

Captured

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He could hear her near him, in the rocks, but the sound of her movements bounced around the stony outcroppings that surrounded him and made it difficult to pinpoint her location. Perking his triangular, feline ears up and out he strained to hear his quarry. He was in trouble, and he knew it. He had been separated from his team; they had no idea where he was. Hell, he had no idea where he was, just that he was somewhere in the foothills north of the Seven Mountains, much too far from home for his own liking.

He spun, brandishing his sword when he heard her again, rock clattering off of rock around him. She had the high ground on him, and if he were to try to climb up into the rocks at her, he would be too open, so he was stuck where he was, creeping through the jagged monoliths that rose up around him in a hopeful attempt to find his team. They had to be nearby, at least. He had seen them only a few hours ago, and then they had been attacked by a dragon, or something that looked like one, with vicious horns and savage ferocity. The only thing it had lacked was a pair of wings to match its pallid, bone-white scales.

It had driven them apart, and he had lost it in the rocks. He felt like a coward, but there was no way he could confront something more than three times his size without his team. He was the sneaky part of his team. His slight stature and lean, wiry musculature made him fast, and padded, digitigrade feet let him move quietly in the night, an effort that was made easier with his coat of short, grey fur. But out here, in the middle of the day, in the open, he was a sitting duck, and he couldn't be sure that she wasn't waiting for him behind whatever rock he wanted to dart behind.

Every single instinct in his frightened brain was screaming at him to run, turn around and sprint away with his long cat tail tucked between his legs. He fought it down, swallowing hard. Running was often the worst thing to do, and he was a dead cat if he got caught out in these rocks by that whatever-it-was. Besides, he had seen her out here, was so close to her he could almost smell her. While he was running he had caught a glimpse of her in the rocks, and he had gone from the hunted to the hunter.

That had ended pretty damn quickly. She had disappeared, and now he was stuck here, jumping at random noises. Heaving a deep breath, he straightened and tightened his grip on his sword. His armor was certainly not helping him remain concealed at the moment, the shining argentum breastplate reflecting the midday sun around the rocks. He might have to speak to the captain about some more appropriately camouflaged armor for the less brute-force of the Lancers.

He heard her again, and forced himself to take a deep breath as he spun in a slow circle. Not seeing her peeking over the rocks around him, he continued cautiously forward. Let her follow him. If she wanted to tire herself out hiking over the difficult terrain above him while he found his team on the low road, let her. He would see her if she tried anything sneaky, and his armor would at least protect him if she pulled a bow on him.

He froze when he saw it. He couldn't comprehend how it had gotten so close without him hearing it, especially as it took thunderous steps out into the open in front of him. It must have been at least twenty feet tall. Pale white scales, the color of bleached bone covered almost its

entire body. In fact, its whole body looked washed out, everything but its piercing, golden eyes, which were completed by slitted, reptilian pupils as it looked at him with a frightening amount of intelligence.

He supposed it was a she, with as much he could see under its peculiar garb. The enormous creature was wearing a suit of armor that looked much like his own, but of a much darker, more sinister looking metal, a breastplate that covered her incredibly bountiful chest, fingerless gauntlets that let it put into play thick, predatory claws, and plated greaves and leggings that covered its calves and shapely, thighs, leaving her taloned, digitigrade feet bare. She had a suspiciously bare crotch, but he supposed that, following along with her reptilian nature, her genitalia were concealed behind a slit that was protected by its thick, glittering scales.

What made her most striking, however, was her sheer, obvious power. Her entire frame was covered with tremendous slabs of dense, unyielding muscle. She outstripped anyone he had ever seen for physical power, save for perhaps a true dragon, and it looked like it would take no effort from her twenty-foot frame to crush him to a pulp if she got her fingers around him.

She smiled, showing twin rows of unbelievably threatening teeth that were as pale ivory as the backward-curving horns that crowned her head tipped her nose and the long, jagged spikes that lined her spine all the way down to the end of her long, equally muscular tail. He could practically hear loose rocks clattering around him as she spoke, her thundering voice booming in his ears. "Hello, kitten... You're awfully far away from your friends." He didn't answer her, just stared her down, staying ready to sprint if she so much as twitched in his direction, not that he believed he could outrun her; her legs were longer than his whole body. She blinked at him, appearing genuinely wounded at his ignoring her. "That's alright, kitten. I suppose we can talk more later."

