

The Festival of the Last Harvest was Nikki's favourite time of year. The name was fairly literal; the very last harvest marked the end of the summer and the close of the best growing season, which meant that the majority of the hard, hot and dry work of the year was finally finished. Wheat was reaped, fruits were plucked and it was an opportunity to mark the close of another successful year granted by the auspices of the great and benevolent queen. What a year it had been, too.

Nikki had been selected from amongst the most worthy of her order and elevated to the position of Prelate – Keeper of the Faith and Holy Articles. She was an advisor of sorts, a trusted voice in the royal court and one whose task was made all the more important by her proximity to the mighty Queen Mack, already a legend in her own right. Tales were told and stories sung of the great battle in which she hefted the ancestral hammer of the previous line to strike down the beast which had felled them and ended their reign, and in doing so shown her worthiness to ascend as had previous rulers. She'd been raised a blacksmith's apprentice, and while the peasantry seemed universally convinced this gave their ruler a unique perspective on the common man's plight, Nikki understood far better that it meant the doughty Queen Mack's education was sorely lacking.

So, over the past year, the queen had ascended in both the figurative and very literal sense. The whole time, Prelate Nikki had been by her side, faithfully serving the new queen and her subjects, ensuring that matters of faith and piety were correctly attended to, histories remembered and traditions upheld. Queen Jaida Mack, First of Her Name, Protector of the Realm and Defender of the Realm had some interesting perspective on 'wasteful' traditions and true to the expectations of the common folk, wealth and prosperity had begun to touch their lives in a very tangible way. The nobility somehow endured the sea change in their lives with a kind word and a knowing smile from their almighty queen. The queen's power, influence and stature grew while Nikki's did quite the opposite.

Yet she endured. As the days seemed to grow longer even while the autumnal chill began to sap the sweltering humidity from the air, Nikki held true to her faith and continued her efforts to educate and instruct the queen on the proper manner in which to conduct herself, all while enduring the booming, carefree laughter of her divine majesty. She was faithful and true and – in a sense – was richly rewarded for her duty. As Queen Mack ascended and every day became grander and more in tune with the divinity required of her role, Prelate Nikki slowly and relentlessly found her perspective dwindling, the queen's almighty magnificence amplified and made overwhelming by a simple twist set into royal spellcraft by the Keeper of the Infinite College: Jaida grew, Nikki shrank.

When it had first been a matter of inches, Prelate Nikki simply tightened her already generously cut robes around her fulsome figure and went about her duties with a gritted smile and a spring in her step to carry her around the castle at her usual pace. Inches gave way to feet, however, and soon the Prelate's shrinking was a matter of much mirth and humour through the castle. Rumours abounded that Queen Mack was having none of the Prelate's stiff and stuffy interpretation of divine mandate, and that for each inch taken from her, the queen's own power instead grew at the expense of the meddling feline Prelate. Nikki had come to realise, on the eve of the Festival of Last

Harvest, that she wasn't being punished at all. Queen Mack was giving her exactly what she richly deserved for her service.

It made little sense to the common folk and those that toiled in the castle to ensure the queen's comfort. They couldn't understand what the queen had seen in Nikki and which, in time, the soft-figured feline had come to begrudgingly accept. Their time spent in one another's company was a private thing, after all, and while Nikki's height dipped below the average waistline of the chortling, snickering drudges that manned the castle's many kitchens, libraries and hallways, the Prelate took solace in the knowledge she felt safe in assuming from her queen's doting care. This 'punishment' was deserved, she knew, and after a fashion it improved her. Nikki would continue to endure the shrinking for as long as her queen deemed it necessary and enjoy the rich rewards that the seemingly mountainous figure of her royal majesty had to offer.

