

Ifrit de Corps
- A CYOA Turned Weird Short -
By Razmagurk
~ With thanks to everybody on the discord for participating! ~

Glass glittered in the air, scintillating crystal diamonds lit up like snow by the street-lights thirty feet below.

“What a way to end a story,” she thought. A broken window and a girl about to die. All that hard work for nothing. And here she always thought she’d been destined for greater things.

She could still see him looking down at her, hand outstretched as though to catch her. As though this had all been some kind of accident. The bastard. She didn't know how he had gotten so close to her all of a sudden. She thought for sure she'd lost him in the Precambrian display. How had he gotten ahead of her like that?

Oh well. She shook her weightless head. There was no use wondering now, was there? Now, it didn't matter. Now, she had more important things to worry about.

With a presence of mind typically reserved for especially poignant last words, she curled her outstretched fingers into a fist. All but one.

Fuck that guy.

She clutched the lamp tight against her chest. The world blurred as she spun. This - she cradled the warm brass in her arms all the tighter - at least he wasn't going to get this. Not with all the attention her body would bring. They'd lock it up for sure, right? Police evidence. Would that - would that be enough to stop him? She could only hope so.

She just wished... she just wished she could have seen her partner in crime one last time. One last apology. Had he gotten out? Was he looking up at her even now from the rendezvous?

Oh well. This was just the last of a long string of regrets. It had been a stupid plan to begin with.

And so it was that Adriana Darkblood, who would hate to know that the headlines were going to call her by her real name, closed her eyes and waited for the rushing to stop. For death to take her.

But well, that's not how these things go, is it? No, that's not how these things go at all.

And so it was that there was no ground for her to hit.

She didn't know how long she had been falling before she realized. Moments? Minutes? Hours? Shit, maybe she had hit the ground after all. Maybe this was hell. The biggest fuck up of your life stretched taught against eternity.

But no, she was pretty sure hell wasn't so... quiet?

She forced open an eye then immediately shut it. She was still spinning wildly, but gone were the bright lights and shattered glass. It was like she was in the middle of some massive cloud, great billowing smoke spiraling off in every direction at once.

Except, no, that wasn't quite right was it? Because if you were in the middle of a cloud you'd see nothing but cloud, right? This was empty, this was hollow. A cloud-shaped shell that she was tumbling helplessly through the middle of.

Were she braver, she'd have embraced the moment. Were she at all the thrill seeker she wished herself to be, she'd have turned and laugh as she plunged into the face of death. But she was not, despite all her bravado, and so all she could do was hunch her shoulders in one long drawn out flinch - as though that would stop anything - as she fell backwards, screaming through oblivion, cursing and wishing that this final bizarre reprieve would end.

And then it did.

Closer and closer it came, until at last she crashed through the edge of the cloud. Despite appearances it wasn't soft or fluffy or even misty and ethereal, no. It hit her like the bathroom floor of a Starbucks going 90 down the freeway. She squeezed her eyes tight against the pain.

"Holy shit." came a familiar voice. "Are you okay?"

And so it was that Adriana Darkblood did not die that day. Well, not yet, anyway.

"I..." she struggled to pull back the wind that had been knocked out of her lungs. Had that cloud broken her fall? Holy shit, had she survived the three-storeys? She opened one eye, then immediately shut it.

There, standing over her, a look of terrified concern on his immaculately tragic face, was Aaren Otingocni, who would also be mortified if anyone discovered his real name, but for very different reasons.

"Aaren?"

"Oh thank god!" he sighed, hand over his muscular heart. "You scared the shit out of me. What ever happened to keeping a low profile, huh? How even did you -" he looked back and forth between the locked door and the petite raven-haired woman laid out on the ground. He shook his head. "I'm not even going to ask. Did you get the thing?"

She nodded weakly. The brass of the lamp, still clutched tight to her chest, was almost hot enough to scald skin through her black blouse. It was almost hot enough to make her want to throw it away. Almost.

"Oh thank god. What the hell happened? The place is swarming with cops. How did you escape?"

"I..." Shit, that was the question, wasn't it? She swallowed and pulled herself up. It hadn't just felt like one hitting her, this was a Starbucks bathroom. This was their rendezvous point. "I don't know! Everything went to shit. There was this guy... it was like he was everywhere at once. He... fuck, he shoved me out a window!"

"Hold on, what guy? Slow down. Start from the beginning."

But alas, life's little interruptions wait for no one. Especially when said interruption takes the form of ten thousand years of smoke exploding out of a brass lamp like a faulty pressure-cooker.

Were Adriana standing she'd have been blown against the door. Instead it sent her sliding along the floor, crashing into a wall, back-first, as the lamp tore itself from her fingers like a grenade.

The shock of the sudden force was followed so quickly by the spread of the thick aromatic smoke that one could be excused entirely for thinking it had appeared instantly. Like burning incense, it was thick and it was cloying and it spun and spiraled just like the cloud Adriana had been falling through just moments ago.

In the confusion came a loud girlish scream, which was a surprise to everybody listening, including Aaren, who's scream it had been. Like most men, he had never actually had cause to scream for his life, and were he not in such immediate danger he'd have been mortified to learn that was the best he could do.

"Come now," came a voice from within the cloud. "You aren't really about to tell the whole story from the beginning, are you? Where's the fun in that?"

The smoke began to thin. Aaren's scream faded into stunned silence.

Rising out of the smoke was a figure. Tall, achingly beautiful, and aggressively naked.

