampoo into the fur as he stroked her form. Inside Aira squealed and started to struggle harder. It wasn't just that being treated this way was humiliating, Takkos's belly rub was making his stomach more active. "Stop it. Stop it. Stop it!" she screamed, kicking again as the digestive juices sloshed around her.

It was no use. No matter how hard she wriggled, her protests elicited nothing but pleased groans from the fox. Turning around, Takkos allowed the shower to run down his back while he petted his belly and the prey inside. Aira soon found herself getting dizzy again. Biting her lip, she forced herself to take the shallowest breaths she could bare and hold out as long as possible. The surrounding pool of acids now came up to her chest and sloshed over her head each time the stomach walls contracted in another squeeze. Finally, she heard the drumming of the water stop and, for a moment, hoped that Takkos's fun was over. Unfortunately for her, the fox then grabbed a towel and proceeded to pay just as much attention to his belly getting dry as he had done getting clean.

Aira whined and kicked again with as much strength as she could muster. It wasn't much. Her lungs were aching and she couldn't tell how much of her sense of vertigo was due to the stomach sloshing her around and how much was from breathing the stale air. Each squeeze seemed to last longer than the last and her strength was draining fast. Soon she wouldn't even have the energy to keep her head above the fluids and that would be the end of her.

Takkos seemed to have noticed that his meal had stopped wriggling. "Okay, I guess that's long enough," he decided. Next moment Aira felt his stomach walls clench hard around her. Her first assumption was that he had meant her life had gone on long enough and that he was now bringing it to a decisive end, then she heard the nauseous groans he was making.

The squeezing grew tighter, pushing her upwards until she felt her head squeeze through the narrow opening into his esophagus. The peristalsis was working in a different direction now as well, instead of being shoved back down she felt herself dragged forwards. Next moment a dazzlingly bright light stung her eyes leaving an afterimage of the inside of Takkos's mouth dancing in front of her.

Another retching noise from Takkos and she was pushed forward. Her head touched something hard and wet and soon the rest of her body followed. For a moment she lay completely still, barely daring to believe what her senses told her had just happened. Eventually she risked opening one eye, just a little.

After spending so long in the darkness of a fox's stomach, even that was painful. Still, it allowed her to take in her surroundings. She was lying face up in a bathtub. All she could see apart from that was the horribly bright bathroom light and Takkos's silhouette standing over her. "You okay, bun?"

he asked.

Aira closed her eyes, then blinked a few times to adjust her vision to the new environment. He was grinning at her and wearing only a towel wrapped around his waist. "You ... you were planning to let me go from the start, weren't you?" she asked.

"Well, yeah. Like I said, I really do like you, Aira." he answered kneeling down beside the bath. "Still, it's not exactly a good idea for little bunnies to be out at this time and transporting you in my stomach seemed the best way to avoid getting into any more fights."

"You didn't tell me that." she protested. "I thought you were actually going to digest me."

"Mmh hmm," Takkos agreed. "And you shouldn't have been out during hunting hours. I thought a little scare might help you remember that."

Aira started to protest that she had already had a very big scare from her encounter with the cat, then trailed off mid-sentence as she thought about how that would have ended had Takkos not showed up. She couldn't really be angry with him for letting her think she was going to be digested alive when it would have happened for real had he not intervened. Glancing up at the fox she noticed that, while the shower had washed most of the dried blood away, the cut on his forehead was already bleeding again. She covered her mouth in guilt. "Oh. I'd forgotten you got hurt. I'm so, so sorry."

Takkos touched the bleeding area and shrugged. "It's just a scratch." He replied. "Head wounds bleed a lot so it probably looks worse than it is. I really should have expected worse trying to take a fellow predator's catch off them. Fortunately, that cat was a bit of a pushover."

Aira shook her head. She knew he was trying to make her feel better by downplaying the injury but it wasn't working. Hearing that he could have been hurt far more while trying to protect her just made her feel worse. "No. This is all my fault." She insisted. "If I hadn't been out so late, if you hadn't been trying to protect me, you wouldn't have got hurt. Please, I promise I'll find a way to make it up to you."

Takkos grinned. "Honestly, it's just a scratch. You don't have to worry, I was happy to get to be your valiant defender." He teased. "Now, I'm sorry to point this out, but you could really use a bath, bunny. Why don't I wait downstairs while you get clean?" He got up and left.

Aira down at herself. Takkos was right, she was a mess. Her shirt was plastered to her body and her fur was matted and glistening with foul smelling fluids. With some difficulty she managed to pull the sodden shirt off and draped it over the edge of the bathtub. A moment later her bra and panties joined the pile. Her shoes, socks and pants unfortunately were probably still lying in the alleyway. Still, she could worry about that later.