This didn't make dealing with the peasantry any easier, however. The Festival meant the cobbled passageways of the castle's outer wards were packed with thronging life and eager visitors from across the lands; species numerous and foreign to the Prelate took to the streets with carts, handbills, shouldered trays and whatever other manner they could find to barter and trade the sweet results of their hard work. Elephantine visitors from the southern deserts thumped heavily with the tide of eager revellers; giraffes stood like lighthouses above the press of bodies and signalled one another with easy smiles and quick waves. Mice were in abundance, their deft hands and quick wits affording them many of the best crafting houses available to any in the Merchant's Guild. Felines, canines, murines and more; all were represented, and all seemed equally ignorant to damn well look where they were going!

Nikki's landscape was a thickly forested maze of shifting thighs, thumping knees and careless feet. She was only knee-high to some of the visitors from foreign shores and when those heavy steps came crashing down within reach of her, the Prelate's tail frizzed like a bottle-brush and she'd scamper back haphazardly, knocked and shoved around by the shuffling thicket of commoners that would invariably crowd around her. Usually she'd have spent the morning sampling the sweet treats come to the castle from uncommon visitors, but the Prelate's attention was instead focussed on getting from the upper to the lower ward where the sharp tang of distant spices gave way to mouth-watering fresh pastries and fruit preserves... and getting nowhere quickly, it seemed!

A dense thicket of legs closed around her as Nikki tried to find her way through the crowd and she caught a swift knee to the chest that knocked her back. Coughing, the breath knocked from her, the pint-sized Prelate staggered back a few paces that saw her thumped by another careless elbow to the back of the head. Stars in her vision burst and Nikki tumbled forward, landing with an unceremonious thud on warm flagstones. She groaned, feeling tentatively at the back of her head, grimacing as she rolled on to her back and felt at her hastily-shortened tabard – little more than a hanging cloth with the royal sigil on it tied around her waist with a length of thin rope it was as 'official' as she could look. Perhaps not enough so that she was immediately recognized.

“Oh, you poor darling, let me help you up.”

Slender fingers wrapped under Nikki’s arm and hauled her upright in a single fluid motion. The feline’s figure usually meant she was more than an easy handful, but her rescuer seemed to have no such trouble lifting Nikki. Reflexively she jerked away, huffing and trying to straighten her tabard with quick hands. “I-it’s not proper to grab me like that!” Nikki said smartly. “I’m here on her royal majesty’s business, a-and-...” She never did finish that sentence. “Ooh.”

Her rescuer was a mouse, that much was immediately obvious – behind her flicked and swayed the thin tail typical to her kind. She was undoubtedly a merchant judging by the breadth of accessories and ostentation she was wearing; a traveller from the dry, hot lands of the distant south, if Nikki was any judge of the style. Ornamented lavishly in gold rings, hanging loops of fine chain and both anklets and bracelets jangling against one another weighted heavily in semi-precious gems, the mouse’s clothing was cut to accentuate everywhere that her wealth was kept visible. Loose-fitting trousers were tied with leather thongs just above her ankles, anklets and a toe ring or two plain to see. Her blouse was cut with billowing sleeves that ended at her elbows, over which the merchant mouse wore a sharply-cut red waistcoat that hung open over her chest, edged in the thin, fine gold thread that spoke highly of the tailor entrusted its use.

The mouse’s figure seemed almost in constant motion. Not just her tail, but her shapely thighs and calves as well. Nikki’s eyes followed the supple curve of the merchant’s legs up to wide, feminine hips – after a moment she couldn’t tell if the mouse was swaying in time with some tune she alone was privy to, or if Nikki’s gaze was just dipping and cavorting in each ample curve of the mouse’s physique. Further protest caught in her throat as she looked up past the merchant’s hips and met dazzling lilac eyes. The mouse’s fingers slipped from under Nikki’s arm and let the feline stand shakily on her feet, staring upward at the undoubtedly pretty smile beaming down at her.

“My goodness. I’d mistaken you for someone much younger! A thousand apologies, esteemed prelate,” the merchant crooned in a soft tone. She pressed her palms together and bowed low from the waist, forcing Nikki to take a quick step back as the mouse’s face swept into view to fill her view. Almost. Nikki’s attention momentarily disappeared into the tantalizing glimpse of sleek tan fur swaying below the mouse’s collarbone. The mouse’s eyes dropped just a fraction, catching Nikki’s green gaze, and two large front teeth peeked from a knowing smile that immediately snapped the shrunken cat’s attention back to the face looming over her. “Ah, but my manners! Please, be welcome in my humble little corner of this royally-appointed bazaar. You may call me Jessica. Perhaps not the far-off and exotic name you might expect, but the one I belong to,” the merchant continued with that same easy smile.