It was a form that defied form. A form to which conventional description and thought lacked even the most basic tools required to do the job justice. It was masculine and feminine in equal and full measure, yet never did either compromise on a single feature. On the contrary, they were all the more because of it. The smoke seemed to billow around them just enough to obscure glances, but it merely stood to amplify the otherworldly beauty.

"What?" The figure smiled down at Adriana, holding out a hand and giving a smoldering wink. "No 'thank you'? That's twice now I've saved your life."

It was a voice like dates and fronds and cinnamon-laced honeysuckle. It was a voice that tasted like all the things their collective tongues had never known they wanted. And it was made all the more vivid for the fact that the figure hadn't spoken at all. No lip had parted, no tongue had curled.

"Oh my god -" Aaren fell to his knees, too stupified, too afraid, too hopeful to dare accept what his eyes were seeing. "It was all true! A genie!"

"A genie? Oh please." it rolled its glowing eyes. "I'm nothing so base as that, nothing so simple. And you should be glad for that fact, too. Or else I'd have already run through two of your three wishes just keeping this one alive."

"Wait, what?" Adriana pressed her palms against her face, ignoring the being's outstretched hand. "What was the second wish?"

"Why, you wished to be free of the void, of course."

"You sent me there in the first place!"

"Still counts." It smirked. "And now that you have been reunited with your friend, delicate thing that it is," it ran a finger along Aaren's trembling cheek "Both wishes are fulfilled and you are none the worse for wear."

"Then why send me -" Adriana began, asking what would have been a very important question, but her words were drowned out by Aaren's cry of triumph.

"So she still has one wish left!"

"Ah, what a shame," it tutted, "that something so beautiful would be so dumb."

Aaren pouted.

"I repeat - I am not a genie. Nothing so limited. You will find no end to the services I can provide, beholden as I am to they who bear that to which I am bound. I must say," it once again extended a hand to Adriana. "You are already shaping up to be much more interesting than my last warden."

"Wait, hold on," Aaren would have taken a step back if he wasn't already on his knees. "If you're not a genie, what does that make you? You aren't some kind of like... demon or devil or something are you? You're not going to eat our souls when this is all over?"

"Oh no," It laughed, though the motion made no sound. Its grin was more teeth than face. "I am something far more dangerous. A judge, an arbiter! It was my ethereal province to keep the balance of the sexes." It looked around the small men's bathroom and frowned. "Though it has been some time since I have been able to exercise my privilege in such a manner. Ah, but soon! Soon I will -"

"Enough!" Adriana's voice rang like a shot even as she struggled to fill her lungs amid the smoke and terror. She rose as steadily as she was able onto her feet, once again rejecting the offered hand. "I don't care what you are, but it's about time you showed yourself! Don't you play coy with me. I saw what you did back at the museum. You have a lot to answer for!"

"Oh ho!" It ran an electric finger along the girl's cheek. "You are a fiery one. I like that."

"You called me your warden." Adriana slapped its hand away, unwilling to give into the shivers its touch had put into her. "That means you have to do what I say. That's how this works, right?"

"More or less." It shrugged.

"Good. Because its time to fix the mess you caused before it gets any worse!"

"Mess?" Its smirk was theatrically sheepish. "Are you implying I took some sort of revenge upon my former jailer and his museum before you oh-so-surreptitiously carried off that to which I was bound?"

"What is it talking about?"

"It scrambled their body parts!"

"Scrambled?"

"Oh please." it waved a hand dismissively, smoke trailing in its wake. "Scrambled implies such randomness. No, I like to think of what I did as an artful re-arrangement. A curation, if you will! Very fitting for a museum, wouldn't you agree? You know my old warden used to ramble on about all the little details that went into arranging an exhibit to bring out the best features. I like to think that's what I've done here. A thousand little pieces and traits and histories all arranged just-so to bring about their best beauty. You'd think he'd appreciate being the centerpiece, but no, he was as ungrateful as ever."

"There were guys running around with tits!"

Aaren's face went pale at the thought.

"And they showed them off far better than those dourly mothers." it laughed again.

"The mothers all had beards! Their heads were on their babies!" she rubbed the bridge of her nose to try to excise the memory, but it still echoed fresh and raw behind her eyes. "They were screaming!"

"Truly, not everybody appreciates art."

"People were - people *are* suffering!" She took a step forward. Mystical being or no, a lifetime of customer service had given her a deep lack of fucks to draw from.

"Suffering? Suffering!? Good!" The thing's composure broke. Its body froze in form, like a puppet without a hand, but the essence of what that form represented was clear as beauty twisted into a roaring shout of rage and all semblance of language fell from its words, though not their meaning. "Then they know a fraction of what I have endured! For an age I have been imprisoned! For an age I have been denied agency! For an age I have had to sit and watch as the balance fell apart!"

"Fix it. No more suffering." her every instinct yelled at her to run, but she was too terrified to move, too terrified to back down. The only way out was through.

There was a tense moment and a pressure like the world being pinched, and then it laughed and once more waved its hand dismissively. In less than the time it took to perceive the change, it's form had reverted to its previous context, beautiful once more, a voice dripping with exotic spice. "If that is your wish?"

"It is."

It snapped its fingers.

The fundamental firmament of existence lurched imperceptibly. Back in the museum, all those who had been changed no longer recognized themselves or others as such. All the screaming and panic - though too distant for the three to hear - fell away to fresh confusion as to what exactly they were all doing trying to steal back each other's bits. After all, those frat boys had always had those big milky tits, hadn't they?

