

A Short Delay

Heather flicked through her scrap book. On each page there was either a sketch of a plant or a carefully pressed leaf or flower. Around the main feature Heather's scratchy handwriting described what she knew of that plant, what fascinated her about it, and why she felt it deserved a place in her precious book. A few weeks ago, less than a third of the pages had been used, now it was over half full. She would have to slow down if she wanted to make it last until the end of her degree but their recent field trip had proved too full of fascinating new specimens for her to resist.

"Adding a new entry?" Artes asked.

Heather glanced up at the fox sitting beside her. "No." she answered. She couldn't risk drawing in it now. What if the train went round a corner or something? "Just reviewing the old ones."

Artes nodded, understanding her reasons, then looked awkward. "I ... uh, I don't suppose you could let me copy a few pages of that sometime?" He knew better than to ask to borrow it, but he doubted she would mind if he jotted down a few of her notes.

Heather looked an equal mix of surprised and flattered. "Sure? There's nothing in here that you wouldn't find in the text books though. Probably in a much more ordered form."

Artes doubted that. He'd seen the effort the little rabbit put into researching every entry to that book. He doubted any one else on their course had that kind of meticulous focus. He was about to say something to that effect when the train braked sharply.

Heather turned in her seat to stare out the window. "Urg! What now?" She protested.

Her frustration was not unreasonable. The entire return journey had been a series of delays and miscommunications. First the plane had been late to take off, then the coach the university had hired to take them from the airport to the station turned out to be waiting at a different airport. That had resulted in them all missing the train that should have brought them back onto campus and they had been forced to book rooms in a nearby hotel instead. Now, just when it seemed like they'd been making good progress, they had come to yet another stop barely halfway into their six hour train ride.

Artes shrugged. "Probably just waiting for another train at an intersection." he suggested. "I doubt it will take long."

It soon turned out that this was not the case. After half an hour of waiting, Heather carefully tucked her scrapbook back into her luggage and pulled out her packed lunch. At least eating would take her mind off the delays. Seeing her, Artes followed suit and rummaged through his own bag for a similar meal.

Heather wrinkled her nose a little at the strong smell of fried bacon from her friend's meal, but made no comment and simply tucked into her carefully prepared salad bowl. Half an hour after that, the two were clearing up the leftovers from their meals when the train's intercom switched on. "I'm very sorry about the delay. There is a problem with the line ahead. Rest assured that our engineers are already working on it."

Heather glared at the overhead speaker. That did not sound like the sort of problem that would be fixed quickly. Still, she glanced out the window, at least the scenery was nice. The train had stopped over a river and she had a pretty good view of the surrounding countryside. Not only that, but she

had managed to get a seat next to her best friend. She supposed there were worse ways to spend her time. Now that she had put her scrapbook away she could have a proper conversation with him. "So ... what was your favorite part of the trip?" she asked.

The two chatted for a while, discussing the various aspects of their field trip, or just life in general. Gradually, however, Heather could feel the atmosphere in the carriage getting colder. Everyone seemed tense and on edge. Even Artes was showing signs of distraction and kept pulling out his phone to check the time mid-conversation. "You okay?" she checked. This didn't seem like him.

"Fine. Just ... thinking of something else." he told her. "Sorry, go back to what you were saying."

Heather was about to but, at that moment, someone got out of their seat and came over. "Hey bunny, I was just wondering if you knew what the time is?"

Heather wrinkled her nose at the intruding cat in distaste. Given that Sandra had deigned to come talk to her she was pretty sure this was leading to some kind of insult or joke at her expense. Still she couldn't currently see how and, apart from the little sneer in Sandra's voice as she said the word bunny, she had no current justification to be unfriendly. She pulled out her phone and glanced at it. "Six thirty. Why?" she asked. She was pretty sure Sandra could have looked up the time for herself had she actually wanted to know.

"Oh, I was just trying to work out what time we would be getting back. This delay just keeps getting longer, after all." she smirked.

Heather's blood froze. The journey was supposed to take six hours. They had stopped some time around the three hour mark, although she couldn't narrow it down much more than that. Which meant there was probably another three hours to go... which in turn meant that, even if the train started up again now, they would not be getting back to the university until around nine thirty, just half an hour before hunting hours started.

That wasn't a problem in itself. Her own accommodation was pretty close to the train station. She could get there in about ten minutes if she ran. She could abandon her luggage on the train if necessary and pick it up from lost property the next day. Unfortunately, the train showed no signs of resuming its journey any time soon. Suddenly Heather would have given anything to know exactly what was wrong with the rails and how close anyone was to fixing it.

Sandra grinned as the look of horrified realization spread across the little bunny's face. "Well, I'll leave you to think about that for a while." Her tongue slid out and ran once over her lips. "Although, if we don't get moving soon I may have to come back." She returned to her own seat as Artes let out a snarl.

Heather glanced up at her fox friend. He was clearly angry with the cat, but didn't seem remotely surprised by the news. He must have been perfectly aware of the situation, which explained why he had seemed so distracted. Looking around at her fellow classmates, Heather came to the conclusion that she was one of the last to figure this out. The prey all looked much like her. Some were checking the time compulsively, some staring out the windows as if that would give them some hint as to what was wrong with the rail line and when it might be fixed, most just looked terrified. The predators, on the other hand, looked much more cheerful and most were already scanning their smaller classmates, working out who they would start with if the train didn't arrive in time. Even Artes was throwing occasional hungry glances to those sitting nearby.

"I ... I hope they fix the rail soon." Heather muttered. Like all the others, she felt reluctant to

actually say her concerns aloud in case that somehow made them more real.

“It would certainly make things simpler.” Artes stated.

Heather couldn't help but notice that this wasn't actually an agreement with her own statement. Miserable, she pulled open her phone and checked the time again. Four minutes had passed. Assuming they started moving now, and that the rest of the journey would take about three hours, that would give her just twenty six minutes to get from the station to her flat. That was easily manageable. She fidgeted nervously and stared out the window, willing the scenery start to moving again.

After several long minutes of waiting, Heather became aware of Artes's eyes on her. She shivered slightly, picturing her friend smacking his lips at her in the same way that Sandra had done. When she finally worked up the courage to turn around, however, she found that he was only looking sympathetic and concerned. “You holding up okay?” he checked. Heather stared down at her feet and nodded miserably. Only twenty two minutes remained if they set off now. She couldn't bear this.

She was not the only one having difficulties. One of her classmates, a squirrel named Thelmor who was also sitting beside a predator, edged nervously out of his seat and started down the carriage to the next compartment. Unfortunately for him, the cat he had been sitting next to got up as well and followed. Heather didn't bother trying anything like that. There were only two compartments in the train and her class occupied most of the seats in both of them. There wasn't anywhere she would be able to hide that a hungry predator wouldn't think of looking if the train did not arrive before hunting hours.

Her stomach twisting with fear, Heather sat back and slowly counted out the passing of each minute. At ten to seven she realized that she would probably not be able to get home before hunting hours, but even that was not a complete disaster. Her fellow classmates numbered just over a hundred and, of those, only twelve were large enough to eat a rabbit. As long as they arrived at the station before ten o'clock, she would have a good chance of slipping away in the crowd and not being pursued. Even if someone did decide to follow her specifically, she would still have a chance of outrunning them.

The real danger was that they would not reach the station in time and would all be on the train when hunting hours started. Trapped in a metal box with no hiding places and twelve hungry carnivores, Heather doubted that there would be any survivors at all. She bit her lip as she started counting down the last ten minutes, mentally begging the train to start moving.

