

Looking divine

Fewer and fewer days remained on the calendar, the one circled in red growing ever closer. She kind of regretted having brought that in the group chat, but back then she thought it could be a good way to get all together again. No matter who proposed what, life always seemed to throw a wrench in the plans, having to cancel. But now that the night was almost upon them, she was not sure.

A party with a costume contest. Sure, it sounded fun. And everyone seemed on board. But the doubts in her mind only grew stronger. They had shared photos to make sure all would look similar, but there was this gaping hole in her gut... a feeling that would not let her be. So what if they looked a bit bland? The idea was to have fun, right? Enjoy the party, have a few drinks, maybe dance a little...

She stared into the empty space, waiting for Sara to finish her business. Her eyes drifted, trying to find something to obsess with, to shove those thoughts aside. The shiny and perfectly clean floor, the footprints of all the shoes that had come and gone, even her own. The digital advertisements that rolled in the screens that divided the aisle, showcasing every product she could think of; from expensive perfume and clothes to the humblest of foods and treats. One thing or the other, presented in a neat package with this or that celebrity of the moment showcasing it.

"Taking your sweet time, aren't you?" She asked in her mind, fidgeting in place and changing the paper bag to her other hand. That thought wouldn't let her be, and maybe the costume in her hand was the cause. Well, that and maybe the fact that they were running literally at the last minute to pick their costumes. The more time they had to prepare, the closer to the last minute things got done. *"Whatever, we are set."*

Shifting her weight from one leg to another, she took the chance to stretch her legs a little. Not much, but even a few steps could relieve the stress. And doing so, the glass store window returned her reflection. Long and straight dark hair, dressed in skinny jeans and a black

t-shirt. Yep, that was her alright. But that aside, something else managed to catch her eye. It was a door, a rather ordinary one. A plank of wood in a massive building of glass and steel. No display window, nothing fancy about it.

- Talk about standing out like a sore thumb...

It couldn't be any service corridor or forbidden area, and if it was the total lack of any signals was even odder. But seeing that Sara was not coming out any time soon, she shrugged and ventured forth. She hesitated for a moment, unsure of whether to knock or call, but went in anyway. If whoever ran the shop wanted privacy, maybe some panel or sign should have been in place. Or so she told herself. The wooden door felt heavy and solid, much more than what it looked from a distance, but it let her in, opening with a creak. And the inside left the "shop" even more so out of place.

Brick coloured tiles covered the floor, some lighter, some darker, some with a hint of red. That wasn't that odd, sure, bit of an extravagance, but hey, to each their own. What threw her off was... well, everything else. Where to start? The cabinet of solid wood to her right, and one made of metal to her left? The wooden boxes that looked like they belonged to some farm ages ago? The buckets with the planks of wood and the barrels with rolls of paper coming out of it? And was that an oven with a fireplace?

Each step she took left her more and more speechless. Were the apples in that basket real or just props? She managed to pull her hand back in time, but that sheen did not seem plasticky... And the rolls of paper were completely blank too, at least on the side they showed. Not that the light -electric light, she noted- hinted at anything else though.

She looked through the glass windows of the two cabinets. The shelves displayed a variety of items and antiques, all of it in an orderly fashion. A clock, statuettes of parts of the world she didn't recognize, some small decorated vases, an old wooden game of chess, marionettes and puppets, dolls and statuettes, be it made of wood or porcelain to carved stone... None of them interested her, but those would probably be better out in the open, so that people could see the catalogue. Not like there was anyone around for that, though. But that didn't stop her from browsing what was in sight, more trinkets ordered not as nearly.

The smell of wood, metal and closed off air wormed its way into her brain, her eyes going from one place to another. Just how much had the owner spent setting up the shop like this? The trinkets on display didn't seem that different from the usual fare, and the air didn't give her the impression of much movement either.

Fragile looking vases and porcelain plates in wooden shelves, all of them with varying hues of brown, grey and blue. All of them being rather plain. A weighing scale and glass recipients that looked like they belonged in an old alcohol distillery or an alchemist's lab. The scale even had the tiniest hint of rust from storage.

She walked around the central table, her eyes on the shelves and cabinets, sometimes leaning forward for a closer look, to properly see the trinket, but nothing that kept her attention. Well, there was the purple crystal on a small table, shining and trying to stand out; and it was pretty and mesmerising, with that sheen that seemed to run across its perfectly cut shapes...

But that aside, she wandered a bit around the store, walking around the table and finally touching the oven that took the entire wall. Built of perfectly cut bricks, it had two furnaces at ground level, some old tools thrown inside. However, the darkened walls and the small pedestal that it stood upon revealed previous use. And the same went for the big furnace in the wall, which currently had a marmite on a small fire. How the owner had gotten the permits, she had no idea, and maybe that was for the best.

A heavy sledgehammer and what looked like a wooden magician staff were thrown nearby, while the chalkboards held some unknown formulas in them. She did recognize the golden bars though. Maybe props for an alchemist costume? Because that was the only logical thought she could come up with. Maybe Sara could have a different idea and share it, whenever they came by again.

