

Food for Me, Grave for You
By Angelus

You see him in the crowd ahead of you, walking down the street in your direction. He's easily twice the height of anyone else in the crowd, so he stands out, to say nothing of the gleaming red scales, and the right arm that looks to be completely made of metal. He looks like a dragon, maybe a cyborg one, and your eyes linger, drinking in all the details. Your gaze lingers a moment too long, perhaps. You suddenly find that he's looking at you. Sharp white pupils set in black eyes stare at you, and a smirk tugs at the corner of his snout.

You avert your gaze. He definitely saw you staring. You duck down and try to blend into the crowd, but you're not watching where you're going, and you bump right into him. You stop in your tracks and look up, finding yourself face to face with a screen that stretches across his stomach. It flashes "Hey~" on it in big text, followed by a low fuel warning. You quickly look up to his face, and he's grinning down at you, almost locking you in place with his gaze.

All you can think to do is take a few steps back and apologize for staring before turning to try and flee. You don't make it more than a step.

Holo's metal hand closes around your arm and lifts you off the ground like a ragdoll. You feel the world shrink away as you're hoisted up several feet. Your legs dangle uselessly as he lifts you to eye level and stares through you with those piercing, dark eyes. "Hmm..." he rumbles in consideration, and you can feel the vibration in the air. "Sure, you'll do." He lifts you higher and the ground shrinks away from you until you're dangling over his head, more than ten feet off the ground. You're hanging from one arm, legs kicking at the air as you look down in a panic. Holo is looking straight up at you, and his huge jaws are yawning open beneath you. Steam hisses out from between his teeth, and as the cloud of hot vapor clears, you get a look at the dark and rubbery flesh of the inside of his mouth. His forked tongue flicks up at you, as though tasting your panic in the air around you.

You swallow hard, trying to think of some way to get out of this situation-
-and you find yourself falling.

It's a short fall. One second. Two at the most. You feel your legs surrounded by a tight, damp warmth and your arms reach out without so much as a thought. By the time you have a moment to process your predicament, you're already waist-deep in Holo's mouth, with your arms grabbing onto the sides of his mouth to keep yourself from getting swallowed. You feel his throat muscles swallow around your legs and pull on you. You tighten your grip on his face and lift, and you manage to slide your legs partway free.

He swallows again and you feel your shoes get sucked off your feet, exposing them to the humid, slimy depths. Holo snorts, stuck breathing through his nose, and you feel his hot breath wash through your hair. The open mouth surrounding you is just as warm, and you're starting to sweat and pant. Holding yourself up is taking a toll, and you can't seem to lift yourself completely free. Every time you try, he swallows, pulling you back.

Your game of tug of war doesn't last. Holo tires of playing with his food and slides his tongue along your back. You shudder as you feel it slide under your shirt, covering your back with drool and soaking your clothes. Slowly, it curls around you, just under your arms. Your heart

starts to race, and blood pounds in your ears. That long tongue tightens around your chest and starts to pull on you.

You're slipping.

You try to keep your grip, but your arms ache and your whole body is sweaty and hot and slick. Your hands lose their grip on his smooth scales. You feel your legs slipping deeper, and your eye level falls below the horizon of his slicing fangs. You know it's futile. He hasn't even used his hands to pry your arms from his face, and you've already lost this battle. Your arms slide into his jaws, past the elbow, up to the wrist. You catch the corners of his mouth with your fingers, but he's had enough. He flicks your hands with a finger each, making your hands sting and forcing you to let go.

His jaws snap shut, and it all goes dark. He swallows, and you're pulled down. Your legs are pressed together, and your arms are stuck raised above you. His throat is tight, but you can still wiggle and breathe, though the heat and humidity makes every breath stifling. It's rubbery too, not quite like flesh, feeling more like silicone rubber as you slide down.

For as tall as Holo is, his throat is only a few feet long. Just enough to briefly hold all of you before your feet hit his stomach. You can feel them slide into it. It's even slimier than his throat, but more spacious. Your feet touch the bottom of it first, and you can feel the stretch of his synthetic stomach through the fabric of your enzyme-soaked socks. Your knees slide through, and your legs bend to fit into the space. It stretches more, having considerable give compared to his throat, and soon your whole body is stuffed inside.

There's a dim ambient light within, a faint glow that's a collection of the illumination of dozens of tiny, pixel-sized lights. You don't know what they're meant to indicate, but you know you won't need to worry about it for long. The air down here is oppressive. You can barely breathe, and your skin is starting to tingle and itch as the pit of his stomach slowly fills with a viscous fluid that clings to you.

Your breaths are coming short and fast and you feel your chest tighten. You slump down, and your vision blurs as you can no longer catch your breath. His stomach tightens around you, and you hear a faint beep before his stomach fills with light, almost blinding you. You hear a distant voice, like that of a digital assistant. "Scanning Subject... Data Saved. Digestion setting: Normal. Beginning Fuel Conversion."

You never expected to end your day getting processed into fuel in a robotic stomach, but that's how it's going. You're feeling faint, and it's hard to stay conscious. You feel like your body is sinking, even though you're pretty sure you can't slouch any lower than you already are. You close your eyes as your vision darkens, let out a final, shaking breath, and pass out.

Hours later, you're nothing but a meaty soup with bones stewing in Holo's stomach, not that you'd be aware of that. You barely make a bulge in his middle now that you've been melted into soup, and the only indication of your fate is a temporary icon of your face displayed next to his fuel gauge. He scratches his stomach and lets out a gaseous belch, expelling all the air that built up from processing you down. You made a dent of a couple of percentage points on his fuel gauge, hardly a drop in the bucket. He's already forgotten you, and is already thinking of who he's going to add to his fuel tank next.