At seven o'clock Heather put her phone back into her pocket. Not all hope was lost. She didn't know for certain when they had stopped. Maybe they had been a little past the halfway point of their journey. Maybe they could still get into the station with a few minutes to spare. Even if not, the train didn't always drive at a single fixed speed. Maybe they would make exceptionally good progress and arrive ahead of schedule. Still, there was little point in watching the time tick past if she no longer knew what she was waiting for. “Distract me.” she stated.

Artes simply stared at her. “Just do something!” she begged the fox. “Anything to take my mind off this.”

He thought for a moment, then started telling her a story about one of his cousins. Heather closed her eyes and sank into the fox's words. She wasn't particularly interested in the story itself, although the fact that Artes came from a mixed predator-prey family did mean that his stories were always

fairly unique. More importantly, though, was the fact that it allowed her to forget her current situation. Like this she could almost believe that everything was back to normal. She was talking to her friend on the way back to university and tomorrow she would wake up, safely in her own bed.

After a long time she opened her eyes and glanced out the window. The train had stopped halfway across a bridge and, now that the sun was starting to set, the water beneath them lit up in a haze of red and gold. Unfortunately, for Heather, the beauty served only as a reminder of how much time was passing. It was strange how each minute seemed unending but, at the same time, vast amounts of them could disappear without warning. Heather's eyes began to blur with tears. Then the train gave a little lurch.

"I have just been informed that the line is now clear and we can continue on our journey," the intercom announced. "On behalf of this rail line I would like to apologize for the delay and any inconveniences caused by it. Refunds for all passengers will be available at the central ticket office or online." It went silent again.

Heather stared at the overhead speaker, then out the window to see that the scenery was starting to slide past again. Quickly she dug her phone out of her pocket and checked the time. Eight thirty!

The rabbit's long ears drooped as she read and reread the numbers on the screen. If there was any hope of arriving in time the train would have to make the remainder of its journey almost twice as fast as it normally did. Much as she wanted to believe that there was still hope, Heather couldn't really see that happening.

She was not the only one to come to that conclusion. A muffled whimper ran through the carriage as her classmates also checked the time. Some of the predators were getting out of their seats and starting to walk up and down the carriage, inspecting those still sitting and working out where to begin. A few of them shot hungry glances in her direction but, overall, Heather received far less attention than most of her peers. The fact that Artes was still sitting beside her helped give the other predators the impression that she had already been claimed.

She looked up at her friend to see that he was engaged in a pretty similar behavior. He wasn't leaving his seat, but the way he looked at the other students made it clear that he was working out who would taste the best, who would be the most filling, and who would wriggle nicely. A little strand of drool slipped from his muzzle before being licked away. Those bacon sandwiches had been quite some time ago.

Suddenly an argument broke out. Heather glanced behind her to see a fox and a wolf snarling at each other. The point of contention seemed to be a rabbit named Sarina. Heather had sat next to the girl in a few of their lectures and there was no denying that she was hefty, even for a bunny. Sarina squirmed in her seat but could do nothing but listen in as the two carnivores argued over who would get to eat her. Eventually, the fox gave up in frustration and the wolf settled into a nearby seat and smacked his lips at the terrified girl.

Just as Heather was beginning to think that things could not get any more unpleasant, Sandra suddenly swung herself into the empty seats in front of them. Reaching over the backrest she prodded Heather sharply in the nose. "Claimed you, bunny," she taunted.

"You have not!" Artes snarled at her.

"Oh, I suppose you think she's yours, then?" Sandra smirked.

Artes shot Heather a quick glance, asking for her permission, before nodding firmly. "She's mine." he confirmed.

"Well then you should have claimed her sooner." The cat replied. "You had every opportunity to state your claim on her but you didn't and now she's mine." A sick grin spread across her face. "Yes Heather, just another hour and twenty minutes to go and you and I are going to have a lot of fun together."

Heather shank back against her seat as Sandra reached out and brushed her nose again. She wanted to run but couldn't. She had always hated that cat and the thought that she might soon become a meal for the sadistic feline left her paralyzed with fear. It wasn't like there was anywhere for her to go anyway. Sandra would be able to follow her anywhere on the train, drag her out of any hiding place she could find, and ... well, Heather wasn't sure what the cat would do to her. She imagined it would be a little worse than what most of the predators did to their food though.

Fortunately, Artes put a stop to Sandra's teasing by catching hold of the cat's wrist. She turned on him and hissed in irritation. "You really are protective of her, aren't you? Well what are you going to do about this, hmm? I claimed her. Everyone heard. That makes her mine."

For a moment Artes's face screwed up in pure hatred, then it was gone and he looked calm and relaxed again. "You're right." he agreed. "I'm not going to interfere with another predator's catch. You can do anything you like to her. Just be aware that, once you are done, I'll be doing it all back to you."

Sandra's yellow eyes widened. "You can't do that! I'm not prey. I'm a predator like you." She tried to pull back but Artes's grip on her arm remained firm.

"Maybe, but you are also a significantly smaller one. Believe me, you'll fit, and likely make a far more filling meal than any bunny."

Sandra pulled back again, this time using her whole body to try to wrench herself free but Artes's arm seemed locked in place. "I ... let go. You can't do this." the cat whimpered.

"You're right. Not for another hour and twenty minutes, at least." the fox answered. "Although, assuming you are willing to relinquish your claim on Heather, I might be willing to reconsider."

"Yes! Anything! Just get off me." Sandra stumbled back as Artes released her then slunk away to the other end of the carriage.

For the first time in hours, a little smile played across Heather's lips. It was almost worth her horrible situation to see Sandra get her comeuppance like that. "Thanks Artes." she mumbled. "I can't begin to tell you how satisfying that was to watch."

"Happy to oblige. I've been waiting for the chance to try something like that on her for years now." he smirked. There was a long silence then he spoke again. "Um, Heather? I know you must be feeling pretty scared right now, but I promise I won't do anything to hurt you. I'll go after the others instead."

The tears returned to Heather's eyes. "Artes, please don't..." she couldn't quite bring herself to say it.

He completely misunderstood her request. "I won't. I promise that, whatever else happens, you're

safe from me.”

“No ... I mean ... don't leave me for someone else to eat.” she whimpered.

He stared at her. “What?”

“If ... if I'm going to die. I'd far rather it was in your stomach than in someone like Sandra's.”

“I won't let her touch you.” he assured. “I can keep you safe.”

“From Sandra, sure.” Heather agreed. “What about him?” she gestured to the wolf still sitting beside poor Sarina. “Do you really think that, if I'm the only bunny left on the train and it's clear that you're not eating me, that wolf is going to ignore me? Do you think you could intimidate him the same way?”

Artes bit his lip before reluctantly shaking his head. “I guess not.”

“Then I'd rather go down your throat than anyone else's.” Heather assured.

Artes hesitated a moment longer, then nodded. “Okay. I guess I can do that for you.”

Heather nodded gratefully and sank back into her seat. To her surprise, now that she had willingly accepted her fate, she no longer felt so terrified. She still held out hope that the train might, any minute now, announce that they had arrived but if that didn't happen, which seemed far more likely, being digested by Artes did not seem such a terrible outcome.

“You know, if I'd realized this was going to be my last field trip I wouldn't have been so careful with the space in my book.” She joked. “I had to pass up several specimens that I really wanted to keep because I was worried about running out of pages.”

The fox gave her an odd look, clearly not appreciating her dark humor. Heather shrugged and pulled out her phone. Only one hour left to go.