“J-Jessica, alright, well... I think we’ve both had quite enough excitement for one day. I’ve things that need to be attended to, and I haven’t the time to stop and talk with commoners.” Nikki moved to disappear back into the ground.

A chorus of golden rattles drew her eyes back to the ground. Jessica had placed a foot on the flagstones alongside Nikki's and the prelate's attention was riveted there. She swallowed, watching the mouse's brightly-painted toes curl back a fraction, Jessica arching her sole so that her far larger foot drew back even faintly level with the diminutive feline she was standing over. "Please," Jessica murmured from behind the prelate. "Stay. Just a moment of your time. As I said, my little caravan here is present at the behest of your almighty queen. The Keeper of the Forge and Crafts caught wind of our skill with precious metals and gems, and here we are. Perhaps you'd care to take a look, yourself? I assure you, there's something to suit all tastes."

Nikki swallowed again and the swaying sensation in her head subsided, leaving her a moment to think. The scent of warm spice and sweetness still filled the market ward, but she was having a time of deciding if that was the stalls laden with spiced fruits and pastries or the seemingly massive woman standing behind her. Long fingers caressed her shoulder, the mouse's thumb settling delicately against the curve of Nikki's back. "For the queen's representatives there is no charge beyond what you think is fair to pay our skilled craftsmen," she promised in a sibilant whisper that tickled the tips of Nikki's ears with a hush of warm breath. A shiver tingled down her spine and she didn't resist the subtle pressure on her arm, turning her toward a bright row of tents with tables of glittering goods laid out before them.

Jessica gently lead the prelate through a gap in one of the tent flaps, having to pull it back to enter herself; Nikki was acutely aware again of just how small she'd become in the last few months, now barely even hip-height to this sensuously slender merchant, happily swaying ahead of her one they'd both entered. The feline's eyes adjusted quickly to the warm darkness within. Jessica stepped past her with a too-easy sway in her step, the touch of the mouse's tail gliding just a whisker's distance from caressing Nikki's cheek. She swallowed again, glad of the relative darkness, her face an almost painful shade of crimson. The tent was occupied by two others, both mice, male and female to judge quickly by the cut of their outfits. If Nikki was to judge by the accessories of each, Jessica was clearly the head of the caravan with these two her 'hands' in business. Each spared her a lazy smile as she entered, taking long pulls from a bubbling hookah to the side of the tent.

"I don't understand," Nikki began uncertainly, eyeing both the mice reclined on soft cushions before looking back up to face Jessica. The mouse was still smiling sweetly, though it bore an indulgent cast that the prelate was all too conscious of. She'd worn that same smile having caught trespassers and troublemakers before. "Th-there's no goods I can see in here, Jessica, I think it'd be better if we went back out of the tent-"

"Don't be so silly, precious little kitten," Jessica said smoothly, drawing a low chortle from the male watching them intently. "I said that we catered to all tastes in here, and that you'd only pay what you thought was fair. So, take a closer look." She invited Nikki in closer with a wave of her hand, leaning back against a stacked wall of iron-bound chests to stretch a shapely leg out in front of her and point her toes toward the dry, packed earth scattered over the flagstones beneath them. "I could see you admiring them outside, *Prelate*," she practically purred. "So, since you're already so close to the ground, I expect you won't mind kneeling down for a slightly better look? They're the finest and most beautiful in the entire caravan, I assure you."

Nikki didn't move at first, staring down, her heart thumping eagerly, her eyes wide at the display offered to her. She'd been at the queen's almighty feet before but Jessica's were a world apart. Slender, shapely, delicately cared for by expert hands rather than the thick, toughened wall of baked leather that Queen Mack presented when she slammed her heels down in front of Nikki. "Th-they're very nice rings, Jessica," Nikki began.