He blinked in confusion, and then heard his mistake before he could realize it. He spun, swinging his sword around, but before he could bring it to bear, he caught a glimpse of the woman he had been chasing through the rocks before she pressed a damp cloth over his feline muzzle. Almost immediately, his eyes rolled back in his head and his world went dark around him.

He awoke with great trepidation, stirring sluggishly as he fought to open his eyes against the weight of whatever had been used to knock him out. With a soft groan, he raised his hands to his head, pleasantly surprised that he wasn't bound to something. He took a quick stock of his surroundings.

He wasn't chained to anything, and he still had his clothes, which was another surprise. However, expectedly, his gear, arms, and armor were all missing from his person. Peering around, he realized why he wasn't restrained. Through the dim light he saw the bars of his prison before him. He rose unsteadily to his feet and staggered over to them. They weren't the bars of a prison door. He was in a cage, a... surprisingly roomy cage. It must have been at least an eight-foot cube, and the bars were made of the same glittering, almost black metal as the creature's suit of armor. It was eversteel, and anyone familiar followers of the demonic taint that the Silver Lance was fighting to rid from the land would have recognized it on sight.

That his cage was made of the nigh-unbreakable substance didn't bode well for him, and he inspected it carefully. It was a solid construction, with no structural weaknesses that he could ever hope of exploiting without his tools. He couldn't even be sure where the door was. The cage didn't even seem to have a door, until he saw it. It was on the floor. The impossibly heavy hunk of eversteel had been lifted from the ground after he had been placed in it, and then situated such

that the door was sealed not only with a complex-looking eversteel lock, but also with sheer weight, thousands of pounds of metal.

His heart sank. He was in trouble, a lot of trouble, and he jumped as an unseen door opened on the other side of the room. A lance of brighter light spilled in through the opening, and he saw, carrying in with her a globe of almost painfully bright light in her hand, his captor. He winced away from the light, his keen cat eyes flailing to adapt to the abruptly painful radiance. He blinked in surprise when the luminance slowly dimmed to a more tolerable level, filling the room with soft, white light.

"My apologies, Lancer" his captor told him with shockingly sincere concern. "I forgot it was so dark down here."

He just kept blinking. She wasn't really at all what he had expected. She was dressed in a set of fine black robes that hung down to her ankles, and her feet were clad in a pair of soft leather shoes. She was attractive, very attractive, with fine, raven hair that hung down her back and intelligent blue eyes that peered at him from time to time as she fiddled with some equipment on the table. Her robes couldn't hope to hide a svelte, elegant figure, and she moved with confidence and poise that made her look like a goddess made flesh. Not exactly the mindless horror he had expected to be fighting.

Still, he was a prisoner, and he didn't bother to keep the hostility from his voice as he hissed, his ears flattening angrily against his skull, "Where have you taken me, sorceress?! You might be able to keep me here, but others will come looking for me!"

She just looked at him. "You do me an unjust honor, Lancer. I've got no talent with true magic. I'm just an alchemist, maybe a good one, but one nonetheless." She gestured to the simple, unadorned room around them. "And I've just taken you home, at least your home for now, my home for some time. And yes, I can keep you here, and yes, your fellows will come looking for you. The true question is: Will they look in the correct location?"

That made him swallow hard around a ball of terror that formed in his throat. "My team knows where we found you. They'll be back!"

"Also likely true." she said coolly, "Another question for you: Are we now where we were then?"

He sagged, despair creeping up his spine. "If you're not in the mountains, why were you out there in the foothills in the middle of nowhere?" he demanded, grasping at straws.

She shrugged, sweeping her arm out to the equipment on the table before her. "I was gathering reagents. There is rare lichen that grows on the rocks, just at the snowline on the mountains in this region. From it I can extract a chemical that helps stabilize a few of my more... testy compounds." She smiled, swinging at him a small, leather pouch. "I managed to collect a good portion this trip. I shouldn't need to go find more for some time."

She spoke like she didn't have him sitting in a cage in a lonely room somewhere she seemed disinclined to tell him. "If you were out in those hills just scavenging for supplies, why attack us?"