The time seemed to pass a little quicker now that she was less terrified. Every few minutes, Heather would peer out the window in the hopes of seeing a sign that might tell her they were nearly at the station but none came. Her stomach was still twisting itself into knots as she waited. Would being digested hurt? Would people miss her once she was gone? Would Artes remember her as a friend, or would she be forgotten like any other meal?

Somewhere behind her, someone's phone started beeping, and then the screaming started. Six of the seven predators in their carriage lunged towards their first choice of meal. Those being grabbed struggled and tried to get away. Others scrambled out of their way to avoid being chosen instead. Prey tried climbing over seats or under them in desperation, but were quickly caught and dragged back.

Two terrified looking rats burst through the door from the other carriage only to find that there were, if anything, more hungry carnivores in this compartment than the one they had just left. They didn't get long to regret their mistake, however, before the feline that had followed them scooped one up and started undressing him.

Pretty soon, most of the predators had made a catch and were either busy undressing them, or already stuffing the prey down their throats. Those who had not been caught were huddled together,

for safety or comfort, at one end of the carriage. Only Heather and Artes remained in their seats. She risked a glance at her friend and found him staring down at her intently.

“Last chance.” the fox offered. “Do you still want me to do this?”

Heather glanced around at the violence and mayhem surrounding her. Anything seemed better than what was happening to most of her fellow students right now. She nodded weakly.

“Then I’d appreciate it if you started undressing.” Artes told her.

Heather blushed and squirmed uncomfortably. It made sense, none of the other food was getting to keep their clothes and she would be much easier to swallow in nothing but her fur. She should be grateful that Artes was allowing her to undress herself instead of ripping her clothes away by force. Still, the thought of having to strip in front of her entire class made her cheeks burn.

Reluctantly she removed her top, then glanced back at her friend. “All the way?” she checked.

Artes nodded, remembering the ball of wire and elastic he had coughed up the last time he had eaten someone in their underwear. “I’d prefer that. Sorry.”

Heather stood up in her seat, unbuttoned her jeans, then pulled them off. After that she removed her socks and shoes, then her bra, keeping one arm over her chest to preserve what little modesty she had left. That done, she struggled out of her panties with her free hand. She really wished right now that she was one of those species that had a tail long and bushy enough to cover herself with. Actually, she really wished that she was one of the species traditionally considered predators, but the tail thing would have been nice too. Her own little ball of fluff did absolutely nothing.

Looking down at her naked body, Heather realized that she was being silly. There was no point in trying to preserve her modesty when she was just food. No one was likely to look at her as a potential mate any more, only as a meal. She let her arms fall to her sides, leaving her body exposed and on display. It didn’t even feel like her body anymore, it was just meat.

Rolling her discarded clothes into a ball, Heather unzipped her luggage and stuffed them inside. As she did so, her hand brushed the leather-bound scrapbook nestled among her clothes. A couple of tears ran down her cheek as she pulled it free of the pile. “I ... you wanted to make some notes ...” she reminded Artes. “Here, it’s yours now.”

The fox looked shocked. “Are you sure? Wouldn’t your family appreciate it more? I can make sure they get it if you like?” he offered.

Heather shook her head. “No. None of them have any interest in plants except as food. They might appreciate the memoir but they wouldn’t appreciate the contents. Please? I don’t want it to sit on a shelf gathering dust.”

Artes hesitated for a moment longer, then accepted the book and carefully tucked it into his own bag.

“Okay,” Heather took a deep breath and braced herself for what was about to come. “I’m ready to be eaten now.”

Artes nodded and moved to kneel in front of her, filling the space between her seat and the one in front. Despite every instinct screaming at her to at least try to get away, Heather sat back down in

her seat and raised her hind paws to the fox's lips.

His jaws opened and Heather shuddered as she felt the wet warmth of his tongue on the pads of her feet. A low gurgling came from the fox's belly. Whatever reservations Artes might have about eating a friend, it was clear that at least one part of him wanted to treat her as what she was. Cornered and defenseless prey just waiting to be gulped down and digested.

Artes took a moment to savor the taste of the bunny's soft paws, but quickly pressed on, sliding her legs deeper until her knees were brushing his lips. Heather squeaked as she felt her paws enter his esophagus and the muscular walls squeeze tight. Intellectually, she had known that she was doomed for some time now but only when she felt the raw power of his gullet's grip on her did it really start to sink in.

She would not be coming back out of there. No matter how hard she pulled, there was no chance that she could free any part of herself from that muscular tube. Then Artes swallowed and Heather felt herself dragged forward by the peristaltic forces. Her knees vanished between the fox's lips and she slid onto her back, half lying half sitting in her seat. Staring at the predator's throat, Heather could just make out the little distortion her legs caused in the fur of his neck. With her legs pinned together, she barely made any impression in his throat at all, but she knew that would change once he reached her hips.

Artes paused halfway up her legs and made a muffled noise. "Um ... I'm probably going to choose a few others after this? Sorry, I should have mentioned that sooner." With his throat full and her thighs resting on his tongue, his words were a little indistinct but Heather got the gist of it.

A faint smile somehow managed to cross her lips. His words were a nice reminder that, whatever else was happening, this was still Artes. Even with her legs sliding down his gullet he was still concerned about her comfort. She leaned forward and placed one hand on the bridge of his muzzle. "That's okay," she assured him. "I know something like this doesn't happen very often and that you are going to want to make the most of it. Eat as much as you want and don't worry about me." Lifting herself out of her seat, she helped slide her hips into his open jaws.

Artes swallowed, then stood up, lifting her into the air and tilting back his head so that she had a straight path down his gullet. Heather wavered a little, not used to being so high up, and tried to hold on to his muzzle to support herself. Artes, however, took her hands off his nose and pushed them gently into his jaws. Another little gulp and they were pinned firmly to her hips by his esophagus. As he swallowed, Heather felt her hind paws pop free of his gullet's powerful grip. She wriggled her toes experimentally, but there was no denying it, her feet were in his stomach.

Glancing round, Heather took in the surrounding scene. Most of her predatory classmates had already finished their first course and were starting on a second. A cat with a full and squirming belly approached the huddled crowd of prey at the back of the train. They tried to scatter as she drew near but there was really nowhere for them to go and, moments later, the feline was returning to her seat with a plump mouse tucked under one arm. Heather recognized the cat, as she often sat near her in one of their lectures. She even remembered helping her out with some coursework after the feline had missed a couple of lectures for some reason. The mouse she knew less well, but she had often seen him on campus and he had seemed friendly enough.

A sick feeling formed in her stomach as she watched the predator stripping her second prey of his clothes. This wasn't just some random hunting party enjoying the food they had caught, these were her classmates. They had spent the last few weeks on a very enjoyable field trip together. All of them knew each other to some degree and yet that didn't stop them from eating each other alive the

moment the opportunity presented itself.

Another gulp interrupted that chain of thought as she found herself sinking lower, her paws entering into some kind of mush that she guessed was the remains of Artes's bacon sandwiches. "end 'ur 'ees." Artes's words were even more distorted this time, but Heather managed to grasp that he was telling her to bend her knees, presumably to allow him to swallow her a little easier.

For a moment, Heather was tempted to do anything but that, to keep her legs as rigid as she could and make things as difficult as possible for the carnivore that was devouring her. Deep down, however, she knew that it would not work. She was not the only prey being swallowed feet first and she doubted that the other predators were relying on their meals to cooperate. If anything, Artes was probably telling her this for her comfort instead of his own. With a sigh, she tucked in her legs and felt herself slip a little deeper.