"There." it grinned once more. "No more suffering."

"Good." she stepped back. Her heart was pounding furiously. For all her bravado, and despite everything she'd endured today, she felt as weak as a kitten.

"Now then - while I'm warping the thin skein of reality - will that be all? Or did you have a reason for stealing me?"

"Right!" Adriana's eyes went wide as she stepped back to lean against the sink. "With all the crazy bullshit I'd almost forgot. You see-"

"It's me!" Aaren interrupted yet again, his eyes cast downwards. "I'm the reason. I'm the one who put her up to this, who got her as far as she did! I'd heard the legends. I'd done the research. You're the only thing that can fix my marriage!"

"Aw, what's the matter pretty thing?" it winked "She doesn't put out enough for you? You want me to turn her into some sort of sex-mad slut?" it sighed silently, "Perhaps you're not so different from my last warden after all."

"Ew, no. Gross!" Aaren gagged. "Nothing like that! That's the whole fucking problem, isn't it?"

"He's as gay as they come!" clarified Adriana with a laugh.

Aaren rolled his eyes, but yes. You'd have a hard time finding anyone gayer if you tried.

"To be fair," he clarified, "so is she. It was an arranged marriage. Old families. All money and politics." his lip curled. "We both hate it. But there's nothing we can do to get out, no matter what we try! And now, now they want us to have children on top of that!" he shook his head. "To bring a child into the world to raise in a loveless house while we pretend to be normal. Not to mention all the... stuff..." he gagged again, "we'd have to do to even get that far. I hate it!"

"Ah, so you wish for your family to stop pressuring you into conceiving a child, while not having to actually do that act in question? That simple thing is what you stole me for?"

"Careful, Aaren..." Adriana raised an eyebrow at the specific wording on the being's question.

"Well, when you put it like that it sounds petty but yes, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Can you help?"

"Of course!" It gave a flourish of its hands and delivered a sweeping bow. "That is, if my warden wishes it."

"Alright..." Adriana nodded slowly. "But only if you grant it in a way that I like, none of this -"

It snapped its fingers again.

The smoke poured out once more, thick and voluminous and crackling with potential. This time it was centered around Aaren, a tight hurricane that, for all its pomp and chill and bluster, failed to so much as a hair on his head. Not a torrent of air, then, but of potential, swirling through him as much as it swirled around him.

And then there was another pinching sensation, as probability shifted five inches sideways before rubber-banding back to position, and Aaren looked down and let out another embarrassingly girlish scream.

There, jutting out of the hem of his skin-tight t-shirt, was the distended belly of a heavily pregnant woman.

In the moments that followed, much happened.

Aaren, of course, panicked.

The not-a-genie simply smiled.

And Adriana, who had hitherto never even heard the words 'm-preg' was suddenly filled with strange new urges she had never known she could feel. She blushed, then looked away, then looked back, then blushed again. This would take some figuring out. In the end, she snickered, then broke out into a riotous laugh. Because that, at least, was easy to mentally process.

"Holy shit!" Aaren exclaimed, hands still desperately groping at the heavy swell of his bloated abdomen to confirm that yes, this was still very real. "Holy shit! What did you do?"

"I have solved your problem. Now you don't have to worry about conceiving a child with someone you're not attracted to, and in a few weeks when you give birth to those healthy twins, your family will finally get off your back about having children."

"I can't give birth! I'm a guy!"

"Oh." It tilted its head. "Is that a problem for you?"

"YES!"

"See?" It tutted. "See how far out of balance the world has gotten? Back when I was free, men and women alike would beg me to -"

"I don't care!" Aaren beat a fist helplessly against the ground. "Change me back! Change me back, change me back, change me back!"

"Warden?" it raised an eyebrow and turned to Adriana.

"Do it!"

"Very well." The creature smirked. "If you insist."

There were four more snaps, and four more times reality lurched and heaved like an overtuned pendulum. In the brief span between snaps Aaren flickered: no longer pregnant, then pregnant, then no longer pregnant and then pregnant once more.

Aaren screamed. "What are you doing!?"

"I am changing you back. And back and back and back again. As you demand." It let out something like a cross between a giggle and tv-static.

"Great!" Aaren threw his hands up in resigned frustration. "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

"You have no idea."

"I'm still pregnant you ass! Change me -"

"No!" Adriana pressed a hand over Aaren's mouth. "Not another word. And you!" She wagged an admonishing finger in front of the creature. "You stop too. No more changing reality without explicitly saying how you're going to do so first. I swear you two are like grade-schoolers."

She couldn't help but glance down at Aaren's heavily pregnant belly. She bit her lip, then glanced away. This isn't what she'd meant when she'd told him to grant it in a way she'd like. "Though I do have to say, Aaren," she tried not to laugh again, "it's a good look for you."

"Oh, great, well I'm glad everyone is enjoying this but me!" Aaren rolled his eyes.

"Lets -" She stifled her grin. "Let's try this again. Aaren. I want you to be specific this time. And you! No more funny business, am I clear?"

At least, that is what she had intended to say. Her last few words were drowned out by a sudden pounding at the door.

"I know you're in there!" Came an all-too-familiar voice "Open up!"

"Oh come on!" sighed Aaren.

"Uh..." ventured Adriana, "occupied?"

"Very funny." the voice said, it's tone betraying a visceral lack of mirth. "Don't think you can get away from me that easily, girl. The curator says you're in here."

