

Istlehiss' Hospitality

By: IndigoRho

Raf cursed the storm as he stumbled through the darkness. The hefty spotted hyena clung to his cloak, which only just barely protected his wide frame from the rain. He couldn't see much—wasn't even sure he was still on the trail—but the desire to find shelter drove him onward.

Everything about the mage's trip had seemingly gone wrong. Raf had been delayed in leaving, forgotten quite a few supplies, unintentionally snacked on half his rations, and napped most of the day away. Of course when he'd made the risky decision to continue traveling at night he'd been rewarded by rain and lost the rest of his supplies narrowly avoiding a plunge into a river. He couldn't imagine anything else going wrong, and hoped for at least a *little* good luck.

A soft glow further ahead caught his attention. Raf picked up his pace, the hyena's belly bouncing as he waddled with haste. Soon the glow revealed itself as a window, and a cottage came into view. A cottage this deep in the woods was a surprise, but Raf wasn't in the mood to be picky about his potential haven.

An overhang above the front door provided temporary shelter. Raf pulled back his hood, the hyena's pink mohawk springing back up.

Raf knocked on the door hard a couple times. "Hello? I was wondering if I could shelter from the rain here!"

It didn't take long for Raf to hear faint signs of life from within, and the door opened wide.

Standing before Raf was a black-and-gray scaled snake. The snake was a good foot taller than Raf but much, much thinner. His eyes were a piercing green, his flicking tongue a deep purple. He wore a dark red coat, two animal skulls serving as shoulder pads. Raf was too busy taking in the snake's visage to notice their gaze lingering on his middle.

The snake took a step back and grinned. "Please, come in, come in! I've got a fire going, you can dry off."

The stranger's hospitality was welcome, albeit a little...overeager. Still, Raf didn't need to be asked twice to step inside. He hung up his cloak when prompted, doing his best to avoid dripping too much water everywhere.

"I wasn't expecting to find anyone this far out," Raf said, already grateful for the warmth. "Oh, my name's Raf, by the way."

"Istlehiss," the snake replied in turn. His eyes were constantly darting to Raf's gut, especially any time the large hyena moved. "And yes, I'm a bit out of the way, but I rather enjoy the peace and quiet."

Raf nodded in agreement. People tended to annoy him more than anything else, and living out in the middle of the woods sounded wonderful.

An unexpected—and rather loud—rumble from Raf's stomach caused him to blush.

"Hungry, eh?" Istlehiss asked, cheerfully. "I was actually just about to prepare dinner, and there should be more than enough for the two of us."

Sure enough, there was a large cauldron just visible through the doorway of the adjacent kitchen, the enticing aroma of stew hitting Raf. His stomach growled even louder this time. He hadn't remembered feeling the least bit hungry before entering the cottage, but in all likelihood he'd merely overlooked the hunger pains while grumping about the rain.

"Thank you. Some food sounds really nice right now," Raf admitted sheepishly as Istlehiss guided him to a table. There was only a single, bulky chair, and Raf guessed his host kept a spare elsewhere.

The chair didn't creak at all when Raf sat down, which was the greatest surprise of the night yet. He was used to seats protesting his heft all the time, and had broken more than he cared to remember. It seemed odd for someone as slim as Istlehiss to keep such a sturdy chair, though.

“Alright, you just sit right there, and I’ll have a feast for you in a flash!” Istlehiiss said before retreating to the kitchen.

Raf did just as he was told. As he waited he looked around at the main living area of Istlehiiss' cottage. There were plenty of old looking books lining shelves, strange plants that seemed somewhat familiar, lots of candles. There were also skulls. *Lots* of skulls. Some were mounted on the walls, others above the hearth, and a few scattered amongst shelves.

All the evidence in the room pointed to Istlehiiss being a practitioner of some kind of magic. As a mage himself Raf could have easily tried to detect traces of magic and get a feel for who Istlehiiss was, but he felt himself overcome with reluctance to do so. Raf was a guest, and prying would be rude.

“Sorry for the wait, enjoy!”

Raf was startled by the sudden appearance of Istlehiiss, his belly jiggling as he twitched. A large plate of meat and a bowl of hearty stew were on the table in front of Raf, along with a sizable mug of water for washing it all down. He swore the snake had only been gone a few short minutes, yet somehow he'd already prepared a full meal. Perhaps it'd been nearly complete when Raf had arrived?

A grumbling stomach snapped Raf away from his train of thought, his mind now fixated solely on the food. He offered thanks and dug right in, ravenously clearing off the plate as if he hadn't had a bite to eat in days. Once the hyena started to eat he didn't stop—*couldn't* stop.

As soon as the plate had been reduced to picked-clean bones Raf moved onto the stew. Then there was the bread, which he must have missed initially, and the second plate of meat. Or was it the first? It must have been, as the hyena couldn't believe he'd eat *that* much food in a couple minute's time. And of course he'd yet to try the stew, though he had the oddest feeling he knew how amazing it tasted already.