She looked at him, an insulted frown stretching her full lips into a thin line. "My friend and I didn't attack you, Lancer. You attacked us. My... friend is rather protective of me, and both parties might have overreacted a bit after battle was joined... at least such a battle as two grown men running for their lives from an angry titan could be."

"So you aren't behind the disappearances from the towns south of here?"

"Hardly, Lancer. Until you, it has just been myself, my friend, and a few very unfortunate bandits and thieves. In fact, I don't remember seeing anyone suspicious up here since I arrived."

"Then why in The Gods' Names did you drug me and take me here?!"

She looked at him hard, and he felt his anger die out, replaced by creeping fear. She smiled, a smile that never touched her eyes. "Because you intrigue me, Lancer. When your compatriots ran back the way they had come, down out of the hills, you ran in the other direction. You came very close to getting squished out of your armor when you... attacked my friend and sprinted into the rocks. You put yourself in harm's way to give them time to run away, a futile effort; if she had wanted to catch them, she would have regardless of your attempted intervention. However, you still tried. You charged her, clearly trying to get her to focus on you before you ran further into the hills, away from safety.

She hardly looked like she expected an answer, but he felt obligated to defend his decision. "O-of course I did! I had to do whatever I could to help them escape!"

She just shrugged, going back to her work. "They must be valuable to you, Lancer, your allies. I assure you, they safely made it out of the hills and back to their town."

He sighed with relief, wrapping his fingers around the bars of his cage. "Thank the Gods."

Waving the statement away with an idle hand, she didn't look up from her work. "If you so desire, Lancer." Pausing, she looked up at him again. "Lancer, do you have a name? I would like to know what you're called."

She seemed so earnest, and he spoke before he could corral his thoughts. "It's Gravis."

Smiling like he had given her his life story, she nodded politely. He cursed himself for his stupidity. He was a prisoner of this woman and he was sitting here answering her questions like a lost schoolchild. Trying to recover his senses, he leaned on the bars before him. "What's your name." he asked her innocently.

Her smile dropped like he had just reached through his cage and slapped her. "My name isn't important, Gravis. You may call me what you like, but Mistress would be most appropriate."

All semblance of hope dropped out of his gut, and he struggled to grin at her charmingly. "How about Miss?"

In response, she only shrugged again, saying without emotion, "As I said; you may call me what you want."

She seemed rather disinclined for any further conversation, and he felt his tail drooping sadly as worry tightened his gut. "What do you want from me?" he demanded weakly.

She still didn't look up from her equipment. "I want nothing from you, Gravis."

"What are you going to do with me?"

Laying down her work, she pivoted on her chair so she could face him, smoothing her robes over her front. "I'm likely going to let you go, Gravis. I like you. Perhaps not all Lancers are crazy cultists."

"Cultists?!" he spluttered in disbelief, "Cultists?! The Silver Lance is not a cult! We fight cultists! We help people! We-"

She cut him off with an angry swipe of her hand. "You are a group who follow a leader with a nearly blind zeal, a religious fervor that is capable of clouding your judgment! Your leader possesses power unmatched by any but the gods themselves, and he sits in his tower, passing judgment down on those he deems lesser without concern for the consequences. He also is the head of a secret organization that is answerable to none but themselves! How is that not a cult?!"

He got angry. "Because that's not at all how it is! He deems no one lesser than any other, let alone himself! All he does is worry about the consequences of his actions and those of the

people around him! He judges no one, accepts all! And while any Lancer would lay down their life for him, just as we would for each other, it's not because he expects it of us; it is because we care about him, just as he cares about each and every one of us!" He finished with an angry growl that made his fur stand on end and his tail flick furiously.

Sitting in her chair placidly, she accepted his tirade with impossible patience. When he was done, she just looked at him, and Gravis felt distinctly uncomfortable. He felt like she had learned far more from his outburst than what he had told her, and she nodded slowly, a sympathetic smile crossing her opulent features. "If that is how you feel, Gravis. I'm not one to argue the point."

