

“There’s a cave in the woods near the bend in the river, where the storm drain empties out into the gorge...”

Jenna tossed her hair over her shoulder and leaned in a little closer to her notebook, going over the last line she had drawn another time. There on the page, pushed down into a little corner between some notes for precalculus, the image stuck in her head since last night had finally come into view: two wild, feral wolves, one with shadow-black fur and the other with smooth lilting grey and brown, snarling at one another along a dipping ridge in a forest.

They were two characters of her own imagining, two pieces in a puzzle spanning multiple journals back at home in a fantasy world under development since... she paused and tapped her pencil to her lips. Since fifth grade, maybe? Maybe earlier. She sighed, looked back down to the paper, and tilted the notebook to continue in.

The cluster of her classmates all gathered around Luke’s desk continued on as well, Megan sitting back with her long blond hair coursing down over her shoulders. “In that cave,” she went on, voice pitched for dramatic effect, “but not too deep, there’s the roots of a tree which no longer stands, and if you go there, make an offering, and proclaim your wish, it will be granted. There’s a catch, though...”

Balkay – that was the name of the black wolf atop the ridge, a strong, tough male, beta in his pack, seeker of knowledge and justice. Sanna was the smaller, lighter male further down, lips curled back in a feral snarl. Jenna smiled as she looked over that part again: recent practice and photo reference had granted her a skill to be proud of when it came to rendering wolves’ mouths and fangs.

The story here was that Sanna disagreed with Balkay’s intended plan to bring down the current alpha and establish himself as the head of the pack. Jenna smirked as she continued on down the smaller wolf’s underside, guiding her pencil over the little tuft and hint along his lower belly, brought into view from his angled leg. There were *also* stories, in one of her secret journals, detailing how these two departed on hunts together so often since they were actually passionate lovers, as neither had a female mate within the pack.

“...the wish has to affect yourself, and yourself *only*.”

“Oh, come on.” That was Luke’s voice. He sat back in his chair and drummed his fingers along the portion of his desk that Megan did not currently occupy. “That’s bull. Next you’ll be telling me that-”

She swung around and glared at him. “It is not! How do you think Jessica lost forty pounds over spring break?”

“She’s on keto?”

Jenna sat back and took a wider view of her little sketch. Shame that this was in *this* notebook; this would be a good one to save in the folder for later. The rest of the conversation returning to a distant drone beneath the ringing of the bell overhead for class, she lifted her head and looked out the window across the wide green of the football field, the shimmering chrome and white of the bleachers and soccer goals past there, and then the thin band of the street and nearby houses. Past there, barely a four minutes’ walk from her own house at the corner of Walnut Dive and Peachblossom, rippled the sea of treetops that formed that little forest in the heart of Ravenwood Park right there.

Ever since her family moved here in elementary school Jenna had been fascinated with that park, mainly for its name. In person it was a bit underwhelming, containing a walking trail barely a third of a mile in length surrounding a small soccer green, and with a playground that she had swiftly outgrown off to the side. In recent years she and a small group of her friends had started to re-inhabit that playground, though, as it provided a perfect spot to relax and pass a blunt between them once the clock ticked past midnight on weekends... and, also recently, they had discovered the twisting, unmarked dirt paths leading deep into the woods that comprised the majority of the property.

Unlike some of the more popular students here, Jenna didn't go anywhere or do anything for spring break. Most of her time was spent at home reading or watching any of the shows she followed or, during the pleasant days between the rains, sitting out in that forest writing and sketching in her notebooks. It was there that she had completed the worldbuilding entry for the depths of Deepshatter Woods, the main setting for her little world – and where she had brought Balkay and Sanna's relationship to a sharp climax, at least twice. There was a nice little spot across the river, over a few stepping stones strategically placed within the current, where the rest of the world folded away and she could focus on only herself and her imagination, wrapped in the protective, cool swathe of nature all around...