Istlehiiss grinned as he watched his portly guest gorge. As a warlock, it'd been all too easy for Istlehiiss to place multiple hexes upon Raf the second he'd waddled in. One to make the hyena susceptible to his suggestions, one to give him an endless hunger, one to disrupt his sense of time so hours would feel like minutes. It'd given Istlehiiss plenty of time to cook a literal feast to stuff his guest with.

The mere sight of Raf's gradually swelling gut made Istlehiiss salivate. It'd been a while since he'd indulged on a delicious, live meal, and Raf had looked ridiculously filling from the beginning. Raf's magic alone would enhance his flavor greatly, while also energizing Istlehiiss. Once he'd been stuffed he'd be beyond excessive for a meal, but Istlehiiss felt he deserved the treat. He might even clear off a special place above the mantle for Raf's skull if he proved to be as tasty as he looked.

Istlehiiss replenished Raf's plate and bowl frequently, the hyena oblivious to his presence. As Raf's gut burst out of his robes Istlehiiss maneuvered his tail over to prod the growing mass, grinning as Raf blushed in response. To the hyena the belly rubs probably felt like a momentary itch, far less important than the meal he was consuming.

All through the night, Istlehiiss continued the feeding. Inevitably Raf's bulk became too much for even the reinforced chair, finally creaking. Istlehiiss simply coaxed the massive hyena onto the floor. By then Raf's belly was more than large enough to serve as a table, it's wobbling surface covered in plates of food.

Raf was completely docile and oblivious, trapped in a mental loop of always just starting on his first course of dinner. No matter how much he ate he was never sated. Had Istlehiiss wished, Raf would've literally eaten until he exploded. However, the snake very much wanted his meal intact.

As the first light of dawn began to creep through the windows of the cottage, Istlehiiss finally decided Raf was ready. A quick hex put the hyena into a stupor as soon as he finished the final plate. Raf groaned and belched, hopelessly pinned down by his enormous belly. Not that he realized the danger he was in.

Istlehiiss circled the beached hyena like a shark, poking, prodding, and jiggling Raf's gut all over. He was, in a word, *perfect*.

With his own stomach beginning to growl, Istlehiss dug into his breakfast. He started from below, jaws stretching wide, his fangs brushing against Raf's calves as he swallowed his legs with ease. Raf made no effort to fight back. Istlehiss gripped Raf's bloated gut and pulled himself forwards inch-by-delicious-inch. As the snake's middle swelled with hyena he carefully unstrapped his jacket so it wouldn't get torn.

Raf's mountain of a belly was an imposing obstacle, but Istlehiss had gorged on plenty of well-fed prey in his life. Even Raf wouldn't be too fat for him. His jaws steadily stretched over the hyena's belly, then chest, then shoulders, arms slipped into the maw in the process. Istlehiss himself was rocking atop his own belly now, a few short gulps away from sealing his prey completely. But first, he'd have some fun.

Istlehiss removed his hexes all at once. Raf abruptly shook his aching head, overwhelmed by grogginess. He felt impossibly heavy and struggled to move his body. He was also warm and...wet? As he came to he realized he was staring right at Istlehiss' face—and that the snake's maw was wrapped around his body. Immediately Raf began to squirm, to no avail.

"S-stop! Let me go!" Raf growled in a panic as Istlehiss slowly started to swallow him again.

The snake couldn't speak, but his actions spoke loudly enough. Istlehiss placed his claws atop Raf's head and pushed, muffling the protests as the hyena was stuffed into his mouth. Jaws shut, a final gulp sending the rest of Raf into the stomach.

Istlehiss cackled and grinned as he felt Raf's pitiful attempts to struggle within him. The hyena was far too stuffed to stand a chance of escape, and even if by some miracle he made progress a few well-placed hexes would stop him in his tracks. Raf was doomed to be digested, reduced to bones and dozens of pounds of fat on Istlehiss' waistline.

"It's going to take *forever* to churn you away~" Istlehiss teased. "But it'll be more than worth it in the end."

There was faint cursing from Raf, but Istlehiss could barely hear him. Though it would take time for the hyena's physical body to start digesting, his magic could be siphoned right away. Istlehiss' smile broadened as he lazily soaked up the magic within Raf, weakening his prey while strengthening himself.

"I'll make sure your skull has a prominent place for future...dinner guests to admire, so you'll always have a clear view of feasts," Istlehiss continued. "And hey, maybe you'll get lucky and friends will come searching for you so you'll have company on the wall!"

Istlehiss' gut wobbled in response, and the snake laughed. Hopefully Raf's friends were just as fat as he was—though if they weren't, Istlehiss could fix the problem with ease...