Artes's tongue slithered up her back between her shoulder blades as her chest slipped into his mouth. Her breasts brushed over the carnivore's teeth making her squeak nervously, but he was careful not to scratch her and soon her chest was only touching his hard palette. She was almost completely inside him now. With her arms pinned against her side and only her head and shoulders still to go, all she could do was look around and wait for the next swallow.

Some of her classmates were already starting on a third helping, bellies jiggling with the struggles of those inside. At the far end of the carriage she could see Sandra's tabby tail sticking up from behind a seat. From her current vantage point she couldn't actually make out what the feline was doing to whoever she had with her, but the muffled screams told her she didn't want to know.

Those still free were huddled together at the back of the train, watching despondently as the predators enjoyed their meals and only reacting when one of them returned for another helping. Even then, their responses were limited to pitiful moans and half-hearted attempts to ensure someone else was chosen instead. They all knew that it would make no difference in the end. Dodging one predator only meant waiting for the next. They would all go the same way eventually.

A wolf approached the group, still licking traces of fur from his lips. The huddled group shuffled away uneasily but Heather didn't get to see the predator make his catch. A powerful swallow dragged her deeper and she lost sight of the outside world as the fox's jaws rose over her head. Artes's tongue ran over the back of her skull, ensuring that her long ears were tucked inside his bite before he closed his mouth. The last thing Heather saw was the lights on the train ceiling, framed between two rows of fox teeth, before they clicked together sealing her in absolute darkness. Then he swallowed.

Heather had just time to grab a quick gasp of air before her head slipped over the back of Artes's tongue and down into his gullet. Now that she was completely inside, the peristalsis made rapid work of her. Powerful contracting waves ran through the surrounding muscles, forcing her down. Heather's butt landed in the mush at the bottom of his stomach and, the next thing she knew, her head was pushed between her knees and the journey was over.

She was in a predator's stomach. That took a moment or two to sink in. Her life was over. She was just food now, in someone's stomach and waiting to be digested. She inhaled deeply, trying to resist the urge to panic. The air was hot, humid, and smelled strongly of the remains of Artes's bacon sandwiches.

Still struggling to come to terms with where she was, Heather reached out and ran her hands around the surrounding walls. All she could feel was smooth muscle with no indication of where she had

come in, or the sphincter through which she would eventually leave. As she withdrew her hands again, she found that they were wet and starting to tingle gently. Artes's stomach was already secreting the juices that would digest her.

Atres smacked his lips, gathering the little traces of bunny fur that Heather had left behind. She had been absolutely delicious and, on any normal night, he would have been content to sit back and enjoy the sensations of a successful hunt. Tonight, however, he was faced with a rare opportunity. Usually a full stomach would make the task of catching more prey all but impossible, so predators rarely managed more than one meal in a single night. Only if the prey was completely cornered with nowhere to run would a hunter have much chance of swallowing multiple meals in one sitting. Still licking his lips, Artes advanced on the huddled crowd at the back of the train.

Most of them edged away as he drew near but, to Artes's surprise, a few actually stepped forward. They could see what was happening to their fellows, they knew they had no hope of surviving this, and they had seen how gentle he had been with Heather. Like her, they wanted to take the more pleasant option, even if it meant going down a throat now instead of later. Two of them were even starting to strip down for him.

Heather squirmed in Artes's stomach, trying to minimize her contact with the stomach acids. She may have agreed to be here, but she was in no hurry to actually start breaking down. Somewhere above her, she heard a "Glompf!" noise followed by a series of wet gulps as saliva drenched fur was squeezed down Artes's esophagus.

She tried to wriggle out of the way for this new arrival, but there wasn't anywhere she could go. The stomach was barely large enough for her. With an extra loud "Slurp!" The esophagus deposited a sodden and squirmy rat boy on top of her. The two wriggled about trying to disentangle themselves but the stomach was too tight for them to do anything but find a position where at least no one's elbows or knees were digging into the other.

"Heather?" the new entrée asked.

From his voice, Heather recognized him as Antos, a third year student who had joined the trip due to being unable to attend the previous year. Heather blushed slightly. He also had his head wedged between her legs and both of them were naked. In the little time she had devoted to wondering what being eaten might be like, she had never once considered that getting overly intimate with the rest of her predator's dinner might be a problem. "Yeah." She did her best to keep her own face away from the rat's butt.

"He ... your friend is going to let you out afterwards, right?"

"I doubt it." She surprised herself by how calm she sounded. She hadn't really had the time to consider that much but she supposed it was possible, if very unlikely.

"Oh." The little rat sagged in defeat. "Well ... if he does ... could you ask him to make an exception for me as well? I know that's asking a lot but I ... I'd nearly finished my course and I just wanted ... just ..." His voice trailed off into fretful whimpers.

"Sure." Heather ran a comforting paw through his fur. "I'll ask." She couldn't really imagine Artes agreeing, but her promise helped comfort him and cost her nothing to make. There wasn't much chance that it would come up anyway. She was pretty sure that Artes had no intention of ever letting her back out.

Artes sat on the train floor, licking his lips and admiring the little crowd around him. This seemed like a predator's dream. Dozens of plump tasty meals just standing around, waiting for him to send them down his throat. Even going so far as to undress themselves for him. He glanced over the little sea of unhappy faces before selecting a tearful squirrel girl. He had a particular fondness for squirrel, after all.

She squealed when he picked her up and struggled in his grip. She had approached him willingly enough and even undressed herself, knowing that all her other options were worse. Now that she was about to go down his throat, however, she was starting to have second thoughts about this. Unfortunately for her, Artes had already made his choice. Lifting her off her feet, he pushed her head into his jaws and started swallowing. The girl kicked a little, but several long gulps sent her on her way and soon there was nothing left of her but a bulge in the fox's gut and a pleasant aftertaste in Artes's mouth.

He didn't bother to savor her for long though, before reaching for the next. A nice rabbit would make a good follow up to that squirrel. Artes selected one from the crowd and lifted him towards his jaws. At this point a fellow fox walked over, also looking to start on his fourth helping of squirmy prey. He gave Artes and his cluster of willing meals a surprised look. "Are these all yours or ..." There was a slight edge in his voice suggesting that he felt that Artes was being a little too greedy by claiming so much of the food at once.

Artes shook his head. "Nope. They've all gathered around me but I'm not making any claims to them. Help yourself."

The other fox nodded, then selected a plump rat from Artes's crowd. The unfortunate rodent yelped and tried to get free. Getting to choose which predator ate her was just about the only thing the rat had left and now even that was being taken from her. Of course, her opinion didn't really matter anymore and she was carried off, still protesting, to be devoured. After that, the rest of the prey huddled closer and gave him pleading looks, knowing that if Artes didn't choose them soon, some other predator might. Artes simply shrugged and went back to his rabbit meal. He wouldn't be able to eat everyone who had gathered around him, but he could make a good start.

Heather winced as the latest of her classmates finished their journey down Artes's esophagus. The stomach had been cramped when it was just her, worse once the rat was added, much worse with the arrival of that squirrel and was now squeezing her into the others. Not only that but, from the sound of it, her friend had still not finished. Another series of gulps introduced a second squirrel to their group and Heather wriggled in protest as her nose was buried in someone else's fur. Being on the bottom of the pile was not a pleasant experience.

