

(Almost) Perfect match

Her heart beat like a hammer on her chest as she ran through the forest, trying to leave behind the battered stagecoach before it was too late. Shouts, screams and the panicked neighing of the horses were starting to sound more and more distant, her legs carrying her as fast as they could. Even with her mind focused on surviving the attack, trying to spy for anything that could hide in the shadows of the trees, she couldn't help but think about it.

"Why?"

There was nothing fancy about the ride, one she shared with more people as it was rather affordable, and those that travelled on it were just as humble. A thought that went on and on, stuck on an endless loop trying to find something to break that line of thinking.

"Why?"

Bandits, raiders and highwaymen usually blocked the road, surrounding their target and demanding a ransom. But there had been no warning, no demands, nothing. The cart grinding to an abrupt halt as something fell to the ground with a loud thud, the horses panicking and the chilling noises of flesh and bone.

"Why?"

They had been terrified, wishing and praying in silence that the stagecoach driver was the only victim of the attack. It wasn't, as one of the travellers was plucked through the wooden wall of the cart and brought screaming outside. And then pandemonium happened. People ran, trying to get away from their attacker, and she had taken that chance.

Slowing down a bit, Dana leaned against a tree, catching her breath and trying to calm her wildly beating heart. It was only then she noticed her surroundings, and how far she had strayed from the usual well-trodden paths. Sure, it was not a fancy cobblestone road leading directly into the heart of a major city, but still.

And now she was in the middle of the forest in the twilight. Dark wooden trees stretched as far as she could see, their trunks twisting and turning competing for the smallest ray of light that managed to break through the dense roof of leaves of the forest. Their dark bark was cold and almost hostile, a far cry from the picturesque imagery from the sides of the roads; and their roots were just as twisted and massive, almost as if trying to starve the rest around them.

“How... long did I run?” asked the brunette woman, looking around for anything she could use as a landmark. But everywhere she looked it was more and more trees, shadows looming over her like predators ready to jump on isolated and defenceless prey.

The sound of moving leaves above her caught her attention. There was nothing, but her eyes darted from one place to another. Heart still pounding, she kneeled next to a tree, trying to look as small and insignificant as she could.

More leaves moved and swayed as a chilly breeze blew by, making her shiver as Dana tried to discern something, anything in the dim light. But there was nothing, other than an absolute silence. There were no animals, no birds... She was alone, her surroundings deathly silent. In fact, it was *too* quiet.

“The stagecoach...”

Her voice was barely a whisper, but the reaction was immediate, as more rustling sounds of leaves sounded nearby, followed by a quiet thud on a wooden surface. Covering her mouth, Dana tried to fight the terror in her mind. Her heart dropped, realizing that the distant sounds of the stagecoach had stopped, probably long ago. And now it was on to her.

Should she try to wait it out, curling into the smallest she could become, or maybe make a run for it, hoping the trees made it difficult to pursue her? She was no mage, and although she knew how to defend herself, she was no warrior...

Thud.

It was right above her, but there was nothing besides that single noise. Her thoughts were cut short, fear taking over as she sprung into a wild run. Her whole body ached, her legs protesting against this abuse, but she was not letting herself get caught. She had no idea where she was going, where she was supposed to go, but her mind repeated a single word.

“Away.”

She kept running, fear masking the soreness of her limbs as her blind escape continued. Racing among the trees, she moved with surprising ease and nimbleness, letting her body move on its own. She did not know where it would take her, but she wouldn't second guess her choices if she was not in control.

The forest and the trees became a blur, a palette of dark colours with blurred shapes and forms, but she didn't care. She could feel it, keeping the pace as it constantly shadowed her in her vain attempt of escaping. And the more she thought about it, the stronger the sore pain came back. She wasn't running away; she was merely entertaining it.

She wanted to cry, she wanted to rage, she wanted to do something. Anything but keep on feeling powerless. But she knew what awaited her if she stopped. She couldn't stop, and facing it down was not an option. Maybe a distraction...

Out of the corner of her eye she saw something, a blurry shape that broke the uniformity of the forest, although nature was doing its best to bring it down. A building, made of stone. A safe haven if she managed to distract it.

As she ran, she noticed some of the roots were twisted and arched, leaving openings under them and making some of the trees rise from the ground. She was no animal, but if she had to drag herself under trees and in mud, she would. Her heart pounded, her breathing somewhat steady, but her mind was back in control.

With a single and fluid move, she slid under the roots of a tree, stopping her momentum to avoid coming out the other side. The tree bark felt as cold as before, threatening to pierce her skin with splinters, but it seemingly worked, as her chaser went on forward. Moving quickly and as quietly as she could, she came out and found another hiding spot, taking refuge inside of the dried husk of a tree. And finally, she saw her pursuer, as a silhouette floated in the air nearby, looking for her.

It didn't last, as it quickly vanished from sight, once again on the hunt for her. Covering her mouth with a shaky hand, Dana caught her breath for a moment. It was almost dark, the little light there was having an orange taint that revealed dusk was falling.

"It reacted to my noise... maybe if..."