She blushed, swallowed, and then started in on sketching out a lonely little cave back behind the fighting wolves, with a tangled system of roots hanging down inside the entrance.

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*Balkay leapt up the climb, tail trailing out behind him as he... no, not quite. Balkay stepped carefully over roots and boulders... the sleek, black wolf blended in with the night sky... 'blended' doesn't sound right. Maybe...*

Jenna hefted her little pack over her shoulder as she reached up to grab at a hanging vine. This was one of the few that didn't have thorns along its length, and when she wrapped it around her hand and tugged, the leaves sheared right off in her palm – but the vine itself held. She tugged again, lifted a foot, and then used it to climb up the steep ridge to the top. Once there the sound of the small waterfall where the drainage ditch emptied out into the river doubled again in strength, a distant rumbling hiss beneath the whispering of wind overhead.

*Little twigs and fallen leaves crunched beneath his footpaws as he trod through the underbrush, hidden in the shadows as always. Balkay knew his way around these woods, from the subtle landmarks recognizable only to a primal hunter like himself as well as from the old scent trails left between the trees, themselves landmarks of their own. He knew what he sought, and drove forward to... drove? I guess it works, but it still sounds wrong. He... carried onward to his goal, the sound of the river guiding him forward, thick ears perked towards the rushing of water.*

Once she made it to the top of the ridge she reached over and dug around in her pack, just to make sure everything was still there – the notebook, her pencil and eraser, the little pens she liked to use for lining. Those she had swiped from her math teacher's desk about a month ago, which meant that she couldn't do anything with them in that class, just in case. Satisfied, she redid the clasp and continued forward, ducking down beneath another low-hanging branch. This section of the park was entirely new to her: as she looked closer she could barely make out the signs of a trail beginning to form, in sections of dry dirt

and scuffed earth beneath her feet, but it wasn't one that she would really have the confidence to explore without the right clothing. Which, she was finding out, she certainly had not brought.

Generally she didn't listen to what the other groups of students had to say. The popular kids, the few little circles of the weird ones with their dark clothing and dyed hair, the ones that all gathered in certain teacher's rooms at lunch... none of them really had anything good to say. But she knew this park, and had been around it a few times in quite a few different ways – there was the playground with her friends, and then a little section pushed up against the base of a broad tree off the main path where something *else* had happened a few times, again bringing a blush to her cheeks as she thought about it – and learning that there was a cave here, with a rumor such as *that* attached to it... well, she just couldn't resist.

As the afternoon sun trickled away between the treetops she ducked again, careful to keep one hand out on the trunks for balance when the footing became too unstable. From here she could just barely see the concrete rise of the drainage ditch, coursing out between two rows of houses along the main street; another thing she and her little group of friends liked to do was walk the length of this ditch, talking about their worlds and fantasies and ideas with each other. It had actually been Lillian who suggested Jenna start turning things for Balkay and Sanna to end up as mates, and after putting some thought into it she had fallen deeply in love with the idea.

*...And there stood the cave in the wood, a dark, gaping maw rising out of the flesh of the forest. Thick roots hung down like hungry teeth over the entrance, guarding the interior from wind and rain and prying eyes. Jenna had to crouch down again, reaching over to clutch her pack to her side, to fit in. As she stepped in further she dug her phone out of her pocket to flick her flashlight on. He knew what waited inside for him. The male, perhaps strongest of his pack, stepped forward to face what might become his fate.*

*"Have you come for a boon, too?"*

Suddenly Jenna froze, every muscle in her body firing off in shock and fright. That wasn't *her* voice, and yet it had still come resounding deep inside her head, a bright, rich, full sound, piercing through. Instinctively she reached back to squeeze her pack and the stories inside back against her body. If anything, she didn't want to lose *those*.