After that a second rat joined them and still the fox was still not stopping. Heather could already hear him starting on another. "Artes! You greedy pig. How much more can you possibly pack in here?" she shouted. She had told him that he could eat as much as he wanted but she had assumed that that would only be another two or three and that was before she had known how tight his stomach was going to be.

Her protest prompted no response from the fox but she did get some annoyed whimpers from the others. Packed this close together anyone shouting was very unpleasant for the others. Artes's latest meal arrived soon after that. A second male rabbit, and a large one at that, who immediately burst into uncontrollable sobs.

Next came two mice, small enough that Artes had been able to force them both down his gullet together. They wriggled a lot once they reached the stomach but, fortunately, were small enough not

to take up too much space. True the stomach walls expanded with each person swallowed, but they also grew tighter each time they did so, squeezing those inside into one big ball of fur and flesh.

Artes groaned softly and inspected what was left of his group of volunteers. Another rabbit, a rat, and a vole. The rest were either inside him or had been carried off by other predators. The remaining three were looking very nervous and, glancing up, Artes noticed Sandra was staring intently in their direction. The moment she saw him watching, however, she decided that taking one of his volunteers was not worth the risk, even if others were doing so, and headed for the other group. Still, the doomed trio knew that the other predators would soon be coming back and huddled closer to the one fox they almost trusted, eyes pleading him to choose them before someone else did.

Artes whimpered. This was the last thing any of them would ever get to ask for and he would have liked to be able to give them each their way. Added to that, was the fact that each of them looked mouth-wateringly delicious. Although the fox was a reasonably accomplished hunter the pressure of his course meant he could not go hunting as often as he would have liked and live prey was still a rare treat for him. The naked bodies and exposed fur in front of him seemed too good an opportunity to pass up.

His stomach, however, had a different opinion. It had already stretched far further than he had expected but was now starting to feel quite sore. It seemed that even foxes had limits on how much they could pack away in one sitting. Still, the worried little faces in front of him were starting to look quite desperate and Artes hated to let them down.

After a moment's hesitation, he selected the vole. She was the smallest of the group and besides, he had tasted rabbit, rat, mouse, and squirrel before but never vole. As he placed her legs in his mouth, he found he quite liked her flavor. Her fur was quite short which gave her a pleasant texture while still allowing his tongue to push past to the flesh beneath. As the girl's hips were sliding into his throat a cat and a fox walked up and claimed the last two members of Artes's group. He felt sorry for them, but couldn't deny that he was also a little relieved to see them carried off. Either way, there wasn't much he could do about it so he turned his attention back to savoring his current meal's soft midsection.

No longer having any reason to hurry, Artes took his time with the vole, almost to the extent he had with Heather. The little treat squirmed and whimpered as Artes's tongue explored her body, but didn't actually try to escape. Eventually, Artes grew bored of the new flavor and slurped her down to join the rest.

The fox let out a little whimper as his final mouthful wriggled into place beneath his fur. Rolling onto his back, Artes ran both paws over the massive bulge inside him, trying to ease the pressure a little. He was starting to feel somewhat nauseous from his feast and was now questioning the wisdom of not stopping a little sooner. Still, they had all tasted so very good. Despite the pressure in his belly, Artes could not help but glance towards the place where the less willing meals had gathered.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, they were pretty much gone as well. A wolf and a cat were helping themselves to the last two stragglers but, other than that, the feast seemed to be over. There might be a couple left in the other carriage, or trying to hide somewhere, but Artes had neither the patience nor the maneuverability to go looking for those. Someone else would polish them off pretty soon. With a contented sigh, the fox patted his bulging stomach and lay back, waiting for digestion to set in and convert the ten squirming bodies inside him into something a little more manageable.

He was not the only predator enjoying the rewards of their feast. All around him, fellow carnivores were lying back in blissful satiation or licking strands of rodent fur from their lips. A few stepped over Artes as they wandered up and down the isle, checking the luggage racks and under the seats for any last prey that might have been trying to hide.

A sudden scream from nearby told him that someone had been found hiding but it was only a few seconds before the yelling stopped and the sounds in the carriage returned to contented sighs, muffled whimpers, and gastric rumbles.

Half an hour or so after the last prey was swallowed the train started to slow, then pulled into the station. With a sleepy sigh, Artes heaved himself into a sitting position and then managed to pull himself onto his feet, staggering slightly as the massive weight in his middle almost pulled him over. Glancing round, he looked at the mess they were leaving in the carriage. Clothes and discarded belonging littered the floor and the seats. A few enterprising predators had gathered up their victims' wallets and phones but most of it was being left for someone else to deal with.

With some difficulty due to his overstretched belly, Artes gathered up own his luggage then, after a moment's thought, picked up Heather's bag as well. With both bags slung over one shoulder, he joined the other stuffed predators as they waddled towards the exit.

After leaving the platform, Artes headed for the taxi bays. His home was not far and normally it would only have taken him a few minutes to walk there. In his current state, however, it would likely take much longer and he was in no mood for the exertion. The taxi driver, a jackal, gave him an impressed look as he maneuvered his belly into the back of the car but only muttered a brief "Good hunt then?" Before asking where Artes wanted to go and setting off.

Heather's long ears twitched. She had felt the fox carrying them off the train and could hear the purr of a car engine. It wasn't hard to work out that Artes was heading home, likely to get a good night's sleep. A little shiver ran through the ball of flesh and fur as the others reached the same conclusion. Once the fox was asleep his body would be able to devote all of its resources to digesting them.

Little whimpers and protests started up as the frightened prey started begging for their lives. This time, things were different. They were no longer trapped on the train. If Artes let them out now they would still be outside during hunting hours but there was a good chance that most of them would be able to make it to safety in one piece.

Unfortunately, Artes was showing no interest in doing any such thing. The fox didn't even seem to have heard their protests and gave no response except to run a contented paw over his stretched belly. Gradually, Heather became aware that she could hear something other than pleas and frightened whimpering. The vole who had been Artes's latest snack was letting out a series of high pitched squeaks. Unlike all the others, however, she didn't sound fearful or pleading. In fact she sounded like she was enjoying herself immensely. Now that she was listening more carefully, Heather could also make out the occasional masculine grunt punctuating the vole's cries.

At first a little blush spread across Heather's cheeks. This seemed an extremely public place to be doing something like that. Not only were her fellow classmates forced to listen in but some of them were probably pressed tight against the coupling pair. As she thought about it, however, she began to wonder whether that really mattered as much as she had assumed. Nobody in here was likely to get out. There would be no gossip or whispering about this afterwards, nor any unintentional pregnancies. They were all going to be turned into fox fat soon, so what did it matter how they spent the intermediate time? At the very least, it would be a welcome distraction from thinking

about their futures.

The protests and cries for help were steadily replaced with breathless moans as others caught on and followed the vole's example. Heather jumped slightly at the feel of someone's tongue in a very intimate place. She almost pulled back from the unexpected intrusion, but then she relaxed, pressed her muzzle to the pair of rat balls in front of her, and began to return the favor.

As the orgy grew around her, Heather felt the car slow to a stop, then Artes stood up and paid the driver. His belly swung from side to side as he walked, then started climbing a flight of stairs. After that, Heather heard a door open, then running water and a scrubbing sound as the predator started brushing his teeth. Around her, the motions of her classmates became a little more intense. Everyone knew what this meant but nobody wanted to think too hard about it.

After spitting out his toothpaste, Artes headed for his bedroom. A multi-vocal yelp came from the contents of his belly as he flopped into his bed. For a moment, the struggles inside him redoubled then subsided again. Artes sighed contentedly, running one paw over the massive squirming bulge in his belly.