She took good care of not voicing her thoughts, as she got out of the husk of the tree and made her way back, minding where she put her foot. She was quiet like a shadow, trying to blend with the surroundings, but what her body did not manifest her mind took the brunt.

Her eyes darted from one place to another, paranoid of even the tiniest shadow or movement. Her pursuer could be- no, *was* still out there, so the smallest mistake or misjudgement could spell her doom.

And yet, step by step, she kept on moving forward, until she saw perfectly what the building was. It seemed a small chapel of sorts, long abandoned and with notable damage from time and the elements. It could be a good place to spend the night.

"And it could offer some holy protection... right?"

She was fooling herself, but her aching body demanded some rest. The main issue was that it was in a small clearing, but her patience was wearing thin. It was a short run, and there were no trees, which worked both in favour and against. Less chances to make noise, but no way to hide herself. Holding a hand over her mouth, she ran, quickly covering the distance and entering the building.

Despite its location and not being used, it was in a surprisingly decent state. A single room building, lacking any furniture at all. An obvious thought, but Dana couldn't help but stare in a mix of awe and intimidation. The stonework was smooth and held steady, even if the roof had fallen in a couple of places, allowing some vines to creep in. She finally allowed herself to pant, catching her breath. But the dark grey stone was a stark reminder that, despite the apparent safety, she was still surrounded by the forest.

“And that thing mi-”

“HI!”

Dana's words died in her mouth. Her heart sank and her throat went dry, giving thanks that her body had seemingly petrified, holding her completely still and silent. She stared at her hunter in absolute silence, and her pursuer stared back with a cheery and wide smile.

It- She was a woman, about her height and with a rather good-looking physique, but that was where similarities ended. She was completely white, her body ivory-like and imitating a living doll or a golem in appearance, with the exceptions of the golden jewellery that adorned her nude body. Around her hands, lower legs and ribs, and on her... feet and hair?

Her feet ended in golden high heels, while her hair seemed less like regular hair and more like material carved in long tendrils. The curves of her body were adorned with more golden parts, but her collar stood out... even when she was floating upside down before her. A finely crafted gold piece, adorned by a single red gem that glowed

like an ember and seemed to inspect her from head to toe. Same gems that could be seen in her forehead and belly button.

“That’s not jewelry... is it?”

“Hm...” Hummed the... woman as her smile morphed into a pout and her brow furrowed.

“Please, please, tell me she can’t read minds...”

Her blank eyes were completely fixed on Dana, who could only give thanks that her body had assumed full control and locked her in place.

“Oooh, you are good at playing!” Said the woman smiling again. “You know what, you win!”

The ivory woman cheered loudly, spinning in the air without a care. Dana however, remained silent and locked in place, not believing what her eyes were seeing. She had no chance at outrunning her, never had one to begin with.

“I was expecting a different reaction...” Said the woman as she floated close to her, looking at her confused. “Hello? Friend?”

She floated closer, leaning forward and booping Dana’s nose, giving her a perfect view of her ivory bust while doing so. She couldn’t help herself, her eyes taking the image in as her cheeks reddened. Something the golem immediately picked up, giving her a wide smile once again.

“Yay! I knew you were fine. We raced and we played hide and seek! Why kill the one that is fun? Unlike the rest of the downers in that wooden cart... boo!”

Dana felt cold sweat trickle down her back. She was all that was left, the rest of the people on the stagecoach were... gone. Her heart pounded once again like a hammer on her chest, terrified at giving her a wrong answer, lest she ended like one of them.

“By the way, what’s your name, Friend?”

“D-Dana.” The woman managed to croak, her voice dry and shaky.

“Nice to meet you Dana! It’s fun playing with you!”

“A-are you going t-to... kill me?”

“Eh?” The ivory woman stopped mid-air, confused. “Why would I kill my friend Dana? That’s not fun!”

“T-then?”

“We are going to have fun!” The golem said, spinning and jumping in the air with child-like glee.

“What’s... your name?”

“My... name? My name! I can’t believe I didn’t introduce myself!” The woman realized, floating so that she landed gracefully. “I’m Gilda!”

“Nice to meet you... Gilda...”

“Aw... what’s the long face for?” Gilda said as she once again floated closer and leaned forward.

Once again Dana accidentally ogled her alluring form, like an idol of one of the churches that had taken life... and the sculptor some liberties on her design. But her appearance as well as her attitude were... to behold, only for her mind to remember her that she had wiped out all in the wagon. Still, the redness on her cheeks returned, brighter than before.

“Ooh, naughty girl.” Said Gilda as she floated away with feigned dignity. She gave her a smirk over her shoulder and a playful look, or Dana believed it was a playful look.

“Like what you see?”

“Wha?!”

“You’re pretty too!”

“Ah... t-thanks?”

Silence took over as Gilda floated around her, a smirk on her face as she seemed to measure her with her eyes, sizing her up. One, two and three times she floated around her clockwise, Dana following her with her gaze as far as her immobile and terrified body would allow her. Still, she could feel herself relaxing, be it due to the futility of her escape or the antics of her pursuer.

“Oh, I know! We are going to have fun, and you are going to love it!” Gilda cheered, floating behind her. “You are going to be super cute!”