*"You smell like the others," the voice went on. "We're amused. We have waited here, languishing, for so long... and it takes one of you to discover us, to converse, to change, and then the rumor spreads like fire. What is it you desire, supple one? Something for us, something for you. A change of body, a refining of genetics... a reversal of misfortune. Or..."*

Something began to trickle up her leg. She jumped and kicked at it, then gasped as it began again along her other ankle – but when she tried to reach down to swipe it off, snake or lizard or snail or whatever, she found that the same sensation had begun to wrap around her wrists as well, pinning one arm to her side while the other held out at an angle.

Slick and soft, smooth and wet, *slimy*... Jenna's breath caught in her throat as the tentacles lifted her up off the ground, her eyes trying to follow the dripping, vine-like appendages out to their origin in the darkness of the cave. It seemed that most of them curled away behind that mass of roots, the same one that Megan had mentioned.

Another noise rumbled in her head, one putting her in mind of amusement or fascination. "...perhaps, realization of fantasy.

The long, squeezing fingers of those tentacles, pulsing rhythmically along their length, wrapped further up her arms legs, creeping in beneath her shirt and pants. Shock and surprise still wracked her body, and yet at the same time... *Fantasy*, she thought. *Anything I want. A change of body. I could...* The idea swirled into an image there in her head, took shape, established form. Despite herself and her current situation, Jenna blushed again. She was always easily flustered.

For a moment the tentacles slowed in their exploration of her body, the sleek, lukewarm touch doing nothing to abate her interest and curiosity. Coated in a thin layer of sticky slime, they soaked through her shirt and dripped down her sighs, heavy moisture like rolling drool settling in against her smooth skin and seeking deeper, trickling in along the curves of her body, creeping beneath the waistband of her pants.

She swallowed, squirmed, struggled. Another had started to wrap around her throat, though she noticed that that one had a much looser grip to it. Whatever this was, it didn't want to *hurt* her: each and every one of its touches carried the distinct tint of curiosity and investigation, and perhaps a little bit more. Or maybe that was just her own thoughts, her own body, running wild – they felt almost like so many long, careful tongues running their way up and over her, straining at her clothing, teasing at the spots that they thought might make her wriggle and gasp.

And they did, of course. Amusement rippled along the presence in her head again.

"I-" Jenna swallowed and gasped. Suddenly she realized that if anyone else were to stumble into this cave tonight, they would see her here in this precarious position, legs straining to buckle together with growing pleasure as those tentacles curled up around her breasts beneath her shirt, the fastenings of her bra popping free, the seams of fabric pulling taut and splitting. Pressure against her lower abdomen grew, mounted, spiked... and then released as the button of her fly leapt free, with the zipper forcing itself down as another wrist-wide tentacle slipped down there. Her voice caught in her throat. "I want – to-"

The tentacle around her throat curled up, tugged at her hair as it went, and pushed itself into her mouth. She wriggled and tried to turn her head away but already it was caught in place, the thick, slimy exterior bulging and swelling out to fill her cheeks, that trickle of sticky fluid rolling into her throat and mixing with her saliva, surprisingly and thankfully tasteless. Or, at least, *almost*.

"*You need not speak your wish. We know; we can feel it.*" Her clothing continued to tear and hang off in tatters over the twisting tentacles until, finally, she hung there suspended in the cool air of the cave wearing nothing more but her own skin and the dripping drool from whatever this creature was, the strap of her bag broken with her notebook resting along the stone floor. "*We have a price.*"

Jenna gritted her teeth, nervousness meeting and mixing with excitement and, of course, arousal. Already she could feel the changes beginning, the tightening of those tentacles forcing skin, muscle, flesh, bone to shift and change, not in a purely physical, forced but in a deeper manner, as though the little shocks of tension and pressure coaxed her very body to shift and move.

*Balkay faced the beast, lips curled back in a snarl, hackles raised, tail flagged. He took his stance; he felt the fire of battle surging through him. This was his moment. He could prove himself, finally.*

The human tried to speak, yet could not around the tentacle trailing its way into her throat. She swallowed around it again and again, body trying to lurch and gag yet unable to – and then that one slipping between her legs tightened, pressed, sank inside of her, and her breath punched out in a quick moan. She nodded fervently.