With that, she just turned away and bent back to her work. He dropped his hands limply to his sides, utter flabbergasted. She seemed to just be ignoring him, but her stance told him that, despite attending to her self-appointed chore, she was still paying keen attention to him. He threw himself from the bars and paced around his cell for a few minutes, trying to think of something to do, but there was little hope for him. The bars were too closely spaced to give him a hope of squeezing through them, despite his feline flexibility.

Instead, he returned to the bars, desperate to learn something. Her silence was unnerving him. "Miss, what exactly are you doing, if I might ask?"

Not stopping, she acknowledged him with only a bob of her head. "You may, Gravis. I'm just keeping myself busy while I wait."

"Wait for what? Is... your friend out doing something?"

She stiffened in a light giggle. "No, Gravis. I don't think I could talk her into letting me too far out of her sight. She's on the other side of the door over there, keeping an ear on our conversation. She has trouble fitting into these rooms. It's more comfortable for her to wait outside." She looked at him out of the corner of her eye. "Not that she couldn't get in here, that whole wall opens up. But no, I'm just waiting for the potion I gave you to take effect." She turned her head, smiling manically at him. "I think you'll like it greatly. I hope it takes to you as well as my previous guest's took to her."

An icy chill shot through his veins. "Wh-what did you do to me?!"

Continuing to grin, she answered him calmly despite his obvious panic. "Something I think you'll appreciate, Gravis. We watched you for a bit. I saw how you looked at your... friend... the bigger feline, with the stripes. I pride myself on my perception, Gravis. I saw how much you wanted him. I saw your... desire. While my directive might simply be finding ways to improve the production of eversteel, I saw no reason not to give you a small gift. My friend has expressed interest in getting... bigger. I think I'd like that, Gravis, for her to be even larger, but my expertise in body-sculpting is limited. Her current form exceeded my abilities as it is, but she's special, and it didn't exactly surprise me to see her become what she is now. I was very pleased." She paused, thoughtful for a brief moment. "I want to give her what she wants, Gravis. She deserves to have what she wants. I would make her as big as a mountain!" She sighed, looking heartbroken. "But I can't, Gravis. I'm not good enough for her, but I can get better. I just need more practice. She would never let me test compounds on myself. That's why I-Oh? Do you feel something? Tell me what you feel, Gravis. I need to learn. Tell me everything."

"F-fuck... you!" he grunted as he fell forward against his cage, dropping to his knees. He could feel it, like an uncomfortable tightness over his chest that spread out over his skin.

She blushed and smiled. "You flatter me, Gravis, but I'm afraid I must decline. I've promised myself to someone else."

Imprisoned by a psychopath, and she wouldn't even give him the satisfaction of yelling at her. "Please! Stop this! You can't make me like her! You can't do this!"

"Of course I can't! I wouldn't be able to recreate the process that made her without another her, and I assure you, she is completely unique. Even if I could, I didn't give you a full dose, just a sip. I just need to see if I've made any progress. Please don't fret! Unease could affect the results. Just relax, Gravis. It shouldn't hurt too much, and I promise you'll like the outcome!"

The tension in his body was growing increasingly pressing, and he did everything within his power to resist it. He knew it was of no use. This wasn't some spell that could be shrugged off through focus; he had already been poisoned, and the potion he had taken against his will was coursing through his wiry body. "Who are you," he growled, his voice ragged with strain, "to decide for me what I'll like, what happens to my body?! You have no right to do this to me! Please," he added, pressing his muzzle into the bars in desperation, "don't do this. I don't want this. I like the way I am. He likes the way I am. I don't want to be big like him."

His captor waved away his protests with a languid hand. "You may be able to lie to yourself, but you can't lie to me, Gravis. I saw how you looked at him. You want what he has. If I can help you achieve that while furthering my own goals, then I am happy to be of service. Now please quit your fussing and calm down. You are in good hands."

He opened his mouth to defiantly continue his fussing, but it proved a vain attempt as an abrupt, dull throb across his body robbed him of his breath. He felt tense and sore, like he needed to stretch. Desperate to ease the strain, he fell backwards, the bars beneath him digging into his back as he contorted. He could barely pull enough air into his lungs, and he gasped frantically, starting to panic as his form was robbed from him. He could feel icy adrenaline shooting through his veins, but overpowering that frightful chill was a rush of something else, something his panicked mind couldn't put words to.