“Cu- gah?!”

Instinctively Dana swallowed, feeling something travel down her throat and into her stomach, immediately reacting as she felt her body jolt and spasm. Gilda’s hair like limbs closed around her, the brunette woman looking at her surroundings as everything became glittering gold.

“Gilda?” She let out weakly.

“Don’t you worry, everything will be just fine.”

In her golden shell, Dana watched with horror and a bit of amazement as a coating started to engulf her, coming from her insides. A nightmarish idea, as the ivory and

gold coating went up and down all of her, covering flesh, bone and cloth alike. And whether it was from her own volition or her captor's doing, she curled to try and be the smallest she could. She folded her legs against her chest, burying her head on her knees and holding steady with her arms.

She thought, or tried to. It was all blurry and confusing, a cold and dark void that went on and on. No matter the direction, or how far she tried to go, there was nothing. No, that wasn't true, there were things. Cold and dead husks, their surfaces dark and uncaring, twisting in a tangled mess hell bent on trapping anything within their grasp.

She tried moving forward, as the landscape became more and more familiar. A forest of trees, acting like parasites that leeches off her strength regardless of what she tries to do. There was something else too, a presence besides her own. She wasn't alone, and despite her dark surroundings, she looked up.

She was beautiful, an image of beauty and warmth surrounded by gold against the void. Her ivory and gold casted the shadows away, gently lowering herself before her, giving her a beatific smile before offering her a pristine hand. Something she took, being brought into her embrace as she was encased in ivory and gold. No more cold and dark, she was safe and warm.

She let herself be embraced by the ivory and the gold, as she graced her with her gentle touch. She felt bare naked, completely exposed to her, but she didn't care. She basked in the delight and bliss of her touch, caresses slowly but surely working on the entirety of her shape. Her limbs were long and graceful, just like her hair, a curtain of ivory and gold.

The caresses moulded her face into a perfect mask, immutable even to time itself, only to give way to the shape of her body. She was unable to oppose the advances of the ivory and gold, making her body an alluring image and gifting her with a generous bust and rear, like a perfect craftsmanship of a sculptor brought to life.

While the ivory covered her mostly, she could still feel the gold, small parts of her body adopting the metal instead. Small bands here and there, adorning the entirety of

her body, following the example set by the image of beauty that lovingly held her in the embrace. A small touch here, a lovely filigree there.

And as the ivory and gold faded, she opened her eyes.

Gilda smiled gently as she held her friend in her embrace, watching the rays of golden light that occasionally escaped from between her hair strands. She lovely toying with the mortals, always making sure that her tasks were completed to the best of her ability.

Assaulting the wagon had been laughably easy, looking for potential candidates to enlarge her kind, but just when she thought it had been for naught, she had drawn her attention. Nothing remarkable about her, but her attitude... she was surprisingly determined. Yes, it could be due to an irrational fear, but that didn't make her less resilient.

She had toyed with her, giving chase. Oh, the joy when she had tried to fool her, to distract her. She knew all along where she had been, since it was surprising how few of her prey looked up. They were certain they had none above them, and she was glad to prove them wrong.

And her face! She had to hold back a giggle when the woman had almost petrified in place by fear when she greeted her! A mere greeting and she was rooted! But... she was cute. Very cute. And she had been looking for a peer ever since she had been graced with that demon seed. And she would do nicely. As her hair let her prey free, her new friend appeared before her, opening her eyes for the first time.

She was beautiful, an image of ivory and gold almost so perfect that it could have almost passed as a reflection in a mirror. She possessed an otherworldly grace that she could definitely relate to. Incredibly similar curves and measures in all of the right places, taking a moment to admire her beauty fully

“Looking very lovely if I say so myself!”

There were some slight differences, such as Dana's locks still being present, now much longer and with a new palette of ivory and gold; as well as some of the golden bands playing with asymmetry to set her apart along with her own design on the golden lines that went from her calves to her back. But more importantly, she sported three crimson gems, on her forehead, on her collar and on her belly button. A beautiful result indeed!

Now the ivory and gold woman remained silent before her.

"Friend?" Gilda asked.

"Yes?"

She held back a smile for a moment.

"You are SO CUTE!"

"I KNOW!"

They locked a single hand while they squealed in glee, both of them savouring the moment. They were perfect, both of them, and the result was everything Gilda had expected from such a lovely friend.

"Dana?"

"Yes, Gilda?"

Gilda was silent for a brief moment. She still answered to the name, but there was nothing else that pointed anything else remaining of who Dana was before. She was her friend. Forever.

"Let's go have some fun!" Said Gilda, leading the way. "There's so much you I have to show you!"

“Let’s go!”

Both women floated away in a flurry of giggles as one learned to float and the other gladly helped her learn. There was so much ground to cover! But a partner would make her tasks so much easier to perform and carry out. And she was as beautiful as her, enough to have Gilda eager to explore her friend’s new form in careful and intricate detail.

They left the building behind, venturing into the dark forest, now much easier to navigate, looking for new prey to help her friend. Practice made perfect, and she had to be just as perfect as she looked.