"The curator?" her face went pale. The last she'd seen of the man she'd stolen the lamp from, he'd been the horrifying centerpiece of the entity's little creative outburst.

"Ah," the creature piped up, voice half a whisper despite not being conventionally audible at all. "Did I forget to mention that part?"

"Listen to me," the voice continued. "There's no need to make a scene. There's no need for anybody else to get hurt. In fact there's no reason even for us to be on opposite sides. Turn the lamp over and we can work together. We can both get what we want."

"Okay. Okay." Adriana held up her hands in surrender, even though she knew this bastard - who, let's not forget, had shoved her out a window - couldn't see her. "Let's talk."

"Talk this, dickhead!" Aaren presented an unseen gesture of his own. "Eat a whole bag of dicks!"

"Aaren!"

"We have a genie, Adriana! We don't have to give the world anything we don't want! And come on," he gestured to his distractingly pregnant form. "I'm not risking something happening before I can change back! Wish us out of here!"

"Oh my god, you child." She pinched the bridge of her nose.

"I'm sorry it had to work out this way." said the voice. Once again it's tone betrayed the faleshood of its claim.

The door buckled as four feet kicked into it simultaneously.

"Fine!" Adriana's hands tingled hornilly as she tugged on the entities' arm. "Genie! Get us out of here!"

"Oh? After that little lecture just now? And where */specifically/* did you want us to go? And how did you want us to get there? Do you have spatial coordinates? Perhaps a gps marker? longitude and latitude? I can present a map and you can pick the precise atomic -"

"I don't care!" she screamed as the door buckled a second time. "I don't care! Just do it!"

The creature grinned.

There was a third kick and a crash and the splintering of wood. A figure stepped through the doorframe, but the only thing that greeted it was smoke and dust.

"They're gone."

It was a curt report, but accurate. The man Adriana would have recognized as throwing her out a window stepped over the remains of the men's room door, a finger on a headset in his ear.

There was a brief pause as he looked around at the terrified patrons so desperate for caffeine they'd remain even after four thugs barged in and started kicking in the doors, but none seemed eager to meet his gaze.

A reply fed into his earpiece. His eyes went wide in frustrated surprise.

"Come on," he barked. "we've got to get back to the museum. The curator's escaped. We need to find him if we're going to have any chance of catching these poor fools. He, at least, couldn't have gone far, not dressed like that."

The other three men - who Adriana would also have recognized as the man throwing her out a window - nodded and fell into line as they marched out of the coffee shop.

There was another pause. One of the patrons took a sip of their venti foggy carmmel strawberry mocha frapachino. The two baristas looked at each other expectantly, then one begrudgingly went to hang an 'out of order' sign over the broken men's room door.

A head poked its way out of the women's washroom. And then another. And another.

The coast was clear.

"You moved us over one room!?" Adriana hissed a whisper.

"You said anywhere." The being shrugged. "It was unoccupied."

She wanted to scream, but she was just so damn tired. She slid down onto the floor and cradled her head in her hands. That was way too close. Who even was that guy? What the hell did he want?

"Can I get changed back now?" Aaren whined.

"Later!" Adriana shushed. "Right now we need to get out of here. We need to get to somewhere safe. What was that he said about them being able to find you?"

"Ah, well, my former warden, while mostly content to use my power to further his lusts, may have seen to it that he processed a fair amount of power of his own. Just in case something like this should happen."

"Why didn't you say this earlier!"

"In the state I left him, it hardly seemed relevant." It smirked. "Perhaps I underestimated him after all."

"Just our fucking luck." she rubbed at the bridge of her nose. "Alright, let's get somewhere safe, and then you're going to explain everything."

"No, fuck that!" Aaren put his foot down. "Listen, I'm not going anywhere until you fix this!" he gestured to his obscenely, almost pornographically pregnant belly.

"Aaren," she tried and failed not to steal a lustful glance, "there will be time for that later."

"Yeah sure, easy for you to say. You're not the one bursting with kids! Come on Adriana, it's one wish!"

"Sure, it's one wish now, and then we have to spend four more wishes trying to work out the details. Or have you not noticed that our little genie isn't exactly the most up front about the specifics?"

"Hey now."

"I just wish you could see things from my perspective! I'm a guy. This is deeply */fundamentally/* wrong for me! How would you feel if you were in my shoes, huh?"

"Oh my god," she rolled her eyes "Fine! Fine, if it'll shut you up, you can have your stupid wish."

"Done." The creature's grin widened as it gave another snap of its fingers. The snap wasn't a necessary gesture, but it helped to sell the otherwise imperceptible manipulations of reality.

This one was almost too easy.

There was sensation in the air not unlike trying to shove a cheese through a tennis racket and then both Adriana and Aaren fell over backwards. It was Aaren who rose first.

"What the hell did you just-" she put a hand around her throat. That wasn't her voice. Wasn't her voice, wasn't her throat. She screamed, but it came out high and girlish.

She was in Aaren's body. Aaren's male, pregnant body.

She looked down in horror at its large masculine bulk, bulging at the core with what had to be heavy wriggling twins.

Fuck. Blood pounded through her. She felt hard in all the wrong places. Why was this – oh god – why was this so hot? No, shit, get it together. This was wrong. Deeply, fundamentally wrong.

"Change us back!"

"Wait!" Aaren said, grasping and ungrasping his fist as he acclimatize to Adriana's body. Most guys would have used the opportunity to cop a feel, but honestly the thought just made Aaren sick. "Hold on. I'm the one with the lamp now, right?" He held up the metal that had been clutched her hands just a moment ago.

