

The great city of Hearthome, a place of cultural capital within the region of Sinnoh was filled to the brim with character. From every walk of life did the people of the city hail from and as a result the businesses and atmosphere were a sight to behold, not to mention the large open spaces that the city offered, coupled with the vast park of Amity Square, where trainers can walk freely with their Pokémon as well as meeting other trainers. For citizens, it was a wonderful home. For tourists, it was one of the hit locations to visit for anyone travelling to Sinnoh and for trainers it was the home of the Ghost-type gym, Fantina.

At least, for some trainers it was their goal to collect all eight badges the region had to offer—for others it was merely about the journey. Travelling, battling, making new friends... that was the life for Jennifer. Having started from humble beginnings in the coastal city of Canalave, she had since collected a party of partners on their quest to see it all. So here they were, wandering the streets of Hearthome with a tourist brochure in hand... and an empty stomach on the brain.

She paused as another pang of hunger hit her, swallowing the saliva built up in her mouth as she checked her Poketch. Yep, it was lunch time... not that she had eaten yet anyways. She had been enjoying herself so much that she forgoed breakfast, coupled with the fact that she had run out of supplies when she woke up in her tent that morning. Oh well, no matter. Where should she eat...? The brochure mentioned there were some good restaurants around here that served the city's local dish. Her eyes flitted over the brochure as she pulled it open, her finger tracing the words for the information she needed... a map! There. And that place was... Oh wow, it was just a block away! Wait, if it was lunch time, then it'd likely be real packed... Ah crap! She really should make her way over there now if she was to get a table. Quickly folding up the brochure and shoving it into her pocket, Jennifer picked up the pace and broke out into a brisk jog, on her quest to fill her stomach...

-----

The restaurant was indeed packed for the lunch hour rush. The fairly spacey room, with large circular tables in the center and smaller square ones placed to the sides and corners filled with a variety of people, both businessmen, families and trainers alike dining in as they either waited for their lunch or ate at a relaxed pace while they talked with their friends. The muffled sounds of the kitchen came from up the back, behind two wide doors as waiters and waitresses filtered in and out, their professional manners impressing the patrons as they were served their food.

Jennifer slowed her pace as she arrived to the door of the restaurant, out of breath as she pushed open the door, getting a good look around the place. It was well-presented yet didn't have the oppressive air of fanciness to it, the framed pictures on the wall capturing famed places within the region of Sinnoh. They showed their awards proudly, with potted plants in the empty spaces as she stepped forward. The person there, a youthful, stubbled young man simply smiled at her.

"Welcome to the Poffin Place. Do you have a reservation?"

Jennifer just blinked as she looked up at him, having to take a second to think of her response before she smirked and shook her head. "Uhh... No. Sorry."

The attendant loosened up a bit, relaxing as he glanced down at the electronic pad in front of him.

"That's perfectly fine, all good. You're here for lunch, right?"

She gave him a nod and a sound of affirmation as he glanced back to the tablet, letting out a thoughtful hum as he ran his finger over the screen. "...Ooh, you're in luck. We actually have a couple small tables left for lunch hour. Does that suit you?"

Jennifer nodded again as he smiled, glancing down to his pad quickly before he leaned out from his

desk and gestured to where her table would be. "Table twenty-six, on the left side. Your menu will be on the table and a waiter will be with you shortly."

The blonde-haired trainer just followed the young man's hand with her eyes, nodding and giving her thanks as she weaved through the narrow paths between the tables, navigating through the crowded restaurant towards a small table placed up against the wall, clearly designed for only two people. Not that she minded, she just wanted to taste the local dish and get her fill. She took her seat, getting comfortable before picking up the menu to look at the range of food and prices, letting her bag down onto the floor. While she was finding her choice, the doors to the kitchen were swinging open, the first wave of waiters and waitresses coming out with the plates of food for the patrons. The businessmen on their big round tables thanked their servers as they were given their food, along with the families, couples and tourists. Finally, lunch was served.

The restaurant began to liven up a bit, now that the food was arriving and conversation was starting to flow more freely. Jennifer was too engrossed in the descriptions of the meals on the lunch menu, not even noticing a meek looking waiter approaching who was forced to clear his throat to get her attention. He put on his best smile and placed a green glass bottle of water on the table. "Th-thank you for waiting. Are you ready to order?"