*“Bear our eggs. Everyone else to come here has agreed. Spread us. Empower us. Carry and birth us.”* Jenna continued nodding even as her body continued to change, and once those slow, rhythmic pulses widened and expanded, each one pressing through the spread lips of her sex and dumping somewhere deep inside of her, there was nothing else she could do to resist.

Not that she had really *wanted* to. The creature’s grip on her arms and legs, bones still shifting and reworking, searing more with a bright, fizzling pressure than outright pain, and the tone of its voice in her head, showed that it had known this the whole time: Jenna had listened wholeheartedly to Megan’s story in class this morning, and had held those thoughts in her head throughout the rest of the day. At lunch she had finished her sketch of the cave behind her wolves, and on the bus ride home had lost herself in fantasy about what *she* might ask for, and now...

Now, arousal pulsing, belly filling with thick, heavy masses of gelatinous material, legs constantly trying to strain and squeeze shut around the source of that overwhelming pleasure, she sucked in a gasp through her nose, tossed her head, swallowed – and then let a low, rumbling growl of enjoyment around the tentacle that had worked its way into her throat. It began to retract, the pressure squeezing on her from inside pulling back, and then just kept on going: she opened her eyes and looked forward and down, and saw the front of her face drawing out into the smooth, sleek shape of a canine muzzle.

No, not canine, but – *lupine*. Slowly the creature lowered her back down to the ground, its dexterous appendages wrapping and curling around her arms – forelegs – and slipping between her hands, turning fingers into toes, palms into paws. Jenna could barely hold herself up, belly heavy with the weight of the price, these wide, jelly-like orbs sloshing and swinging inside of her as her legs shifted and morphed as well, joints tweaking back, muscles straining, breaking, and reforming, nails pushing out into claws. One of her hindpaws came down on the cover of her notebook when the tentacle slipped away, leaving curling streaks of thick, black fur where slick slime had coated just a second ago.

Her mind remained intact. She knew who she was, remembered why she had come here, and still felt all of the impressions of her ideas and fantasies swirling around in her head – but there was another presence too, another drive. The tentacles slid and slipped around her body, drawing up over her swollen belly and chest, making her hindlegs shake when they licked over still-human breasts... and squeezed and flattened them into the smoother, rounder barrel chest of a wolf alongside everything else, fur sprouting and settling.

She could do nothing but keep her hindlegs spread and tail hiked as it continued to dump its eggs into her, but even that reached its finish, too. With the last one squeezing into her, pulling her wide and filling her to the brim, the tentacle shuddered, pulsed once more, and slid away, but remained between her legs as it did so. Like a broad, thick tongue lapping and swirling and licking, it teased and tasted her sex, bringing her forward and down with a sharp whimper trickling out of her feral muzzle – and as her body jerked in peaking pleasure, everything that she had originally known slipped away as well. Jenna

shivered and bucked forward and down, a weight growing and swinging underneath her, and then a second, balls growing in a plump sack, sheath dropping down out of her belly, clit and sensitive flesh curling and wrapping together into the shaft inside, growing, hardening... pushing out from her sheath, bulging, spraying her load out across the cover of her notebook underneath her, and the dusty ground of the cave.

The tentacles drew fully away, slithering back along the earth as they went. Jenna remained where she stood, black-furred wolf, fully male in body: sharp muzzle, tall ears, broad shoulders, solid haunches... heavy sack pulling up towards her body, supple sheath pushed back behind her swollen knot, thick red-fleshed shaft bouncing, pulsing against her egg-swollen and heavy belly, spurting and spraying out the remnants of her peak.