Her first instinct was to take a shower as Takkos had done but, glancing up, she realized that she had no way of reaching either the shower head or the controls. This house simply wasn't built for someone of her stature. Briefly she considered using the sink instead, but that was also too high for her. Eventually she gave up, turned on the bath taps and sat under the flow. As an improvised shower it worked better than expected.

After getting the worst of the gunk out of her fur she found a bottle of shampoo and set to work removing the rest. As she worked she noticed that, particularly around her legs which had been exposed to his acids the longest, her fur was a slightly lighter shade than expected. Takkos's

digestive juices had bleached the color out and must have been well on their way to making a meal out of the rest of her. Still, if he hadn't found her, she would be dissolving in a cat right now so she couldn't really complain. She was, however, careful to be extra thorough with the shampoo. She had not desire to let the digestive juices continue their work any longer.

After making absolutely sure that her fur was as clean as she could get it, the wet and bedraggled rabbit clambered out of the bathtub and dragged a gigantic towel down from a nearby rack. It was probably only regular size to Takkos but, from her perspective, it was large enough to completely disappear into. Which was good. Half her clothes were missing and the other half were still sodden with digestive juices. Unless Takkos happened to have some rabbit-sized clothing lying around, this would have to do. After drying herself off, she bundled the towel around her as a makeshift coat, then left the bathroom and headed downstairs.

Reaching the bottom she glanced between the front door and a door that she assumed lead into Takkos's living room. However grateful she might be that he had saved her, he was still a fox. She was in his house which meant that, legally, he could eat her any time he wanted. It might be safest if she just quietly slipped outside and headed back to her own home. She could meet up with him in the morning to thank him for saving her and return the towel. Of course, the downside of that plan was that it was still hunting hours. Walking home at this time would be a little risky but she had done so safely in the past.

She quickly dismissed the idea. Assuming that she could get home safely during hunting hours was what had got her into this mess. She could not rely on getting as lucky as she had done tonight for a second time. From now on she was going to be far more careful to be safely indoors by hunting hours every night. Besides, she trusted Takkos, slipping away would be a poor way to demonstrate that. Turning away from the front door she walked into his living room.

The living room contained a comfy looking sofa and a couple of armchairs, all far larger than she was, but no fox. She could, however, hear the sound of running water from the next room over. "Takkos?" She headed closer.

"Um? One moment. You stay there and I'll come through in a second." He replied hastily.

The response came a little too late, Aira had already pushed open the door and stepped into his kitchen. Takkos was standing at the sink, still naked apart from the towel round his waist. Not that Aira had any reason to object to that. From the look of things, he had just finished washing the cut on his forehead and was attempting to use his reflection in the kitchen window to stick a band-aid over it. The other thing that caught her eye as she entered was that, between the fox and the fridge there was a row of wire cages. Most were empty but the furthest one contained a ball of pale fur in the bottom. On hearing her open the door the ball stirred, uncurled a little and glanced in Aira's direction.

Whatever the prisoner had been expecting to see, Aira definitely was not it. The ball uncurled completely, revealing itself to be a young female rabbit, much like Aira although with lighter fur and stark naked instead of bundled in a towel. She stared out of the cage in disbelief, her eyes darting from Aira, then up to Takkos, then back again. For a moment she seemed too shocked to move, then she moved to the cage door and silently mouthed the word "help" to Aira.

Takkos seemed equally caught off guard by the situation. He gave the cage a guilty glance, then attempted to shoo Aira back out of his kitchen. "Sorry," He mumbled as he tried to redirect her. "I really didn't mean for you to see that. I know this must be pretty uncomfortable for you but ... erk." whatever he had been trying to say was interrupted as a trickle of blood ran down his forehead and

forced him to close one eye.

Aira refused to be pushed back into the living room. Instead she took the box of band-aids from his hand and dragged him back to the kitchen sink. "Let's get you cleaned up before anything else," she insisted. Clambering up onto the sideboard she helped him wash the cut clean and then applied one of the sticky bandages to his forehead.

Once the bandage was in place Takkos straightened up and glanced at the rabbit cage. "Um ... Aira, this is ... Um, Callaway? ... Or something like that. She was ... well she was going to be my dinner tonight. I was actually looking for her replacement when I bumped into you. I was really hoping you wouldn't find out about her but, now that you have, I guess I should probably let her go."