"When... maybe 'If'..." She thought sadly.

With an exasperated sigh, she went back to looking around, staring at the vases on the shelves. Just trinkets and more trinkets. Those did not look like props at all. So what was the goal of the store? To cater to both antique collectors and regular people? To some extremely dedicated cosplayer? She took one step back, and another, hitting with her rear the table that

dominated the room. The clinking made her blood run cold for a second, but nothing broke it seemed. However, the moment she turned around she did find something.

A small pyramid, made -or coated at least- in golden metal, smooth and without the slightest dent of damage. Sure, it could use some polish, but it kept its golden lustre. She picked it up, it was big enough as her full outstretched palm, but heavier than it first looked. It felt cool and smooth, and the gleam seemed not as dull? It was mesmerising the golden hue, seemingly glowing on its own, taking a shine that it previously lacked. It also had a symbol on it, in one of the four faces. It was a human figure, kneeling and feminine if she had to guess, with wings for arms.

- How the hell did I not see you? - She mumbled to herself.

Dumb luck? Missing it on her part? Didn't matter. There was a slight tingling on her hand, spreading across the palm and towards her fingertips. *"Is this thing charged with electricity or something?"* Maybe that was it, a fancy and overly specifically designed lamp. Not that the explanation convinced her.

- Hello? -She called out- Anyone there? I would like to buy this!

No one showed up. No rushing footsteps or even a distant answer from some dusty backroom. Unsurprising, given that there was only one door in the whole place. And it led outside of it. She walked around the table, the pyramid in her hands, hoping that someone would pay a bit of attention. Just the bare minimum to pay and leave.

- This is not going to look good on the review.

Not that she was going to actually do that, she didn't even like the idea of it, but every now and then it worked, and someone that was slacking off would rush to avoid the imminent doom. It did not work, and instead she was left standing before a table and an unmanned fire. She looked at the door again, she had a hunch that she was running late.

- Of course, now I get to look like an ass. -She grumbled, tapping the counter and getting only silence in return.

She spun in place, quickly sweeping the place and the cabinets with a glance. No price tag, no matter where or what she looked at. It was both confusing and infuriating, but she didn't care. Leaving enough cash on the counter -lucky her- she marched towards the entrance, and her waiting friend. They could come looking for her if it fell short.

- There you are! - Claimed a gorgeous and alluring blonde standing close where she had been, putting away her phone.

- Don't tell me you thought I ditched you.

- Nah, you're not like that. - The buxom blonde's eyes immediately went down to her hand.- Ooh, shiny~

- Ah. Right. This. -She looked down at the pyramid in her hand.- You like it?

- You don't? - Sara leaned in closer, giving it a gentle touch with her fingers.

- I... don't know? Not sure what possessed me to buy it back there. -She said, shaking her head towards the shop.

- Wait, that's a shop?

- It is.

- That's odd... Want me to go in with you? There might be something interesting.

- Better not, it's almost lunchtime, and the rest of the girls will arrive later. - She noticed Sara's bag in her hand, opaque, but knowing full well what's inside. - All set?

- Yep. - Sara took the lead, leading her towards the car in the parking lot.- Wanna go out for lunch?

- There are some leftovers at home. - She answered.- Not fancy, but don't want it to go to waste.

- I can help with that.

- Sure thing, I would love your company.

They made their way back to the car, chatting about anything and everything, finally having some time for themselves after so long. They couldn't wait to meet with the rest of the group, and neither noticed that a second symbol had appeared in a different face of the pyramid.

As the light outside dimmed, giving way to a slightly chilly night. They really had lucked out with that, even if they were going to stay most of the time under a roof. The flat wasn't exactly big or roomy, since she lived on her own, but it did its best to accommodate everyone as they arrived. Still, there was a single bathroom, and everyone would have to go through it for the eyeliner and Egyptian getup. It was not much, and there was always someone willing to lend a hand, but it had to be done.

She and Sara had already gone through it, making sure the black marks and the blue eyeliner were done and the next one could get to it. Andrea had gone into the bathroom, and out of the corner of her eye she could see Sara helping Anise with her costume.

- There you go, all set. -The blonde said.- Everything ok, or is it too tight?

- It's ok. Thanks, for the help, Sara. - Said Anise.- I was lucky enough that I found one fit for my size.

The blonde hummed in agreement, nodding as she made sure that the white tunic would hold. Anise was a shy woman, who would rather blend with the background and come and go unnoticed. Her job at the museum was something she loved, giving her the chance to stay out of sight, something that was quite hard to do with her height, standing a head and something else taller than the rest usually.

- You're gonna look amazing. Don't worry.

- It's another thing I'm worried about... - Anise whimpered.

Smartphone in hand, she went back to the bathroom, knocking on the door.

- Yeah?

- Hey Andrea, how is it going?

- Will be done shortly. - She answered without turning around.

- Great. Anise will come in after you.

- Uh-huh.

- And thanks for tagging along. -She said- I know you don't like this kind of stuff.

- Well, yeah, but we don't get to meet up at all lately. So I think it will be fine. -She turned around, revealing her blue eyeliner and the egyptian outline of her eyes, fitting the group theme.- Besides, once in a long while can't be that bad, right?