Jennifer blinked as she glanced at him, looking back down to her menu as she put her finger on the meal she wanted, holding the menu up for the waiter to see. "This please."

The waiter leaned down to read it properly before he nodded gently, writing it down on his pad.

"Alright, uh, would you like any sides? Drink?"

"No thanks!" Jennifer said with enthusiasm, folding up the menu and putting it aside as she immediately went to pour herself some water as the waiter went ignored. He stayed silent for a moment before let out a sigh to himself, double-checking the order before he gave a small bow and departed for the kitchen.

The activity in the restaurant continued apace, with the rush of patrons being served steadily and on time. It was expected that Jennifer would be eating last, but she didn't mind. She had her water and her Poketch to keep her occupied as lunch was served. After around fifteen minutes she got what she came for—the local dish of Hearthome, presented well and cooked fresh for her liking as the waiter delivered it unto her table. She looked up at the waiter with a smile, thanking him enthusiastically before she picked up a fork and began to eat her lunch. Ooh, it tasted good! Nice and hot, a mixture of flavours and best of all, delicious. She could feel the taste of it dancing across her tongue... She was already taking another forkful, just as events were beginning to unfold in the restaurant.

The waiter from before and what seemed to be the manager were talking aggressively by the entrance to the kitchen, their conversation drowned out by the lunchtime commotion in the restaurant. The manager had an angered look written upon his face, having received too many complaints about the food giving them stomach pains for their liking. The waiter was trying to assure him that it wasn't his fault, trying to recall what dish it was exactly that the patrons had ordered, sharing the information with the manager... when a loud scream broke out in the restaurant, attracting the eyes and attention of everyone as a silence fell over the dining area. On one of the tables was a man, his skin flushed pink and his buttoned shirt straining against his rounded torso as a huge tongue had fallen out of his mouth, resting upon the plate he was eating from. Around him were his horrified workmates, all while the pink colour continued to spread over his skin, the shock in his eyes starting to dull.

"...Go get that chef." The manager muttered to the skittish waiter, who simply nodded and pushed through the doors as the dining room erupted into chaos, people jumping out of their seats in a panic

while a few remained, hunched over in their chairs as a deepening pink spread over their arms, their stomachs bulging in their shirts while their growing tongues filled their mouths. Those unburdened by pain fled with panic out of the restaurant, screaming in terror as the changing man licked his plate clean, continuing to grow rounder as his pants split from his girth, fingers appearing stubby as a small tail began to emerge from amidst his straining clothes. His eyes continued to turn more simple, more beady as he wiped his tongue over the plate, even picking it up with the prehensile muscle dripping with drool. As the man changed into a Lickilicky, too focused on eating the food of his co-workers than his own well being, Jennifer could only watch on with growing dread as her food went forgotten. She had not yet escaped with the rest of the people. She felt like she couldn't. Not with the horrible pain growing in her stomach and the pink colour spreading over her knuckles.

She... She wasn't changing, was she? She didn't want to change. She just came here for lunch. Please... Please.

She grit her teeth as the pain continued to flourish within her. She could feel her swollen tongue inside of her mouth, her hand clutching her stomach as it felt bloated, rounder than before. She had to focus, opening an eye as she peered upon the restaurant, looking at the man who started it all as he cleaned the plates with his tongue, picking them up as he manipulated the dripping muscle with expertise... like he had lived with it his whole life. His pants had torn from his expanding roundness, his legs short and stubby with a single, hard white toe sticking out from them. He continued to swell, yellow and white markings appearing on his front as his hairline receded, his hands turned to mere stubs. Aside from the scraps of clothes falling off him, he now seemed indistinguishable from any other Lickilicky. He was just one out of many that were changing in the restaurant.