Heather squeaked as she and the other occupants of Artes's stomach were tossed around by the fox's change in position, their orgy coming to an abrupt end. Everyone started squirming about, either trying to get back to their original positions or starting to struggle now that they had been interrupted. Heather also wriggled about a bit but quickly stopped when she heard her friend speak.

"You having fun in there, Heather?"

The movements in the stomach came to an instant stop and all sounds died down. Now that Artes had finally acknowledged them, everyone was waiting for her to speak. They all knew that the fox was her friend so she was the one expected to plead on behalf of everyone inside him.

"I ... I guess?" she answered. "Are you going to let us out now?" She already knew the answer but everyone else was expecting her to try so she asked anyway.

"I wasn't planning on it." the fox answered. "Sorry bun, but you and the others made a wonderful meal."

"You did say that you wouldn't go after me." Heather reminded.

"Yeah, and you turned that offer down." he countered. "I will miss you Heather, but it wouldn't be easy to try to let you out and not the others. Besides, you were very tasty."

"If ... if it was easy to let me out, would you then?" Heather tried. There were some angry noises from nearby. The others were less than happy that she had switched from trying to get them all out to just herself.

"Probably not." the fox answered. "Sorry, but I don't think our friendship ever quite extended that far. I'll be as gentle as I can while digesting you, though."

Heather felt her last little speck of hope fade away. It was not an unexpected response. They might have been friends but she had always known that Artes was a keen hunter and would not have expected him to make an exception if they had run into each other during hunting hours. Still, it was a bit of a shock to watch her last chance of survival come to an end. Now she knew for certain that she would not be finishing her degree, would not be going home at the end of the semester, would

not be doing anything except dissolving into a nutritious slurry and getting added to the fox's body. "Okay. Enjoy your meal then, I guess." she stated.

"Already am doing." Artes assured. "Settle down now. It's been a long day."

Giving up on the hope that Heather might save them, the other prey all started shouting at once. "Please? I'm begging ..." "... just want to see my ..." ... I'll do anything you want, just ..." "... so close to finishing my degree."

The protests didn't last long before turning into angry struggles. Artes whimpered slightly. He was feeling very full and, until now, he had been managing mostly due to the fact that his dinner had been relatively compliant. Now that they were actively trying to kick him he was having more difficulty. "Settle down." he repeated, trying not to sound too nauseous. The last thing he wanted was for them to realize how much trouble they were giving him.

For a while, he genuinely considered relenting and making an attempt to bring Heather back up. The extra room would make digesting the others much easier. On the other hand, much as he had enjoyed Heather's company, he couldn't pretend that tonight was the first time he had thought of doing this to her. The bunny had always made his mouth water even if he had tried to pretend otherwise. Now that he had actually tasted her soft naked body and felt her plump form sliding down his throat he wanted her more than ever.

All things considered, he would prefer to keep Heather and let one of the others go instead. Of course, that would not be easy to explain to her. Eating her was one thing, he was a predator after all, but he could hardly claim to be her friend while choosing to let someone else survive instead. Fortunately, it didn't seem like that would be necessary. Packed so close together by his stomach, the prey were hurting each other more than him with their struggles. After only a few minutes the kicking and thrashing in his belly faded into much more pleasant squirms.

Artes licked his lips and let out a satisfied belch before pulling the covers over the shifting bulge in his middle. Despite the discomfort in his midsection, he was struggling to keep his eyes open. His digestive system knew that it had a lot of work to do and that progress would be easier once he was asleep. After only a few minutes the fox's breathing slowed and he started to snore. The change was quickly followed by a soft rumbling from his tummy as the stomach walls began to secrete more acids.

A few of his prey continued to protest, despite knowing that the fox could no longer hear them. Others resumed their previous activities, hoping to distract themselves from what was happening. Heather simply closed her eyes and allowed herself to drift into sleep. Artes was not the only one who had had a long day. After everything that had happened she was exhausted and saw no reason to resist any longer.

A faint beeping noise pulled Heather back into consciousness. She blinked in sleepy confusion. She had not been expecting to wake up. She was quickly roused from her groggy state as Artes rolled over and the contents of his belly tumbled over each other. Switching his alarm clock off, the fox clambered out of bed and stretched. Even a full eight hours of digestion had made little impact on last night's dinner. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he got dressed then headed downstairs.

Heather felt the mass of wet fur around her start to wriggle as the rest of the food became more active. Despite having spent all night working on them, Artes's stomach still hadn't produced

enough acids to properly digest their bodies. Heather could feel that her fur was now sodden from his digestive juices, just like that of everyone around her, and her skin was starting to prickle in places, but they evidently had a long way to go yet.

Artes, at any rate, did not seem concerned by their lack of process. Heading into his kitchen, he helped himself to a glass of water, which made the food in his belly wriggle furiously for a while, then headed out.

Heather listened to the noises of the outside world, wondering where he was taking them. She could hear vehicles passing and a brief exchange between Artes and someone else. That, coupled with the fact that he then sat down, suggested that he was on a bus. Time was hard to measure in the depths of his stomach but she guessed around ten minutes passed before the bus stopped and Artes got off. After that, he walked a short distance, then sat down again. From here, Heather could hear someone talking in the distance, although the words were too distorted by the stomach walls for her to make out much of what was being said.

Only when she caught the word pollen did she finally work out where they were. Artes was sitting in the Main Botany Lecture Hall. If the return journey had not ended so badly for her, she would have been sitting next to him right now, taking notes instead of stewing in his digestive juices. A few others seemed to have come to the same conclusion and the contents of Artes's belly started to wriggle about again at this reminder of the life that they were losing.

The struggles didn't last long though. Nobody had as much energy as they previous night and, by now, they all knew that wriggling was not going to make the slightest difference. It didn't take long for the struggles to be replaced by more intimate acts and, this time, Heather had no reservations about joining in. The remaining lecture passed remarkably quickly and, an hour later, they felt their predator heave himself back out of his chair and head for the door.

"Hey Artes?"

Heather felt the fox stop and turn at the voice from behind him. "Yeah?"

The speaker paused, evidently taking in the fox's massive belly. "Wow, how many did you eat?" they asked.

"Nine, I think?" Artes thought for a moment, trying to picture each of the wriggly treats currently inside him. "Or maybe ten?" he guessed.

"Nice. I only managed six myself but that was more than enough for me." came the answer. "It was kind of weird seeing the lecture so empty like that. I guess they'll probably move us to a smaller room once they realize how much smaller the class is now."

"Yeah." Artes agreed. "Not that that's a bad thing. They always overbook these things anyway. Everyone knows that some of the prey aren't going to make it to graduation and so they hand out more places than they can easily manage."

"Heh, bet they've never lost every single prey species in a single night before though." the newcomer pointed out.

"Well, this probably isn't the first time but I doubt it happens that often. Hey, you're free until our lecture at four, right? Want to hang out for a while? The girl I used to waste my free periods with isn't really available right now." Heather felt him give his belly a little slap in demonstration.

Heather pushed herself back off the rat she had been coupling with. "Artes?" She protested but got no answer. Her ears drooped in disappointment. She and Artes always used to spend their time between lectures together and it hurt to see herself being replaced so soon. Then again, she couldn't really blame the fox for moving on. She would soon be reduced to a layer of fat beneath his fur but Artes would still need friends and people he could talk to. Trying her best to be happy for her friend instead of jealous, Heather resumed the mass of mating bodies.