"No, darling. My feet. As if you'd think I didn't notice! It's charming you'd even think to play coy, sweet Prelate, but I think we can both of us stop pretending as though we don't know what brought you in here, and it wasn't the promise of fine golden jewellery. So, my offer stands. Kneel down, get closer."

The interior of the tent was warm, suffused with the rich, heady sweetness of an incense that Nikki didn't recognize. Surely that was why she couldn't think straight; there wasn't enough air, it was too warm, her mind was swimming loose in the unchecked corners of her head and for all she wanted to protest and argue her position, to demand that she be recognized with the authority and respect she was due... and yet.

And yet.

Wouldn't it be interesting, just once? To entertain the ideas that came unbidden when she had those rare moments to herself; when the Prelate was staggering and reeling from the intensity of the queen's august and frankly massive presence. Surely the queen could read her easily, she trusted in the divine motion of the fates that would send a feline with her interests to stand in the rapidly ascending shadow of the leonine queen, but this would be something different. A little fling. A bit of fun. Some harmless play, surely. Those smiles from the mice off to the sides of the tent gave Nikki's train of thought a red flag for all of a moment before she made up her mind.

With a weak attempt at a demure smile the Prelate sank down to her knees on the stone beneath her, fingers curled inward loosely against her palms, eyes directly ahead of her with head slightly bowed under the weight of the moment. *Weakness!* cried a part of her psyche that demanded she rise to her full height and storm from the tent with what dignity she could yet muster. To pander to these travelling troublemakers! Unthinkable!

Nikki silenced the squalling and arguing within with a deep breath of incense, her eyes half-lidded. From her position beneath knee-height to the now towering mouse, however, the scent was more than just the sweetness of warm incense. There was a life to it, a tang on the breeze in the tent stirred by the listless breath of the hookah-smoking onlookers. Nikki's tail flicked straight. *Feet*, she realised with a jolt, her eyes opening; in front of her waved Jessica's toes, the mouse's left foot lifted right beneath her nose, demanding attention from the trembling feline with the same warm, inviting power that a hot meal would exercise over a hungry stomach.

"Oh, that's sweet!" crooned the mouse, still smiling brightly; encouraging, Nikki thought. Her eyes darted to the two witnesses who were likewise smiling. The twinkle of amusement played in their shared smirk, but little of the warmth from overhead. Nikki's eyes returned to the looming mouse and saw that there was a delight beyond the cruel pleasure of tormenting a 'superior' feline in that smile. Jessica was enjoying her little game, surely, but she'd done nothing that Nikki had any reason to fear of yet. "You didn't have to close your eyes, though, dear Prelate. It's cute that you'd contemplate this experience almost as if you were in prayer, but I don't think you want to miss a thing, do you?"

Nikki shook her head weakly, her vision dropping down the slender mouse's swaying, sinuous figure to settle on the toes wriggling playfully in front of her. "N-no, I don't," she said breathlessly, no less earnest for being a whisper. "I-... I think you've got very nice feet, J-Jessica."

The mouse gave a soft croon of delight in a tone usually reserved for a well-behaved pet. Nikki's fur bristled again with indignation, stilled by a sudden movement of the imposing shin and knee just in front of her. Jessica's toes splayed, her big toe stroking with gentle care along the side of Nikki's face. The feline stiffened, swallowing hard, the mouse's nails painted a cheerful shade of purple that stood apart from the rest of her outfit. With the flash of gold nearby and the supple heat of the large toe against her cheek, Nikki could scarcely recall what else the mouse was wearing. It hardly seemed to matter in the moment. "Oh, my!"

Without realising it, she'd turned her head to the side and planted a soft, chaste little fleck of a kiss against Jessica's big toe. Only the mouse's surprise snapped Nikki from the fugue state she'd been in, mind awash with the inviting heat and pleasant, dry promise of the mouse's large foot.