Aira glanced between Takkos and Callaway. The rabbit was now sitting bolt upright and with her hands against the bars. A glimmer of hope shone in her eyes as she stared up at them both. Aira couldn't help but wonder how long the poor girl had spent in that cage, waiting for her turn in the fox's digestive tract. "I ... you don't have to do that." She told Takkos. "I've already ruined your chances of catching anyone tonight, made you run after me, gotten you hurt." She reached out to touch the bandage. "The last thing I could ask is for you to give up food you've already caught."

"Aira, you're my guest, whether you intended to be or not. I'm not going to do anything that would make you uncomfortable." He answered.

"Knowing I made you give up your dinner, particularly after everything else I owe you for, would make me more uncomfortable." Aira answered. She tried to shoot an apologetic glance to the poor girl in the cage but received only a furious glare in return. Not that she blamed her. She couldn't imagine what it must be like to have suddenly been given hope only to have it torn away again moments later, and by a fellow rabbit no less. Still, she owed the other rabbit nothing. She owed Takkos a great deal. "Please Takkos? Just enjoy your meal and stop worrying about me. I'm fine with this."

The fox wavered for a second before a soft rumble from his stomach decided the matter. "Fine, but ... um, could you wait in the living room? I don't think I could do that to a rabbit with you watching." He asked.

Aira nodded, and climbed down from the counter. "Sure. I don't want to see any more predation than I already have tonight, anyway." Crossing the room she opened the kitchen door and stepped back out.

"Hey, wait!" Callaway's voice called after her. "You're not seriously going to leave me with him, are you? Please? Miss? You can't do this! Please? This has got to be a joke or something?" There was a rattle as Takkos unlocked then opened the cage and Callaway's protests grew more frantic. "No! Please? Hey! Let go! Please, I'm begging you? Look, your friend may have said she was okay with this but I'm sure that really ..."

Aira covered her ears in an attempt to blot out the sound, but it didn't work very well. One downside of having a rabbit's exceptional hearing was that it made it difficult for her to tune out things she didn't want to listen to. Especially when those things were being screamed in terror from an adjacent room. Taking her hands back off her ears she glanced helplessly at the door. She could still stop this. If she went back in Takkos would surely agree to let the other rabbit go. But then she would owe him even more than she already did.

The screams from the kitchen were getting frantic now. She should probably just sit on the sofa and

wait until this was over. Takkos would probably get it over with pretty quickly. Still, how often would she get to see something like this, live and in person, without having to worry that she might be next? Despite her better judgment, Aira found herself gently pushing the kitchen door open a crack then peering through the opening.

Inside, Callaway was lying face down on the kitchen tiles. Her feet were already inside Takkos's mouth and, no matter how hard she tried to crawl forwards, he continued pulling her steadily deeper. Still screaming, she made a desperate attempt to kick at him but one quick swallow later her legs were pinned together in his throat.

Lifting her up from the floor, Takkos began working her hips into his mouth. An eager gurgle came from his stomach as it prepared to receive its bunny treat. Hearing it, Callaway stopped screaming and looked down, taking in the large bulge that her lower body made in Takkos's neck. A look of shocked disbelief crossed her face. Her struggles died away and, for a moment, she simply stared down at her vanishing form.

Takkos quickly took advantage of her moment of stillness. Grabbing her hands he pushed them against her hips then gulped heavily. Callaway's eyes widened as she felt herself descending again. The fox's tongue lapped at the soft fur of her belly as it slid past then helped to guide her breasts over his teeth.

"No!" It wasn't a scream this time, just a soft utterance, filled with equal parts dread and denial of what was happening. "No, no, no, no, no." the poor bunny whispered.

Aira could see little ripples move through the fur of Takkos's throat as his meal tried to free her arms or simply wriggled about as best she was able. She couldn't make out much of the girl's form below Takkos's neck but, when Takkos had swallowed her, her head had entered his stomach while her legs were still outside. Given that and the fact that only Callaway's head and shoulders still remained outside Takkos's jaws, it seemed reasonable to assume that the girl's feet were now past the esophagus and poking into his stomach, perhaps even dipping into the pool of acids waiting for her.

Already, Aira could see that Takkos was getting ready for the final swallow. Callaway seemed to sense it as well. Her face took on a hollow defeated expression and she took one last look around Takkos's kitchen, perhaps searching for something that might still save her, perhaps simply to make the most of the last view of the outside world that she would ever get. Then Takkos's tongue rose up over her face as she slid into his mouth. His lips closed, leaving the tips of the rabbit's long ears sticking out, but he quickly slurped those inside as well and then swallowed.

A last ripple ran through the fur of his neck and then it shrank back to its normal unstretched size. In contrast, the fox's belly expanded outwards as his meal filled it. For his part, Takkos simply sat still, licking the last traces of bunny fur from his lips. Once finished he stood up, stretched and let out a contented sigh, then turned towards the door.