By the time Artes got home his stomach was much more active. Over the course of two lectures, and the time he had spent taking to his new friend, it had finally managed to produce enough acids to thoroughly saturate the fur of everyone inside and was now starting to mix them in. Periodic contractions ran through the muscular walls, squeezing Heather's body against the others and gradually stirring them around. A few struggled against it, a few were still more interested in each other than what was happening, most, like Heather, were simply too exhausted, both mentally and physically, to resist.

Artes settled into his sofa and watched television for a couple of hours, then got up, rummaged through his backpack for some papers and got started on this week's coursework. Only after spending a couple more hours on that did he stretch, yawn, and head upstairs to bed.

As the fox snuggled up between his blankets, Heather could feel her fur starting to come out. They were all being basted in the gastric fluids and her skin was starting to burn. It wasn't too bad at the moment, more of a warm prickle than anything else, but she knew that it was the first sign of her body starting to dissolve. Those with short fur and those at the bottom of the pile, where Artes's digestive juices could pool around them, had it worse but, for now, she was still relatively okay. Heather wriggled about in the undulating mass of bodies, trying to work her way higher. She had no desire to be one of the ones spending the night at the bottom of Artes's belly and, as a rabbit, she was larger and stronger than the majority of the others allowing her to squirm her way to the top of the pile.

Once there, she settled down on top of someone relatively comfortable and tried to go to sleep. Her body was still prickling unpleasantly from the gastric juices but it had been an exhausting day. After only a few minutes Heather had dozed off.

She woke to find her whole body burning. She had now spent over forty eight hours inside the fox's digestive tract and was well on her way to becoming rabbit soup. Her fur was completely gone leaving her skin bare and vulnerable to the digestive slurry around her. The stomach walls squeezed their contents about, pushing her around in the wriggling mass of dissolving bodies. She squeaked a few times and tried calling the fox's name, but the only answer she got was a persistent snore.

After an unknown length of time, it was impossible make any guess in the pitch black constantly shifting confines of the stomach, Heather heard Artes's alarm going off and felt him shift. At first she was relieved, hoping for some change to her situation, but the only difference it seemed to make was that Artes's stomach was now vertical instead of horizontal and she had to fight to get back on top of the pile.

Stretching, Artes let out a yawn and then a burp. He smacked his lips a little as the taste of partially digested prey filled his mouth and ran one paw over the wriggling forms in his belly. They finally seemed to be making some progress in there. "You still okay, Heather?" he checked.

"It hurts." came the muffled whimper.

Artes gave his stomach a sympathetic look. "Yeah, sorry it's taking so long. It would normally be over by now but I've never eaten quite so much in one sitting before." Considering the conversation to be finished, he patted his belly then headed downstairs to start getting ready for his lectures.

Heather bit her lip and tried to endure what was happening to her. The bus ride onto campus felt longer than ever before and sitting through her lectures was absolute torture. Each time the stomach squeezed the pool of acids washed over her body and she could feel herself breaking down a little faster. Not that the brief pauses between each squeeze were much better. Her skin was slathered in the corrosive fluid and burned whether Artes was squeezing her or not. The one consolation Heather did have was that many of the others were having a far worse time than her. The mice in particular had short fur which had offered very little protection even while it had lasted, and lacked the strength to push their way to the top of the pile. Heather could hear them whimpering somewhere below her, as well as a series of pained gasps from the vole girl, who was apparently finding this part of being digested considerably less pleasant than when they had first been swallowed.

Eventually the lecture came to an end and Artes got up and headed to his next one. Heather groaned weakly, the day seemed unending. Finally, after what seemed like weeks, Artes caught the bus back to his home. Of course, that didn't mean the ordeal was over. Artes's digestive system would be just as rough with his food whether he was at home or on campus and worse when he went to sleep. Still, it gave her something to mark the passage of time. She had made it through another day's worth of lectures and was that much closer to passing out for good.

"Hey Artes." Heather's ears, or what was left of them, pricked up at the voice. As far as she knew her friend lived alone. She certainly hadn't heard anyone else one either of the previous days.

Artes seemed as surprised as she was. "Susan? What are you doing here?" He certainly didn't sound like he minded though.

"I figured I'd drop in." The vixen answered. Heather had never met Artes's girlfriend, but she had often heard him talk about her. From his descriptions she sounded nice, although that was possibly a somewhat biased source. At any rate, she welcomed the change. Anything was better than another night spent stewing in Artes's digestive juices while he worked on homework for a course she would never get to finish. "I heard your train was delayed past hunting hours and wanted to see for myself just how much you had caught." Sarah continued.

Heather felt the stomach shift as Sarah ran one hand over her mate's belly. An ominous rumble ran through the walls at the vixen's touch and Heather felt a little more acid dribble down her back as the stomach increased its efforts to digest them.

"Ten, I think." Artes bragged. "Although several of those were quite small."

"Wow. I might have to start catching the train more often myself." Susan noted. "I know this doesn't happen often but it clearly pays off when it does." Heather could feel the stomach walls churning around her as Susan pressed a little harder, helping Artes's stomach to grind them into mush.

She gave the surrounding walls a kick, hoping to discourage Artes's girlfriend from giving him any more belly rubs. It turned out to have the opposite of the desired effect. "Oh, they're still moving?" Susan sounded quite surprised by this and not unreasonably, prey usually passed out and started dissolving within a few hours of being swallowed. Heather was well aware that the only reason that she was anything more than a little pile of bones by now was that Artes's stomach was having

difficulty handling so many of them.”Well, don't worry. I can think of something to help fix that.” the vixen chuckled.

Heather's ears flattened back. She had a horrible suspicion that she knew what that would be and feeling Artes heading up the stairs only confirmed her fears. “Artes? Come on. Please? You don't really want to do this to me.” She begged.

The fox paused halfway up the stairs. “I kind of do.” he told her. “Besides, you told me this morning that it was starting to hurt. Anything that makes you pass out quicker is probably for the best.”

Heather shuddered slightly. “I ... I'm really not so sure about...”

“That's okay. You don't actually get a say in this.” Artes interrupted. “You agreed to be my food, rather than anyone else's, so that's what you are now. Settle down and let my body do what it needs to.”

Heather gave in and fell silent as Artes continued into his bedroom. Some of the others continued to protest but, unlike her, everything they said was ignored. Even if he only saw her as food now, Artes still treated her better than the rest of his prey. Their protests grew a little more urgent as they felt the fox bend down and start undressing, then climb onto the bed.

The stomach contracted hard around them as Artes's belly pressed against his girlfriend. Heather let out a feeble cry as the her body was mashed against the others, hard enough to squeeze the air from her lungs. Everyone yelped and tried to kick but there was barely enough space for them to twitch in the crushing grip of Artes's digestive tract.

Just as Heather was starting to wonder how much longer she could endure, Artes's stomach relaxed a little and the fox started to thrust. The extra space felt wonderful after being compressed to the brink of passing out but it came with a different problem. At the end of each of the fox's thrusts the pool of acids would slosh over Heather's vulnerable body, making her skin burn worse than ever.

Her fellow prey kicked and squirmed in time with the rhythm the two foxes were setting, but their protests did nothing to dissuade either carnivore. In fact, Heather suspected that some of Artes's pleased gasps were due almost as much to them as anything Susan was doing. The vixen seemed to be enjoying the movements of her boyfriend's meal as well.