"I didn't think we'd have quite that result," Jessica murmured, her teeth prominent in a distant smile. "Perhaps we run the risk of taking up much too much of your time, dear Prelate, though I do have something that I'd very much like you to have. There's just one little catch." She winked, lifting her foot over the thickset feline's head, turning into a balmy, aromatic ceiling of slowly shifting toes. "Literally, my sweet little kitten. A little catch."

Dazed, Nikki lifted her head to peer at the sandy heat overhead, finding exactly what Jessica had meant to describe. One of her rings bore a clasp that unfastened rather than simply slipping over the mouse's toe, and without instruction Nikki knew well enough what was expected of her. She moved her arms to reach up and grasp the ring with both hands, but Jessica set her foot down with a muffled thud nearby.

"I'd really love for you to wear it, Nikki," said the mouse. Nikki bristled as expected at the use of her name rather than the title she so richly deserved!

"A ring that size? It's much too big for me," Nikki uttered in an undertone, still less than subtly dazed by the treatment she'd endured so far. The promise of so much, the casual toying with her... her *interests*.

Jessica shook her head and laughed, soft and chiming. "No, dear. You're much too big for it. Don't you worry! I know a tune you'll be humming for a while, trying to get the melody right." She fixed her vivid green eyes on the feline below and began to sing.

Tuneless at first, the mouse's voice began to shape sounds and cavort in syllables that Nikki didn't realise existed. Jessica's soft lips moved and pressed to one another, dancing with the graceful contours of the rest of her figure. So engrossed was the feline at her feet that at first Nikki realised nothing of what was happening until she could feel the world around her shifting. The stone beneath her knees was scraping subtly as it began moving, shifting in all directions. The distant tent ceiling stretched further overhead, reaching into a false sky of deep, dyed shades of red and gold. The mice-
...

The mice puffed on their hookah with the same indolent ease they'd shared the entire meeting thus far, only now their aspect was different again. They were further away and simultaneously larger, in a manner familiar to explorers finding the foothills of distant mountains. Their movements were slowed and seemed slack by comparison, their faraway smiles the aloof disinterest of carefree titans. Nikki understood too late to protest what had happened to her.

She could feel it in the motion of fabric across her shoulders; the subtle hiss of her tabard loosening and the thick cord around her waist holding it in place growing loose and heavy at the same time. She could tell by the staggering sensation, the vertigo that gripped her sight and spiralled around her. Nikki knew without looking that the 'clothing' she'd been made to wear by her reduced size – and status, she'd reflected sourly at the time – was getting larger on her frame, the hanging hem of the blue sheet tossed over her touching the tops of her feet where it was starting to spill over her.

Shrunk again. Smaller by the moment as Jessica's song wound and coursed through her figure, buzzing through her miniscule frame as the sounds warped and danced through the gaps in the material plane, snatching at the space between spaces, stealing away the precious inches that the already reduced little Prelate had left in her. "This-... this isn't proper, Jessica," Nikki said as sternly as she could manage. She clapped both hands to her face hearing how squeaky she sounded in her own ears, imagining how she must sound to the slowly looming mouse.

Trying to remain composed she lifted a hand to her shoulder and tried to tug the heavy nap of her tabard back to cover her, the shrinking feline's voluptuous figure dangerously close to being on display. The hang of the neckline now exposed thick, plush cleavage despite her efforts, and Nikki could only whine as the weight of the tabard began to mingle with the mouse's song, seeming to

drag her toward the floor as the inches bled away from her stature. "Please, I'm small enough!" Nikki cried out, giving up on the tabard entirely as it pooled around her legs and hung uselessly up to her chest, the shrunken feline standing in the tent she could make of what used to be clothing. The thickness of the fabric felt rough and coarse beneath her fingers, individual strands in the woollen weave visible to her as she knelt down in order to try and bury herself from prying eyes beneath the neckline of her former garment.