*"Our pact is sealed."* The tentacles drew away into darkness. A breeze blew outside the cave; it sounded as though gathered moisture dripped from somewhere deeper in the darkness. *"Carry our offspring, our later boon, and bear them – bear us – to a new life. We shall be in your debt."*

Still panting, Jenna the wolf, male head to toe, lifted her muzzle, shook her head, and drew her broad lupine tongue up and over her chops, lapping off the dribbling drool and lingering slime of the tentacles' touch. Her hindlegs still shook with peaking energy, and each step, new and careful in this unfamiliar body, sent a twinge of freshly-awakened nerve reverberating up and into her abdomen, itself still tingling and fizzing first with the lingering heat of her orgasm and second with the constant pressure of all of these eggs keeping her belly swollen and full.

*"Return if you must,"* echoed that voice in her head, dimmer and more distant as she padded towards the mouth of the cave. The feral looked over her shoulder; there in the darkness, the glistening surface of a smooth tentacle spread out from the depths, slid over her tattered clothes, her bag, and her precious notebook, and drew them back beneath the protective netting of roots. From here, predator's eyes sharp and sensitive, she could make out the bright colors and overlapping shapes of so many other similar things as well, cast off from their owners' previous bodies. *"A change easily made is just as easily unmade."*

This was something she had thought about, and imagined, and fantasized, for so long. Jenna lifted her head, perception anew, and trod out of the cave and into the world.

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*Balkay dipped his head and gritted his teeth, sharp fangs glimmering in the moonlight cast down from between the spreading boughs overhead. His thick, black-furred ears pinned back in his head, yet it was not rage or fear that drove his muscles, but rather pleasure, sharp and distinct. A growl of enjoyment rumbled in his throat; he lapped at his chops, swallowed, and lifted his head again, body lurching and bouncing, forward and back, forward and back, with the pace of the other male atop him.*

*This was not Sanna driving down into him from above and behind. It was not Sanna's long, strong forelegs clamped around his waist, holding the black-furred beta in place; it was not Sanna's tense, rhythmic breath puffing out across his shoulder, not Sanna's familiar girth pounding into him, not Sanna's full, heavy sack bouncing and swinging against his own, the other male's plump sheath swelling with his knot, Balkay's own twitching and throbbing underneath his body. This was not Sanna, was not*

*his mate, but he enjoyed it just the same. He relished in the act, and the pleasure, and the sensation – for he did not know how much longer he would have the chance.*

*In the weeks since his original awakening Balkay's belly had grown quite swollen and unwieldy, shifting and shaking with each step he took, permanently slowing his pace and tiring him. He needed someone to take care of him, to watch out and hunt for him – another male, stronger than himself, bolder. He closed his eyes again, lowered his head to the ground, and lifted his rump up into the air and back against the rhythm. Each pound of that body against his, each squeeze and throb and pulse of the other male's shaft beneath his tail, accentuated and brought out the pressure already stirring and swirling in his belly – for the creature's eggs had begun to move and shift on their own, signifying their imminent emergence.*

*Again and again the other male's balls came down and bounced against his own, hot and heavy, firm yet soft. Balkay angled his body, turned his head, rumbled softly... and then with a jerk of the body and a little whimper squeezing out from his throat, the other male threw his head back, growled, and forced himself forward and down, slipping the bulge of his knot in past the rim of the black wolf's tailhole and locking tight as his knot swelled up, pulse, pulse, pulse. Those balls tugged up towards his body and shook, jiggling and twitching against Balkay's own as the other male dumped his seed deep into his already-full body. Deep down, far inside himself, the black wolf knew: this was what he and his eggs needed.*

*He stretched out and shivered beneath his breeding male, low rumble continuing in his throat while his own shaft bounced and throbbed, further soaking the loose earth and leaf litter underneath. Off in the distance yet still nearby burbled the sound of a waterfall, where a drainage ditch of the surrounding human civilization poured down into the river that fed the rest of the woods. Near a bend in that river, up a ridge and behind a thick netting of roots belonging to a tree which no longer stood, Balkay knew that something waited for his return.*

*Not yet, though. His part of the deal had not yet reached completion. He tugged on the thick knot buried inside of him – and felt his belly stir and shift again.*