Aira leaped back. She had found herself so engrossed by the scene in the kitchen she had forgotten that she was not supposed to be watching it. Quickly she rushed to the over-sized sofa in the center of the room and scrambled up. Just as she did so the door opened and Takkos came in. Aira quickly smoothed down the folds of her towel, hoping to make it appear as if she had been sitting here for some time.

If Takkos noticed anything suspicious he chose not to mention it. Instead he walked over and dropped into the sofa beside her. A slosh and a muffled yelp came from his midsection at the sudden

movement but Takkos didn't seem to notice. "So, we need to discuss what to do now," he began. "I know you said that you avoided ever coming home with a predator and, if being here makes you uncomfortable, I'd be happy to walk you back home. I can promise you a more comfortable journey this time, but I can't promise that no other predators will try something. It might be safer for you to stay here tonight and head home in the morning. Assuming you are okay with that, of course?"

Aira nodded. She would never have dreamed that she would be willing to stay in a predator's home overnight, especially one that had just eaten someone alive, but she couldn't help but trust Takkos. "Staying sounds good." She confirmed. "In fact, I could really use some clothes before I go anywhere. This towel isn't exactly suitable for public."

Takkos nodded. "Actually, I've got some clothes you could have. They're, well, left over from past meals so I can't promise that anything will fit that well, but it should be better than nothing. I can get the charity box for you now."

Aira moved closer to the fox. "Later," she insisted. "I'm okay in this for now." Reaching out, she put one hand on his belly. Beneath the layer of fur and flesh she could feel Callaway's movements. The poor girl was struggling hard in there, likely trying to find the opening to his esophagus, just as she had done. She seemed to be having a similar amount of success as well.

A soft gurgle came from the belly as she touched him. From the sound of it, Takkos's stomach was annoyed that it had been forced to give up its first bunny and was making up for it by working extra hard on her replacement. Over the next few hours Callaway would be transformed from a live and very wriggly bunny into a bubbling pool of chime.

Part of her knew she should be upset about this. She had experienced first hand how terrible Takkos's digestive system could be. But that wasn't her strongest emotion right now. Watching a fellow rabbit slide down Takkos's esophagus and seeing the resulting bulge in his belly was forcing her to admit a few things to herself that she had always tried to avoid thinking about. Much as she would have liked to, she couldn't deny that there may have been reasons that she had only ever wanted to date predators beyond simply enjoying the thrill of it.

Beneath her hand, she felt movement. The poor rabbit inside was pressing against the stomach walls. Aira moved her hand until it was in the same position as Callaway's. The two of them were almost touching, separated only by a thin layer of fox. Then Callaway shifted again and the moment was lost. Still, it had sent a guilty shiver of pleasure down Aira's spine, the thought that she was going to live while the other girl was nothing but food.

Despite every instinct telling her it was wrong and that Callaway deserved respect, if not a rescue attempt, Aira began to rub the downy fur of Takkos's belly. From inside she heard a soft gurgling and a pitiful cry, which sent another shiver through her. She winced and pulled her hand away. She shouldn't be enjoying this. It was wrong.

"Hey, don't stop," Takkos protested. "That felt wonderful."

Surprisingly, that made Aira feel a little less bad about her actions. After all, she was not the only one enjoying this. It was pretty natural for predators to take pleasure in digesting a meal so it couldn't be too wrong for her to do so as well. Putting both hands on the wriggling bulge, Aira resumed her massage.

Takkos's stomach gurgled in response to her touch. From her own time in there, Aira knew perfectly well how his stomach reacted to belly rubs. The gentle circles her hands were tracing over the fox's

tummy would be making things quite unpleasant for the poor bunny inside, but she didn't stop. She tried to justify it by telling herself that Callaway was going to be digested anyway, Takkos's body was making sure of that, and that all she was doing was helping speed things up. Maybe it was even an act of kindness to prevent Callaway from suffering for too long in there but she couldn't quite fool herself into believing that that was why she was doing this.

The fox closed his eyes and groaned in delight at the feel of soft rabbit paws, both inside and outside his belly. Still, Aira had some ideas of her own for making this even more enjoyable. With one hand still 'assisting' Callaway, her other slid lower beneath the folds of Takkos's towel.

She found him already halfway up and a few gentle strokes soon had him free of the towel and fully upright. Lowering her head, she gave his erection a slow lick and heard a deep moan in response. One advantage of this position was that it also put her ear right next to Takkos's engorged belly. She could also hear every slosh, groan, and scream as Callaway struggled to survive.