"S-stop!" Nikki squeaked, jolted from further outcry by the sound of her voice. Just a fraction too high, a measure too quick. She looked up in mute awe to the magnificent woman now towering above her, realising then exactly what it meant to be under the overwhelming presence of a mouse. They weren't tall creatures by any stretch of the imagination, yet Nikki looked upon the assembled trio now as titans stepped down from legend, come to wreak their vastness on the world unprepared for their power.

Then she realised that the reverse was still quite true. They were mice, still. Shapely, graceful, pretty even – Nikki couldn't any more deny that to herself than the truth standing right in front of her. But still they were smaller, quicker, more nimble and spry than the lumbering slowpokes of the world that lived above them. It was Nikki who'd been reduced instead. She was miniscule, truly tiny, a lamentably meagre little figure now reduced to a size reserved for the likes of pets, pests and toys. She understood with a stunned, breathless cry of realisation that not only was she trembling in the shadow of the very smallest giants in the nation, she was hopelessly aroused by the fact.

"There, you see? Now it'll fit you just fine, my sweet little kitten!" crooned Jessica overhead, her voice strident and thundering. The mouse's hips swayed with tidal grace as she stepped forward to close the gap with her shrunken 'victim,' toes landing first with a scattered chorus of thumps and followed by the thunderous impact of her heel. Nikki was scarcely taller than the mouse's ankle now, and found that staring directly ahead where she was knelt gave her only the thickened ridge of purple nail polish to stare at, the rounded thickness of Jessica's toes just out of reach.

The texture, the heat, the smell... everything was beating intensely on the shrunken feline's senses, grasping and grabbing and demanding every facet of her attention at once. She stared into the gap between two 'dainty' toes; she stared up in stunned awe at the gorgeous colossus; she groaned and bit her lip and damned herself for not having had the good sense to flee when the chance was there. If these mice intended to steal her away, now, there was little she could do to prevent them. She was trapped by her own impulses and held captive in the bliss of her fantasies made real in front of her.

Jessica lifted her foot again, and this time the mouse's toes blotted out the tent entirely, the broad thickness of her sole a dry, travel worn ceiling that could at any moment drop down and effortlessly end the feline's existence. Instead the sinuous giantess gave a muffled giggle and wiggled her toes in concert with a now-audible shifting, rasping sound of flesh rubbing on flesh. "C'mon, now. You have to take it off so that you can wear it, darling!"

Finally, Nikki understood what the mouse had in mind. Sizing herself up against Jessica's sole, Nikki could see all too easily that she was scarcely even the same length, sprawled back on the now warm stone beneath to stare up in squirming amazement and admiration of the mouse's figure overhead. If she'd been admiring Jessica's feet before, this was bliss! But the size of the mouse's ring, the catch that held it in place...

...a collar.

The shrunken Prelate moved her jaw as she began working the courage to protest, but she couldn't find it. She couldn't speak past the motion of her arms as they reached up, brushing wonderingly over the mouse's cute 'little' toes, fingertips dancing across warm, whorled skin. She could only grasp hold of the golden edges of the ring overhead and start to pull, grimacing with the strain as she fought the pressure to unhook the latch and pull the ring to one side so that it fell with a hollowed thunk next to her head.

"There you go, darling," Jessica crooned, muffled by distance, her murmuring soft. "Now, as one last little thing I'd like from you before we let you get on with your business with the queen. Don't you think it would be nice to say thank you, hm? I mean to say that we've really been very generous, after all, giving you a chance to enjoy a little time down here and ground level. So, my sweet little kitten," the mouse murmured softly... "Show me how appreciative you are."

The ceiling fell; the mouse's foot dropped, and darkness enveloped Nikki. The heat and pressure sandwiched her against the floor and for a moment her whole figure was squirming, struggling against the vast, ponderous weight beyond. As an ant struggling with a boot there was little give other than the supple softness of Jessica's sole, the grooves and wrinkles in her foot offering space for the smothered feline to breathe; a hint of the mouse's arch let light pass for her to see where she was. Pinned and playfully squished in place with only one possible option. Nikki said thank you as best she could.