His clothes were already fairly tight on his lean frame. He was proud of his body, and he didn't mind showing it off. When he felt his shirt abruptly tighten further across his chest, he let a low, hopeless whine. He slapped his hands down over his torso to feel his tight, toned musculature writhing beneath his fur. "N-no..." he pleaded as he felt his hands be forced up under the increasing mass of his throbbing muscles. He looked down at himself. His clothes were getting to be as tight as his skin, stretching thin over dense, heavy plates of sinewy strength that were pulsing to life all across his thin frame.

His buttons were straining, fighting zealously to keep him clothed as each individual muscle defined itself from its brothers, rising up in rebellion against his wishes. Their resistance seemed doomed when the first of many buttons popped free from its place over his chest, letting a patch of short, grey fur be seen through the hole. Eager to keep up, his abdominals swelled, quickly turning a taut, defined stomach into a solid wall of stony muscle that could be seen as they too fought against the constraints of his shirt.

Muscle seemed to be not all that he was getting, as the seams around his shoulders started to give noisily. His entire body was beginning to broaden, stretching wider to support the growth of a physique the likes of which he had never dreamed of having. His sleeves separated from the rest of his shirt before he bent his arms to continue feeling the surging of his chest. This awakened the spirit of defiance in his upper arms, and his biceps, already strong from training with his sword, bulged violently against his skin, splitting the cloth over them like it was wet paper. He balled his clawed hands into angry fists at the traitorous intentions of his body, and this incited rebellion in the muscle of his forearms, which rose up against him with the rest of his thickening frame.

Gravis gasped when his pants started to give way. His thighs built up on themselves like a rising tide, splitting seams and shredding cloth with unrelenting tenacity only a moment before his bulging calves did the same. More buttons flew from his chest and he rolled his suddenly massive shoulders, flexing in defeat and splitting his shirt down his back, where similarly powerful slabs of might sprang to unbidden life.

With a growl that rumbled in a now-cavernous chest, he sunk claws into the tattered cloth over his torso and tugged, stripping it from his fur and leaving his chest bare. He considered doing the same for his legs, but any attempt to put his hands below his waist would have been disastrous. There was a storm brewing between his legs, and before long, more than muscle was rising up against his will.

He could see the unexpectedly sizable bulge in the fabric past the twin mounds of his pecs. He wasn't that big. He had never been that big, and he watched it get bigger, throbbing against its increasingly ruined prison of fabric. His dick raged against its confinement, and when the last vestiges of his pants finally gave way, he couldn't help but gasp in explosive relief as he flopped free against his thigh. He had never really been hung like a cat, but the beast surging slowly to life between his legs would have looked more fitting on a horse, and he felt nearly painful tightness in his balls as his scrotum surged to keep up.

Snarling defiantly, Gravis pushed himself up, steadily rising to his feet as his body continued to heave under his skin. She was just sitting there, smiling gently as she watched him lose himself. He took a threatening step forward, but nearly lost his footing when he heard as much as felt his bones crack under his overwhelmingly powerful frame. Blinking in shock as he fell against the bars to steady himself, his body began to inch upward as well as outward.

He surged thicker to preserve his broad stature, which gave his frenetically swelling musculature even more room to continue to coat the slender cat he once was thick a thick layer of throbbing power that made him look more and more like a hulking beast. He cried out for it to stop, but that only seemed to spur it on, and he stretched longer and heavier as he struggled vainly against his eversteel cage. Setting his clawed paws against the floor he hauled backward, throwing back his head and roaring defiantly as his voice cracked and dropped an octave. There had to be something that would give; no construction was perfect.

The almost-black rails refused to budge, even under the onslaught of his swelling form. He grunted as his struggle, instead of doing what he dearly hoped it would do, just encouraged his body to leap outward. As he pulled, he added a foot to his height over the course of a couple seconds, and just as much to his width as pound after pound of steel-hard muscle, thick with pulsing veins, roiled up onto his frame. He put his back into it, and he just got bigger and bigger to no visible result. His cage remained untouched.