The vulpine's member was both longer and far wider than any rabbit's but Aira's tongue worked its way over every inch leaving a little slobbery trail. Once finished, she straightened up and put both hands back on Takkos's belly. Supporting her weight like that she swung one leg around to straddle the large predator. She had intended to bring the towel with her but it slid off as she moved leaving her entirely naked. She shrugged and lowered herself until the tip of Takkos's penis was brushing against her upper thighs. He really was a lot larger than any rabbit and she couldn't help but shiver with anticipation.

"Wow! You know, Callaway," she declared to the full belly in front of her, "I'm not actually sure which of us is going to be in worse shape by morning. Okay, I guess it will be you but still ..." she joked, then lowered herself onto his penis.

Callaway screamed and kicked in her little prison, Takkos gave a long pleased gasp, and Aira bit her lips as she struggled with his girth. She had never felt so full. A little over half way she felt him bump against her cervix and could go no further. Still, Takkos's expression told her that he didn't mind in the least. Leaning forward, she allowed a few inches to slid back out of her, then pressed back down.

As she worked herself up and down on the fox's member, she could feel Callaway's movements slowing down. Each kick was weaker and less coordinated than the last. Then Takkos covered his mouth with one hand, gave a little belch, and quickly gulped down a few mouthfuls of air to replenish the unfortunate bunny's supply. Instantly, Callaway's strength returned and she began to fight again. Each time Aira leaned forward and pressed herself against the fox's belly, she could feel the kicks inside against her own body, although there was more than enough padding to prevent Callaway from hurting either of them.

As she watched, Takkos ran one hand over his belly until he found a bulge that Aira guessed was caused by Callaway's head. He gently smoothed the fur above her then shoved down hard on the lump. Through the layer of fur, Aira heard a desperate choking sound as Callaway found her forced beneath the sloshing acids.

"Get used to it, bunny." Takkos teased. "You know it's going to end this way whatever you do. Why fight it?" his eyes met hers with a wicked dominant grin, "And as for you..."

Aira bit her lip as the fox grabbed her shoulder and pushed her back down onto his length. It was one thing to work her way slowly and carefully over the vulpine's massive girth, it was quite another to be pushed down while he thrustured into her. Ears flattened back and eyes tightly closed,

she squealed in helpless pleasure. Being stretched like that was indescribable.

Still, the fox wasn't finished with her yet. Even as that orgasm faded, she felt him lifting her again in preparation for a second thrust. She just had time to gasp a quick breath of air and brace herself before she was pushed back down. There was nothing she could do but ride the waves of sensation as her fox filled her again and again.

After who knows how long, Aira certainly had not been keeping track of time, Takkos gave a little moan and broke their rhythm. Instead of lifting her again he held her down and she groaned as she felt the first spurt of his cum enter her. His thick penis twitched as it pumped another load into her and then another.

Aira lay in the fox's lap, still supporting herself against his belly and panting like she had just finished a marathon. Once she finally had the breath and energy to move again she lifted herself, feeling his penis slide all the way out this time, and rolled off him onto the sofa. Everything below her waist felt sore, stretched, and tingly. Looking down, Aira saw that her upper thighs were coated in the fox's jizz and it was already starting to dribble down.

"Enjoy yourself?" Takkos asked.

Aira chose not to answer that but simply lay still, basking in the afterglow. After a couple of minutes recovery time she reached out and ran a hand over Takkos's belly. This time there was no response, not even a twitch, from the girl inside. She gave a slightly harder push but still got nothing back. "Is... Is she still..." she began.

Takkos shook his head. "She passed out a while ago." He told her. "Didn't even get to feel us finish."

Aira stared at the unmoving bulge. At last a vague feeling of guilt was starting to creep over her. She could have saved the poor girl. Instead, she had simply watched as a fellow rabbit was digested alive. Worse, she had enjoyed watching.

That was perhaps the most worrying thing about this. She had enjoyed it. She did feel guilty now that Callaway was dead, but not very. In fact, it was kind of satisfying to see what she how quickly her boyfriend had reduced a live and feisty rabbit to a lump of motionless meat. She was trying to feel bad about her part in this, but it was honestly difficult.

"You okay?" Takkos had noticed the odd look on her face.

Aira nodded and did her best to dismiss her confusing and conflicting emotions on the matter. Takkos wasn't in the least concerned about what had happened to his victim. She was just food to him, no different from any other meal. That made Aira feel better and she smiled up at him.

"Yeah. I think so." Leaning closer she planted a soft kiss on her boyfriend's lips. This wasn't remotely how she had expected things to go when she had accepted his invitation to a date but, all things considered, it had been worth the risk.