Timidly at first, Nikki's lips parted and the shrunken feline pressed her dry tongue against the delicately dusty surface of the toes smothering her head. She trembled still, buzzing under Jessica's foot, but if the incense had been enough to set her mind swimming before, the sweetness between the mouse's looming toes was something else entirely. The world beyond little mattered as Nikki began to warm to her role, the first bashful taste giving way to first an accepting, then altogether eager kissing of the enormous toe pressed to her face.

"Oh, that's sweet!" boomed the mouse unseen behind the false sky of a beaten, travel worn sole. "I was a little worried that I'd erred in inviting you in here, but I see now that I was right to make you this offer. Isn't it nice, my dear? Everything you'd ever wanted, and so much of it. Now, darling." Jessica curled her big toe just a fraction, the pad pressed against Nikki's head and pinning her flat to

the ground, smothered between the fading warmth of her own once 'giant' figure in her pointless tabard and the supple heat of the mouse's sole. "Now you can put the collar on."

Suddenly, light. Nikki gasped reflexively as Jessica lifted her foot away, sucking in sweet, cool air. Her eyes stung with embarrassment and she raised a dainty hand to wipe them both, staring up blearily at what was now three faces looking down at her with expressions between delight and bemused interest. She'd not heard the other mice approach despite their great size, their giant footsteps muffled by the pressure and near-deific experience of being toyed with by Jessica. Timid from exposure, Nikki reached and hefted the warm band of metal in both hands, holding it against her neck tentatively. The toe ring was heavy, but fit comfortably in place as though it had been made just for her.

Closing her eyes, Nikki took a deep breath and pressed it firmly together with a click that echoed in her feline ears. The weight of the gold bore across her shoulders and the back of her neck almost reassuringly, not heavy enough to be a real burden... but there was no way that she was going to forget it was there, a constant reminder of the mingled shame and ecstasy of the moment in which she'd played supplicant to a giant mouse's toes.

As if she could have heard the well-oiled click, Jessica smiled from on high, flashing those cute front teeth and beaming genuinely at the feline's acquiescence. "Very good! Now, there's something that I need to tell you, my little Prelate. We haven't been entirely forthcoming with you, I'm afraid. Not dishonest – I pride myself on a reputation for honesty! – but a wee little lie of omission. You see," she rumbled, pressing her toes down again and effortlessly rolling Nikki back and forth beneath them, pressing her into the yards of cloth below, "the little gift you're wearing is actually to make a little gift for someone else. We are here on the invitation of the queen, after all."

The other mice moved with a brisk purpose, sweeping strides carrying them away from Nikki in a blur she couldn't hope to match. She turned her head so that it was just Jessica's pinky toe pressed against her cheek – she nuzzled at it almost adoringly under the belief the others weren't paying attention – and watched with rapt awe. They gripped the sides of one of the tent walls and mouthed a few quick instructions to one another before, with a flourish, pulling on the tent with a firm haul. The tent wall collapsed with a dusty cascade, leaving Nikki to stare ever further upward in mute awe at the revelation awaiting her.

The Queen stood outside. The tent was positioned so that the rear faced part of the castle wall, offering at least a modicum of privacy, and there Her Royal Majesty stood patiently awaiting her gift. Nikki didn't need to so much as sniff to double-check it was Queen Jaida; the shapely, smartly-dressed vixen standing next to her could only have been the Keeper of the Infinite College, a statuesque beauty who came only to the queen's knee. All that Nikki needed to see was the breathtaking scope of the giant leonine paws waiting outside to know she'd been toyed with the entire time.

As a feline might toy with a mouse, she realised, squirming desperately with an arousal pit against half-hearted shame she couldn't entertain as more than a memory. This was *glorious*, even the fact she'd been so effortlessly taken and pit against her own impulse. The queen had known the entire time how easy it would be to lead the Prelate to this point; she was a slave to her own impulses, and through that she was as surely Queen Jaida's as any other property in the kingdom.