Gravis howled in rage at his prison. He felt so tight; it wouldn't end. He barely even noticed as he started to change even further. Seemingly one strand at a time, his soft, grey fur darkened, turning an, inky, pitch black that swept down his form, coating him from head to clawed toes in a layer of midnight. Tensing, his body snapping taut, he felt his body shudder, rapidly approaching a ruinous climax as the transformation rocking his body peaked.

The tips of his ears flicked against the top of his cage, giving him a sense of how big he was getting. Eight feet, he was eight feet tall, at least, and he was forced to bow his head as he continued to quake with growth. He had to begin to bend at the knees as his shoulders pressed up against the roof of his prison. Growling, trying to stoke the flame of his flagging hope with the heat of his flaring anger, Gravis rolled his huge arms in their sockets and straightened as much as he could, levering his body against the bars above him before pushing violently upward. He

grunted in sudden strain, hoping his still-lengthening body would give him an advantage. Instead, he was just forced to bend further as his cage held his strength with placid stillness.

That broke him, and he slumped, spent. In a shocking anticlimax, just like that, his body mercifully ceased its absurd growth. He gasped as he let himself fall to the ground, collapsing against the bars behind him. The fire's abrupt absence left him shivering as he panted to regain control over his breathing. His glossy black fur was drenched with sweat, and his now-black hair hung limply into his face.

Her gritted his teeth and looked down at himself. His senseless growth had left him huge, bigger than most anyone he could remember. His lean, wiry body was gone, utterly buried in huge, heaving mounds of dense, unyielding muscle that made him look like a thick, hulking brute. Massive shoulders sat above a heavy, barreled chest that was covered in huge slabs of chiseled might. Broad arms laid powerful fingers over a brick-and-mortar abdomen, the ridges and valleys of which he touched gingerly.

He hesitated. A massive, girthy cock stood stiffly out from his loins, under which hung a swollen sac that held gonads the size of melons. It ached to be touched; it must have been feet long, a match to his powerful, ten-foot frame. He ignored it, grinding his teeth in defiance. Damn it, it was still his body, despite what had been done to it, and there was still control he could exert. Thighs like tree trunks, thick and hard, let down into powerful calves and feet whose claws had elongated into curving, savage talons.

Gravis blinked numbly, looking at his hands. The claws that had tipped his fingers had thickened and sharpened, turning as black as his fur. He looked bestial, primal. He shook his head with a defeated sigh, lifting his legs into his chest as far as his new frame would allow and wrapping his arms around his knees protectively.

His captor, silent the whole time, rose to her feet with a smile, intrigue glimmering in her eyes. "Almost doubled in height with just a quarter-dose." she mused, tapping her chin thoughtfully, "I guess there was a panther hiding under that skinny kitten, after all. Tell me, Gravis. When you got angry, what did it feel like? It looked like it may have had a powerful effect. I think that might be something I can use. Anger... anger... It must have released something into your bloodstream that helped the compound catalyze. You ended up much larger than you should have. I'm going to need to take samples before we release you." she gestured at his body through the cage. "Do you like it? I must admit you look quite good. Black looks very fetching on you."

Compliments... He smiled bitterly, swallowing past the taste of bile in his throat. He didn't dignify her cheerful question with a response, as biting as he wanted it to be. She seemed to look hurt when he ignored her, her good cheer visibly wilting. That made him feel better, at least. She dipped into a polite bow and turned to begin gathering up whatever it was she had been working on while she was... waiting.

When she turned toward the door, she paused when he mumbled at her back. She must have not quite heard him, because she turned back around on the threshold to face him. "I'm so sorry." she said sincerely, "What was that?"

He spoke up. "I said that I didn't want what he had. I didn't want his muscles, or his height." She opened her mouth to protest and he cut her off with a furious flick of his claws. "I know what you saw! I'm not saying I didn't want anything! I wanted him, you witch! I didn't want to be like him, I *wanted* him! It had been more than a few days of walking with him, and I was antsy and couldn't keep my eyes off of him! I wanted his body on me! I wasn't jealous of his physique! I don't want this!"

Gravis huffed angrily and sagged back against his cell. It had become rather cramped. The delicate-looking woman appeared shaken, but just dipped into another wordless bow and glided smoothly through the door. He caught a glimpse of a wall of pale, ivory scales before the door shut behind her, leaving him along in the dark once more.