It had to be the food. Something was in their food... maybe she could save herself if she could make herself vomit, but it took her everything to hold herself together. She couldn't do it. Her hands felt puffy, like it had been stung by a Combee, her fingers feeling stubbier as her whole body felt rounder as a whole. But she was still in control. She had to... had to do something. She forced herself out of her chair, getting to her weird feeling feet and her tight shoes as she took a weak step forward, blinking as she gazed upon the restaurant. Her legs were beginning to feel weirdly short, her thighs having thickened within her pants to accommodate for the width of her body. The first Lickilicky had stepped over to another changing victim, their skin not yet taken by the pink colour... but with one friendly lick as the drool coated their bodies did the pink pigment immediately catch up. There was shock for a brief moment as the tongue touched them, but then... bliss. The pain disappeared from their face, beginning to smile as their own changes began to accelerate. They grew rounder much faster, their clothes tearing against their growing form as the first Lickilicky assisted in their comrade's changes, who began to eat the food on the table in front of them. All while this happened in front of Jennifer, her face firm set with horror as she continued to slowly change.

She... She couldn't stay. She had to get out. She took another step, body growing into her legs as she wanted to get away from it all. Where... Where could she be safe? The kitchen. The kitchen sounded safe. Her mind was a mess, whirling with emotions while something in their sought to hinder her thought process. But right now, the kitchen... she had to get to the kitchen. Away from the tongues of everyone else. She took another step, unaware that the tip of her growing tongue was poking out from her mouth, her cheeks becoming rounder and puffier, as did the rest of her. The tip of a tail poked from the gap between her shirt and pants, one that went ignored. Each step brought a new weight upon her legs, as her body kept growing rounder, her stomach stretching the waistband of her pants. The doors to the kitchen were before her, as the sound of movement began to stir behind her. She could hear cutlery clinking with plates, as the other hungry victims finished the food on the tables before them. A

horrifying thought crept to the front of her mind, one that thought about joining them... but no, the kitchen would be safe. She gripped the handle, her fingers fat, stubby and almost non-existent, but that was fine. She just had to open... open the door... why couldn't she open the door? She tried, tried pushing and pulling but it was to no avail—the door was locked. The kitchen was sealed away. But she kept trying to open it out of desperation, shaking the handle as she kept trying and trying and—

She fell. She lost her grip as she lost her fingers, falling backwards onto her behind that shook her whole body, continuing to feel the pain permeating through her as she winced with pain. She felt so encumbered, both in body and mind. But she still had her faculties. There still had to be a way to reverse this, right? She opened her eyes as she felt a shadow loom over her, turning her head backwards to—

A tongue hit her in the face, the warm drool being wiped onto her as the horde of Lickilicky's slowly grouped around her, their tongues hanging out of their mouths. There was a brief moment of shock... followed by intense calm as the saliva numbed her pain, the pink colour starting to spread over her face. As she sat there on the ground as the group of Pokémon took turns licking her with their tongues, she could only relax as all her worries disappeared. As the sounds of sirens grew closer in the distance, her longer, growing tongue slipping out of her mouth, she could only smile as her face simplified. Her eyes softened, shrinking in size, turning into small, beady black things.

Eating... eating sounded pretty good right now.

-----

The incident gained worldwide attention from news outlets all over the globe as a full-scale investigation went out regarding the case. Police and scientists were brought onto the scene as the group of nine victims were safely captured and put into quarantine. Witnesses told their stories, the restaurant went into question and the staff were put under the pressure. It didn't take them long to find out that the chef preparing those specific meals had accidentally messed up the recipe—added in an ingredient they weren't supposed to. Needless to say, the reaction it caused was... highly unexpected. The chef didn't appear to have any malicious intent regarding the incident, but he had plenty of regret and remorse. Efforts to replicate this effect in a controlled environment are underway.

The scientists involved in the case were to investigate the victims and to see if it was possible to synthesise something to reverse the changes. They tested the mental capabilities of the Lickilicky's as well as the supposed infectious properties of the saliva—they found it consistent with regular Lickilicky drool, along with the mental capabilities. If it weren't for the fact they were part of the case, they would be practically indistinguishable. Testing of the Pokémon's genetic makeup agreed with that hypothesis. They toiled for weeks and weeks, trying different things with the information they had on hand... but they found nothing. Not even with the information they gained from the testing of the reactant.

So it was decided, with heavy hearts, that the Pokémon were to be released to the wild. The Lickilicky's were released to the wild, the happy and hungry Pokémon allowed to roam free. Of course the organisations involved keep an eye on them, but for everything that had happened, they seemed... content. Happy. Jennifer was out exploring the world now, in ways that she couldn't of imagined before. But she really needed something to eat.