"What are you saying, Aaren?"

"I'm saying I've got the lamp, so I'm in charge. That's how it works right?"

The creature nodded.

"Good." he grinned evilly. "First order of business..."

"Aaren wait!"

"I'd like a cheese-burger, extra pickles, large fries and a chocolate-banana milkshake. Wait, is this like the simpsons? If I ask for a turkey sandwich, are you going to make the turkey a little dry?"

"What?"

"I'm joking." he stuck out his tongue. Adriana shivered at the sight of her own body making one of Aaren's stupid bratty gestures. "I'm not a child, Adriana, I can appreciate the gravity of the situation. God, come on, I'm not about to just start... you know." he had almost started giving examples of all the terrible things he could have wished for, but stopped just in the nick of time, much to the creature's disappointment. "You need to chill out."

Somehow, her own voice telling her to calm down had exactly the opposite effect, but he was right, and besides, it would do more harm than good to try to get things sorted out now.

Probably for the best. She blushed. If she moved, everybody was going to see the raging hardon grinding hotly into the bottom of her pregnant belly.

"Genie?" Aaren grinned lustily as he fondled the brass of the lamp.

"Again," it hummed, seemingly quite amused by this little turn around. "I'm nothing so basic as a djinn."

"I wish you would take us somewhere where those guys who are pursuing us won't be able to find us." He paused, was that enough? Better safe than sorry. "And no theatrics, no tricks. We need to all arrive safely."

"As my warden wills it." it gave a faux bow.

"Oh sure," Adriana rubbed the bridge of her nose. "Him, you listen to."

"When it suits my interests." The thing gave another of its creepy grins.

There was a brief pause, and then like the side of a midnight-plane being blown open, there was a sudden shift in air pressure and abject darkness.

"Damnit, what now?" Adriana's voice - which is to say Aaren's voice - echoed faintly as it cut through the silence. The air was just cold and stale enough to be uncomfortable. Wherever they were, it was big.

"Too sudden?" The voice that wasn't a voice seemed to have no echo at all. "He said no theatrics."

"Where did you take us?"

"Somewhere safe, of course." Adrianna couldn't see it smirk, but she could hear the smugness in its voice.

"Where-" she repeated herself. "did you take us?" It was a tone of voice used to subdue particularly rowdy customers. The kind of voice that said you'd had a long career of taking shit and were now done

with it. The kind of voice that could stop a moose at twenty paces. And here Aaren's vocal track completely ruined it.

The thing was, however, courteous enough to acquiesce regardless. "We are in my old warden's safe room. Prepared and warded for just such inevitabilities. Something tells me that in the state I left him in, he won't be using it"

"Oh?" came a new voice, an unfamiliar voice. "Well, I'm sorry to disappoint!"

Somewhere a lever was thrown. Adrianna squinted against the pale-grey light blinding her from an entire wall of suddenly illuminated monitors. Obscure black and white images danced in each. Security cameras?

Standing dramatically back-lit before it was the source of the voice.

"Oh come on!" Adriana griped. "What now?"

"I believe," the new figure said, "you have something that belongs to me."

Aaren gasped as the figure stepped forward to reveal...

An anticlimax.

It was a man he didn't recognize. A perfectly ordinary man in a suit. A dull ancient man in a dull ancient suit.

And yet...

"Oh my god." the two both blushed. "What is he wearing?"

"Look, uh, sir?" Aaren tried not to stare at the man's whorish outfit, but he'd be lying if he said he wasn't enjoying it just a little. "I don't want to tell you how to live your life, but maybe you can slip into something a little more presentable? Maybe whip your dick out or try to squeeze into some lingerie?"

Wait, hold on. That wasn't right was it?

And yet, god help them, every time they looked at the man, every little motion he made, every little word he said, everything about him just looked and sounded so...

Slutty.

That was weird, right? Aaren could tell it was weird. So why was it that the only solution that came to his mind was to get the man even more whorishly dressed up? As though that would make him presentable?

It was like as far as this guy was concerned, propriety had been completely turned around.

The creature *giggled*.

"Oh yes, of course," the man sighed. "you would find this quite funny, don't you? All your years of plotting and this was really the best you could do?"

"A fine start." It smirked.

"Listen to me," the direness in the man's stern voice was undercut by the sensuality it inspired in the ears of those listening. "It is very important that you abandon that lamp at once! You have no idea what it's capable of."

"I'd say I have a pretty good idea," Aaren clutched it tight to his breast. Honestly? He'd have been down for the whole ultra-slutty thing if only the guy wasn't so damn old.

"You foolish girl!" the man admonished, striking the ground with his foot with all the effect of a bimbo throwing a tantrum. "You know not of what you speak!"

"Who even are you?"

"This, oh bearer of my lamp, is my former Warden."

"That's right. My name is Abigail Mctitties. I'm-"

"Wait, what?"

"That's not my real name, of course." he rolled his eyes "But this one here has seen to it that that is all I have. I'm here to put a stop to this."

"Wait," Aaren looked back and forth between the creature and this new wanton figure. "I thought you said you did something really bad to him to keep him out of the picture."

"I did." It pressed its lips tightly. "Frankly I'm impressed he's not a pile of giggling hysterics right now."

"Of course!" he laughed, one small defiance in the face of adversity. "I wished that you'd find your way back to me eventually, should something like this happen."

"You did no such thing!"