"Oh, Prelate," boomed Queen Jaida, her rich bass voice warm and mocking and loving in a few resounding tones that rattled Nikki's tiny head. "As if you had a chance. Jessica's enchantments are famed beyond the kingdom. I just had to have her pay us a *little* visit." The mouse lifted her foot away again and Nikki slowly rolled to her knees, rising as far as she dare – she couldn't see the queen beyond the ceiling of the tent, but scarcely needed to in order to hear the mocking smile in her tone. "You'll have ample opportunity to continue boring me with your lectures on proper conduct and ritual, of course. I don't plan to sell you off like some trinket. But you are going to... well, rather embody your place in my court at the moment, dear. The chance is there to earn back a little of your former glory and thus your size."

Nikki was breathing heavily, overawed at the sight of perfection on the threshold of the tent. She stood, staggering over the discarded and now pointless pile of her old clothing, stepping on the bare floor and closing with the queen's looming feet. Queen Jaida stood heavily on broad, thick paws, each capable of crushing wood, iron and stone like so much dirt beneath them; Nikki's fantasies strayed to divinity and the thought of being as much a follower of the queen's footsteps as her divine power itself. The Prelate crossed the floor in what felt like an hour's daze, closing the space between herself and the towering, unseen queen.

"Jessica? Would you finish her presentation, please?" rumbled the thunderheads of Queen Jaida's voice. The mouse sprang into action with a sinuous sway and Nikki turned to watch her move, swallowing a dry throat, staring between the now staggering array of sizes around her: the dainty, cute mice; the Amazonian vixen; the colossus made real, the giantess Queen. Jessica returned and kneeled down by the Prelate, reaching with deft fingers to fasten a small loop of fine chain to the collar weighing on her shoulders.

Slender fingers curled around Nikki's waist and the tiny cat squeaked as she was picked up from the floor with all the effort required of grasping a toy. Jessica moved demurely to the queen's foot and stood alongside her toes, and from her new vantage point Nikki could see what was there and waiting for her. She bristled in Jessica's loose grip, squirming against those warm fingers. The mouse merely gave a squeeze and Nikki knew better than to struggle, staring at what divine fate had wrought.

"Do you like it? Sacha spent an age on it. I thought it's a little silly at first, but Jessica was insistent that it looked... how did you put it? Cute."

Queen Jaida's toe ring matched Nikki's in almost every detail but for the clasp that turned it from ornament to collar, with a tiny protrusion set just beyond the thick knuckle that would service as a hook for the other end of the chain in Jessica's other hand. Nikki couldn't squirm, she knew better, and simply gave a faint mewl of what she supposed would be delight as Jessica sat her down on the strong, dense firmness of the queen's big toe; the giantess spread them with a patter of thumps for the mouse to slip between and fasten the chain to Queen Jaida's ring.

With the chain fastened, Jessica whispered a few notes of another old, unknown song... and the chain vanished, its subtle weight missing from Nikki's collar. The feline reached up and felt for the cool length with her fingers where it still hung, invisible, from her neck. "A little enchantment, my sweet little kitten," Jessica crooned, stepping boldly between Queen Jaida's toes to bend forward and plant a kiss on Nikki's blushing features that smothered her in the sweet stickiness of lip balm. "The chain is still there, but it won't interfere with either of you. You could walk hundreds of miles without it pulling taut. Until, that is, the queen decides she wants you near!"

The curvy vixen leaned in close to take a better look at the Prelate, a knowing smirk set along the sides of her pointed vulpine muzzle. "The chain might be invisible, but the collar certainly isn't. We'll make sure to have appropriate clothing prepared so you're fit to serve in the queen's presence. With luck you won't be mistaken for a toy."

The queen silenced them all with a snap of fingers, and Nikki looked up... again the vastness of the queen eclipsed itself, the lioness' gigantic proportions bulging and skewing any perception of her from Nikki's perspective.

"This is as it should be. The Prelate serves the Queen as the Queen serves the realm. Just... in keeping with the standing in which I hold the old ways. For the time being until we can get you dressed, Nikki? Jessica has asked that I leave you in her care for the interim. I don't think you'll mind getting to know the merchants a little better..."

Fin~!