Susan ran her fingers back and forth through the fur of Artes's belly, feeling each shifting and straining bulge made by those within. Any time the struggles seemed to die down a little, or those inside showed any signs of giving up, she would rub a little harder and the stomach walls would contract around them. Heather whimpered each time that happened but tried her best to endure the periodic crushing. She could hear Susan whispering something as well. The exact words were drowned out by the active stomach but she could tell from the tone that the vixen was teasing them.

Gradually, Susan's taunts turned to breathy gasps as the two vulpines worked each other to climax. Heather gasped as she felt Artes reach his limit and the stomach involuntarily clamped down on them. Again the air was squeezed out of her lungs and this time there was no sigh of the stomach releasing them. Her head swam from lack of oxygen and she struggled to stay conscious as she listened to the fox's moaning. Their crushing prison shook a little as Artes released a thick spurt of semen into his girlfriend then, finally, the stomach walls relaxed a little.

Heather gasped in relief as she found herself able to draw breath once again. The contents of the

stomach were tossed around as Artes rolled off Susan but Heather barely noticed. It was just such a pleasure to be able to breathe again.

“So ... anyone still moving in there?” Susan asked after taking a second or two to recover her own breath.

“A few. They're much less active than they were though.” Artes replied.

Heather winced at his response and felt around her. She might have survived that, but she was one of the larger creatures that Artes had eaten and could endure more than most. The other rabbits were definitely still moving, but she could feel that the mice and the vole had all passed out. Unable to resist the fox's powerful stomach any longer they were now lying, limp and unresisting, in the pool of digestive juices.

She didn't get to contemplate their fate for long though. In response to her boyfriend's acknowledgement that some of the prey had survived Susan snuggled closer and nestled her chin against his belly. “Well, lets see if we can put a stop to that.” she chuckled and started running her fingers in circles over her boyfriend's belly.

Heather groaned as the stomach walls began crushing her again. She had hoped that, now that the sex was over, those inside Artes's belly might get a few minutes respite. Still, the belly rub provoked less of a response from Artes's stomach than mating had and Heather found that she was able to endure the assault until the two foxes fell asleep.

Not long after Artes started to snore the stomach walls relaxed a little, giving those who had survived a little more room to move about. Unfortunately, the decrease in mechanical digestion was soon followed by an increase in chemical digestion. The stomach gurgled loudly as more concentrated acids dribbled over the tenderized meat. Heather squirmed in pain as her skin started to react to the corrosive juices, but there was no escape. Artes's stomach pushed her back and forth in the mass of softening meat, ensuring that every crevice of her body was slathered in the burning fluids.

Tough as she was, Heather barely made it to the morning. By the time she heard Artes's alarm clock going off she was in a very poor state. Her ears were in tatters, the enzymes rich juices had burned away most of her skin and her head was swimming from lack of oxygen. It seemed that, some time in the night, Artes had stopped replacing the air in his stomach. Only the fact that most of his prey had already stopped needing oxygen meant that there was any left for Heather at all. Feeling Artes finally start to move again, she struggled to draw his attention to her, anything to ensure that he knew she was still alive and, in some small way, still mattered. Her aching muscles protested as she managed to shift a little in the churning mass of half digested meat.

Artes glanced down at his belly, amazed to still be feeling some motion in there. “Heather?” he asked. “You're still awake.”

She didn't have the energy or willpower to speak by this point but she managed a weak “mph?” in response.

“You know ... I am a little sorry that I didn't let you out.” Artes admitted. “I hadn't realized how boring some of our lectures would be without you sitting next to me. I really am going to miss you, bunny. Still, I think it's a bit late to change my mind now.”

Heather nodded weakly despite knowing that Artes couldn't see her. She could feel the state her

body was in and knew that, even if he were to cough up what was left of her, it wouldn't make any difference. She was just fox food by this point, same as everyone else who had slipped down her friend's gullet.

"Still, you do feel pretty good in there." Artes added. He gently prodded at his belly, the contents were softening up nicely. "It was nice knowing you, a pleasure to get to eat you, and I'm sure you'll look quite good on me once I'm finished with you."

Artes's conversation with his meal seemed to have woken his girlfriend. She rolled over sleepily and blinked at him. "Still talking to your food?" she asked.

"Just saying goodbye to one of my classmates." he confirmed.

"Must be tough to have lasted this long." Susan noted.

Artes nodded. "I think she's pretty much finished now though."

"Want me to help her along a little?" Susan offered. She reached out and brushed the curve of her boyfriend's gut, with a predictable effect on those inside.

Heather knew she should be upset by this but, if anything, she felt relieved. Part of her still wanted to fight, to resist her fate as long as possible and do everything possible to survive, but it wasn't a very large part anymore. Artes's stomach had worn her down in more ways than one. Her body was breaking down into nutrients, but her mind was also reaching its limits. She didn't really want to resist much longer.

The foxes were getting more active around her, light petting turning into gropes and eager growls. If nothing else, she knew that she would not survive another of their mating sessions. There didn't seem much point in trying either. She was just food and passing out would only make things easier. With a surprisingly relaxed sigh, Heather surrendered the last dregs of her consciousness and allowed herself to slip down into the gurgling mess.

A little over one week later, Artes returned to his house panting weakly. He had spent the last three hours at the gym, same as yesterday and the day before, and still he was putting on weight. He ran his fingers through the fur of one arm, feeling how it had thickened up with both muscle and fat. Well, at least he was gaining something out of this besides getting fatter.

First thing he did once home was run for the toilet. Some of those he had devoured on that train were finally going to get their wish of being let out, albeit in a very different form. Sitting down, Artes groaned softly as the first log of processed rabbit and rodent mush dropped down into the bowl beneath him.

Several more logs were added on top as the fox emptied their remains from his bowels. Standing up, he wiped then glanced down at the contents of the toilet. The ten people who had passed through his digestive tract, each of whom had been a unique individual with dreams and ambitions of their own, had now been reduced to uniform brown lumps. A few slithers of bone had made it through him undissolved, but none in large enough pieces for Artes to make any guess as to which creature they had come from. Even the little tufts of fur that stuck out from the logs had been bleached by his acids making it impossible to tell who they had once been a part of. Artes shrugged and flushed the remains away. It was probably made up of a fairly equal mix of all of them anyway.

After disposing of what had once been his fellow classmates, the fox stepped into his shower and started washing the sweat and gym grime away. His belly sloshed as he directed the stream of water over it. Some of his over sized meal might be on its way to the sewers but there was still plenty of liquidized prey left for his body to process.

Once finished with his shower, the fox dried himself off, then headed into his bedroom. On the bedside table was a small, leather-bound scrapbook. Artes picked it up and leafed through it once again, taking almost reverent care with the pages.

The illustrations and notes inside were so meticulous and carefully placed that part of him wanted to leave it untouched forever. However, the one thing Heather had specifically told him was that she didn't want it to sit around and gather dust. That in mind, he flipped to the first blank page and pulled a slither of dried plant matter from his back pocket. Positioning it on the paper, he carefully taped it in place, then picked up a pen and started to make some notes.

'Heather. Grows best in high altitude regions and prefers mildly acidic soil. Flowers in late summer and produces a series of small ...'

His belly gurgled softly as he worked. The Heather inside him, along with the rest of those who had been part of that meal, were now a thin liquid slush. Much of them had already passed into his intestines and been absorbed, prompting the fox's recent increase in bulk, but there was still a large quantity left in his stomach. Another day or two, however, and that would also be absorbed by his body and turned into more fat for him to work off. Most of them would be forgotten forever once Artes flushed the last of them away but, in the case of one little bunny, her work was guaranteed to live on.