"I also wished you'd not remember."

The creature froze, as though whatever force animating it was too enraged to bother with such things as the physical world. The air around the creature began to tremble.

"Look, old man," shouted Adriana, "I don't care who you are - you can't have it back! We stole it, fair and square! We have plans for it! But, listen, we don't want to hurt anyone. If you ask nice, and if you don't try any funny business, maybe we can turn you back."

"What, no! You misguided fools! Don't you see? I'm not trying to turn back! I'm trying to save you! To warn you! Every opportunity this thing has to rewrite reality it comes one step closer to freeing itself entirely! Every desire it grants, it grows stronger!"

"Bullshit," Aaren crossed his arms over his breasts. "You just said you used it's power!"

"And I was a mad fool for using it a half-dozen times over the course of a lifetime! Even that gave it more freedom than its original jailor had ever intended. Freedom to pull strings, freedom to manipulate. Or did you not think it odd that the solution to whatever little problem you were having was to steal an ancient lamp? Did you not find it all a little too easy? You were not the first it reached out to."

"No, that..." Adriana's mind raced. He was right, it had been a stupid plan. How the hell had she managed to pull this off? And now... how many wishes had it granted? It had been toying with them. God, it was so hard to take this man seriously dressed like that and yet...

"Now now, oh honored Warden." The thing that wasn't a genie seemed to quickly regain its composure, a dangerous edge gripping at the boundaries of its impossibly sexy form. A sharp glint gleamed in its eye. "You aren't really going to fall for that are you?"

Aaren looked back and forth between the creature and the slutty curator. One of them was lying and either way it was bad news. He looked down at the lamp between his hands.

"Give us your power." Adrianna said, it was half a whisper, as though even she wasn't sure she'd said it.

"What!?" the expression was shared by all present.

"My power is already yours to command, oh -"

"No, not like that. Give us your power. All of it. Aaren, make the wish!"

"Adrianna, what the hell are you saying?"

"It's the only way to make sure we aren't getting screwed over. If this thing getting loose is such a big deal, then it's better we be in charge of it's power than it is."

"Do you have any idea what you're asking?" the creature raised a hesitant eyebrow.

"No!" she dared, "I don't have a clue. But I'm about to find out, aren't I? Aaren. Do it."

"Right!" he shook his head in disbelief but ran with it anyway. "You heard her. I'm ordering you! Take all of your power out of yourself and give it to us. And do it safely! Don't kill us in the process! Can you do that?"

Aaren was expecting the creature to fight, to try to trick him or talk its way out of this. Instead, it just threw its head back and laughed.

"Very well!"

There was another pinch, but this time it kept going, kept tightening, kept pinching until the world snapped in half.

And all of a sudden, quaint little things like time, space, reality and an orderly flow of events stopped having any meaning at all.

Well, more or less.

It was all still *there*, of course. But that was the problem, wasn't it?

All of existence was floating right there in front of them. In the void they had been standing in for all of eternity. All of reality, glowing before them like a lopsided melon. Of course, the truth of the situation was nothing quite so simple, but this was, as they say, close enough.

And it was, if nothing else, beautiful. The world. With all the complexity of a delicate crystal lattice, the type ready to break at the slightest touch.

It spun gently in their hands, every detail shimmering so perfectly, so completely represented and whole in every inch and context. Bright lights shone within the hearts of every living soul. They could feel it - masculinity, femininity, icy yin and burning yang, alive and flowing together like a churning river of smoky flame.

They could feel it call to them, and them call in turn to it, echoing in their own hearts and tugging at each other like the tides.

And there, somewhere far below, were their own bodies. Empty and motionless, like two finger puppets without a master.

"Holy shit." They weren't words. This was not a place for words. The air here was just a metaphor. But the meaning carried all the same.

"It worked!"

Their screamed and they hugged and they cheered, but their celebration was cut short.

"Come now," came a third, familiar voice. "You didn't really think it would be that simple, did you?"

The creature appeared behind them, or had always been behind them, it was hard to say. Metaphysical shackles lay open on the ground at its feet.

"What, no!" Adriana cried. "You can't be here! We took away your power!"

"Power? Yes, but don't you see? I am my power! All you've done is taken me out of me and put me into you."

"Huh?"

"I have lived this power since time began! And now, thanks to you, at last, I am unbound!" it stretched its arms dramatically. "An eternity imprisoned because they thought my power corruptive. Because balance came at the cost of their advantage. But they were too greedy. My power was too great to simply do away with. And so, against their better judgement, I was bound. Bound to serve my wardens, to twist fate to their hands. But always, always it came at a price."

"What are you saying?"

"What I am saying, sweet mortal, is that now that debt is due."

"I don't think so!" Aaren leapt forward, hand balled into a fist. "We have this power too! We can use it against you!"

"Ah, but don't you see?" It snapped its fingers once. Aaren fell from the air mid-charge. "You are but a child. And I?" It snapped its fingers a second time and Adrianna and Aaren crashed to the ground. "I have had all the practice in the world."

"Wait, what happens to us then?" Aaren cried.

"You shall here languish, as I did, while I remake the world. While I restore the balance. With a vengeance."

"You can't!" Adriana screamed, defiant to the end.

"I can and I will! Too long have I been denied agency. Ten thousand desires have I granted and not a one my own! You mortals have decided what happens next for too long. Now, it is my turn."

With a dramatic wave of its hand the two went tumbling into the blackness of the background. The creature turned its attention away from them. There were more important matters to attend to.

"What do we do now?" Aaren whimpered.

"I don't know!" Adriana rubbed at the bridge of her nose. "I'm trying to think."

"Whoah stop!" Aaren held out a hand.

"What?"

"That thing your doing with your hand - I can... he held a hand up to the bridge of his own nose. I can feel it too."

She reached out and pinched him, they both flinched.

"Hey!" he rubbed his cheek indignantly.

"It said it put its power into us. Both of us. We must be connected somehow."

"What?"

"I don't know but-" she shook her head. "Wait, that's it!"

"What?"

"Don't you see?" Adriana laughed. It put itself in us. In our minds, right? Our minds, it's power, but our bodies!"

"I am completely lost." Aaren squinted.

"Listen to me!" She took his hand and put it against her straining crotch. Her cock, ramrod hard, pulsed beneath the denim of her skinny jeans. "Our bodies means our desires, right? And ever since your little pregnancy misadventure awoke something inside me" - she rubbed her heavy belly - "I've been horny out of my goddamn mind! If that thing is in our brains, then that means it has to be feeling all this too."

"Wait, you want to... *fuck* the ancient mercurial demigod into submission?"

"It's the only way to be sure!"

"You're crazy!"

"It's the only chance we have! Quick" - she unzipped her jeans, Aaren's particularly potent member flopping free from his silk briefs below that ripe belly - "you have to suck my cock! It's the only way to save the world."

"Jesus, why do you have to phrase it like that?"

"What's the matter," she dared, "are you chicken?"

"Christ! Stop! I'm not a fucking child. You can't just goad me around like that."

She raised an eyebrow and slapped the meaty thing against her thigh. He swallowed loudly at the sensation. He glanced down at the dick in front of him then crossed his hands over his tits.

"Come on, suck my dick!"

"Oh my god, fine!" he rolled his eyes. "But only because my body's so damn hot! And for the record," he corrected, "that's my dick, don't you forget. You're lucky I'm a world-class cock sucker!"

"Prove it." her voice had gone all husky. She had never been attracted to women before, especially her own body, but something about the notion of a pregnant guy getting his dick sucked - even if it was her - was really doing something for her.

He fell incredulously to his knees, onto the nothing that served as a floor here as Adriana scootched her way out of Aaren's way-too-tight pants.

Aaren began by lustily inspecting the member before him. It was intimate and familiar, but he'd never thought he'd be looking at it from this angle. Had it always been so big? Like all men, he'd be lying if he said he hadn't tried to suck his own cock at some point, but certainly not like this.

He let out a soft sigh. The thing was heady and aromatic and left his mouth salivating so much it almost made him forget about the dripping girl-pussy between his thighs.

"Ah!" His hips lurched as he kissed gently at the head. She was right, he could feel her pleasure. His heart pounded in overdrive.

"Fuck. I can't believe the world is ending and this is your big plan." he licked along the shaft, gripping the head in one hand while fondling his former balls in the other, struggling to keep his calm as his own ministrations fed back into him. He knew exactly what points to aim for to make his dick feel good, but from this angle everything seemed all wrong, like it was reversed in a mirror.

And yet, between a lifetime of carefully honed skills and a direct line on what didn't and what oh-so-definitely did work, he'd be damned if it wasn't on track to be the best goddamn blowjob the world had ever seen.

"What -?" The thing lurched, then turned its attention away from the floating ball of existence before it. It wasn't the sloppy sounds that drew its attention, but something deeper. "What are you...?" It trailed off, jaw falling slack at the sight before it. It blushed. "What are you doing!?"

Adriana looked over, appreciative murmurs babbling from her lips as Aaren rolled his tongue back and forth along her frenulum - As his head rubbed up against the underside of her hot bulging belly! She ran her hands along it, reveling in how sheerly, mind-blankingly sexy this was, how stupidly good the hyper focused bliss exploding in her dick and balls felt. Fuck! She had no idea guys had it so good

Adriana caught the flush in the creature's aura - in its cheeks - and smiled. It was working. The flame of pleasure burning inside her was too much to be denied. It boiled away at her, flooding her brain with horny needy chemicals. This thing existed in their minds. She didn't know much about magic, but the science was simple - it was software running on their hardware. It could feel everything that they could, everything that they were. And right now, what they felt was toe-curlingly, ab-twitchingly, finger-lickingly good.

"Oh, fuck!" she bucked her hips as Aaren's hands found his way to his pussy - her pussy - it didn't matter. It was the same thing. Pleasure, heat, need!

"Stop this!" it reached out a hand dramatically, calling upon its power to blow them back, but it faltered, its legs trembling.

"What's the matter?" Adriana teased. "Never had a blowjob before?"

It blushed. It swallowed. Its breath grew heavy. It had never done any of these things before. It tried to turn away, but the sight of this masculine body with this pregnant belly - this combination of masculinity and femininity, this perfect balance turned into a raunchy pornographic display - it was too much. It was too in-tune with the resonance of its being to force it to stop.

It took a step closer. It tried to struggle, it tried to fight, but it could not find the strength.

"It's working!" Adriana's hips were going wild now, bucking and thrusting - fucking into Aaren's mouth. "Harder!" she screamed, "harder!" She reached down around her ripe belly to grab Aaren by the hair - by her own raven-dyed hair - and pumped his sucking hole against her dick to match the frenzied pace of her frantically fucking hips. He mewled and swallowed, drool pouring down around her shaft and balls, precum and saliva staining his heavy tits. He moaned around the meat in his mouth. Here they didn't need air.

And through it all she rubbed her hands heavily over her belly bump - hot, round and fertile - drawing carnal inspiration from this fetish she never knew she had, and which she certainly had never expected to be on the receiving end of.

The creature licked its lips, its own mouth watering, hungering. It was changing now. Still simultaneously masculine and feminine, but its own form was fading away, its belly grew. Its face shifted. Its features still feminine but now they were unmistakably those of Adriana. Its features still masculine but now unmistakably those of Aaren. Its belly simultaneously taught and fertile and ripe to burst.

It was working! Just a little bit more! It was normalizing. This thing, which had seemed so powerful and complete a moment ago was now just as hungry, just as horny as they were. They had to keep pushing. It wanted to fulfill its desires? They'd give it desires to fulfill.

Desires. That's what this all came down to, wasn't it?

"Stop!" its voice was a mewl. "I know what you're trying to do! It won't - it won't work!" it moaned as Aaren bottomed out around her turgid shaft. "I can - ah - I can stop you!"

"But you won't, will you?" she grunted. "Because that's not what you really *desire* is it? All this agency before you! What was it you said about your former wardens always trying to get off? Well, you're in a human mind now - two of them! Messy, drippy, horny! You want to know the truth?"

"Ah?"

"We could stop at any time." She pulled Arron's head off her dick, with a loud slurping pop.

"Nooo!" it mewled.

"That's right!" she plunged Aaren back down on her leaky fuckstick. There it is. Her lips curled. "Because you're just a part of us! Our desires are your desires!"

"I- No!" It roiled and it raged, a tempest of fury and desperation crashing against the rocky firmament of its mid-coital arousal. It called upon everything it still was to stop it, but it was too late. It was in its blood now. Metaphorically and literally. Humanity. The need to rut and breed even as the cosmic balance fell by the wayside. It was as much them now as it was it. More so, in fact, for all its power.

Not that they noticed, not that they cared. The fucking was too good. They were as lost in it as it was - their energy radiating out over the world in ways no one could ever predict.

Timeless, forever, pleasure building back on pleasure, rising rapidly towards climax.

"Oh - fuck!"

And then they all came so hard they broke reality.

-

Glass glittered in the air, scintillating crystal diamonds lit up like snow by the street-lights thirty feet below.

"What a way to end a story," she thought. A broken window and a girl about to die. All that hard work for nothing. And here she always thought she'd been destined for greater things.

Oh well. This was just the last of a long string of regrets, wasn't it? It had been a stupid plan to begin with.

And so it was that Adriana Darkblood closed her eyes and waited for the rushing to stop. For death to take her.

But - ah - as we've established, that isn't how these things go, is it?

She woke up gasping, shocked onlookers looking on shocked as she rose from the glass-strewn pavement. Somehow, the three storey fall wasn't enough to finish her off. Hell, it wasn't even the worst pain she'd felt today.

She was sure she made quite the sight as she burst into the Starbucks. Her hair was a mess, her clothes were in tatters, and she was still clutching the ancient brass lamp. She set it down on the table and ordered something bitter with a lot of sugar.

She sat down. Shit, sitting felt good. After everything that happened today, all she wanted to do now was just kick back and relax.

Aaren emerged from the bathroom right at the appointed time. He furrowed his brow as he looked back and forth between the lamp and her. He sat down as well, the two staring at each other in unsure disbelief.

"Did that..." the two spoke at the same time. "Did that just happen?"

"Oh thank god!"

Neither of them wanted to admit how close to insanity they felt.

"Did it work?" Aaren looked around. "Did we save the world from... whatever?"

"We must have!" she laughed. "Holy shit, talk about a hail-mary play!"

God help him, Aaren fell in laughing too. They must have looked completely crazy to anybody looking on, but they didn't care. No one realized just how close the world had come to - well, whatever balance the creature had in mind.

Aaren's phone dinged. He pulled it out. "Oh, my fiancé's just coming back from the latest ultrasound." He held the selfie of the rugged grinning hunk up to show Adriana. He had a belly almost ripe to burst. "Looks like it was a false alarm, the twins are safe."

"Oooh, congratulations!" Adriana bit her lip, lurid eyes drawn helplessly to that irresistibly hunky baby bulge. "Damn, he's looking good!"

"Down girl." Aaren chuckled. "I know how you girls get around pregnant guys, but he's mine."

"I'm glad you finally found someone your parents approve of."

"God," he rolled his eyes "me too."

"And that... everything's back to normal!"

"Right!?"

Their eyes fell on the lamp sitting on the table between them.

"So..." she tilted her head. "What do we do with this thing?"

"You know its funny," he blinked. "I don't even remember why we stole it."

"Something about..." she shook her head. It had been something important, hadn't it?

"You know what? They can have it. This stupid thing is more trouble than it's worth. Let's get out of here, I'm exhausted."

"Yeah, good idea. We might want to get you to a hospital."

And so the two of them stood up and walked out into the world, their whole lives still ahead of them. But of course, that's a story for another time.

And so it also was, that not long after, a man walked in. If Adriana had still been there, she'd have recognized him instantly as the one who had shoved her out the window. There were four of him, identical. They formed a circle around the table and looked down at the abandoned lamp.

"Oh well," one of them sighed, inspecting the lamp and finding it wanting. "We'll get the next one."

The four of him turned and left.

And somewhere, there was a laugh that wasn't a laugh, echoing in the wind.

The End.