As Andrea walked out, she took the chance to look at herself in the mirror. The simple golden crown didn't look too cheap, and the white tunic looked better the more there were around; add her long and dark hair was perfectly combed and she was all set. And just in time too, as Anise quickly rushed to finish preparing herself. The phone in her hand beeped and vibrated, displaying a notification that quickly shortened into the app symbol. A couple of taps, and the message was on display.

"We're here"

Relief should have been evident in her face, because Sara started making her way to the door, and right on cue, the doorbell rang. She heard it open, and someone squealed with glee at the sight of the woman.

- Eeee, You look amazing!

- And pretty good since we last met.

- Who dares call to our royal abode? - Asked Sara, posing dramatically and with her best royal voice.

- The remaining two members of our lovely court. - Answered one of the women, rolling her eyes at the antics of the blonde.

- Then you shall come in.

Stepping aside, the two closed the door behind them. They couldn't be any more different if they tried. One of them was tall, her body showing some toned muscles in her limbs, fitting of a trainer and a gymnast, while her long hair was tied in a ponytail that swung behind her. She beamed at Sara's theatrics, but gave her a hug all the same. The other was of a petite and lithe build, her brown hair short and messy. The moment Sara was free, she almost tackled her to the ground. Not that she could, but she tried nevertheless.

- Good to see you too, Clara. - Said the gymnast with a beaming smile.

- It's good to see you too, Marisa. - Clara answered.- And you too Veronica.

- Yeah! Give ol' Vero a hug!

Brimming with energy, she let go of Sara and jumped at her, Marisa getting out of the way with expert knowledge. And she had the widest grin while watching the whole thing, even as Clara was crushed to death. Or that was what she got from it.

- You're enjoying this. Too much maybe?

- You bet. -The athlete admitted.- Anyway, we got our stuff in the bag, anywhere we can change?

- Afraid not, but you can do so in the bath the moment Anise finishes. - Clara motioned with her head, almost breaking free of Veronica's grasp.- Everyone else is done or almost. Anise is currently working on makeup.

- Sweet. Come on, Vero, let her breathe.

The petite woman followed her partner giggling all the while, as more greetings and hugs were exchanged back and forth. It was a straight line from here on, so maybe now she could relax a bit. A pat on the back from Sara reassured her a bit, as the two of them walked back to the main room.

- Mari, Vero, you have the bath all for yourselves. - Called Anise, joining the rest of the group. - I'm done.

- Gotcha!

- Thanks.

Everyone found a place to sit down, be it on the couch or the bed across it, enjoying the silence that had settled in. Well, if one ignored the voices of the two women in the bathroom, that was, the rustle of the clothes dying down as they switched their focus to the makeup instead. Veronica was over the moon with the whole group back together, and her happiness was pretty contagious to her girlfriend.

The pyramid she had bought sat in the table between them, drawing all eyes to it. Stray glances that one or the other caught, whether they admitted it or not, but the golden hue was irresistible. It seemed to glow with light of its own, the two symbols on its faces almost emitting a faint glow themselves, an intermittent one, but it was there nonetheless.

- Where did you find it, Clara? -Asked Anise, breaking the silence.

- An antique store back at the mall.
- That's an odd place to put such a store if you ask me. - Blurted out Andrea.
- Yeah, but Missy over here was taking her sweet, sweet time at the store.
- You kept me waiting later, so we are even. - Huffed Sara as the rest of the group gave her a deadpan stare - ...even if it was a shorter time, though...
- That aside, I have been looking at the hieroglyphs, and it's... odd.
- Anything you want to share, Anise?
- An odd choice, nothing else. A winged woman, a cobra...
- That's the second one, the one we noticed when we came back - Chimed in Sara.- Pretty obvious with the whole egyptian thing, but it wasn't there before.
- It *wasn't* there?
- As you hear it. I did touch it when we were back at the mall, so it probably appeared on the way back home.
- Maybe... - Anise agreed.- This one is rather specific, though.
- The winged woman? - Asked Clara.- What's so special about it?
- It's an old depiction of a goddess, very old. I'm just... a bit confused how this ended in such a store. And the material it's made of, it doesn't seem a knock-off.
- Should I take it to a museum or something? In case it's important or needs special care?

- I... don't know. It might be for the best though. -The woman admitted, carefully picking it up.- Wait, what's this?

There was complete silence, as all eyes were on the woman. In one of the sides, previously blank, a blue glow appeared, growing stronger. There was no cracking or damage to the pyramid, instead just manifesting itself before their very eyes. It was a simple circle, with two curves that elongated from it. And Anise watched intently. She was not afraid or surprised, but rather mesmerised, watching the blue claim its place among the gold.

- We should take it to the museum. - So we can examine it thoroughly.

- Are... are you okay, Anise? - Asked Andrea.

- It's sweet of you to care, Andrea. - The woman smiled.- But I'm quite alright.

- It did the same back in the store, and felt odd to the touch.

- And that means...

- Like it was charged with electricity, Sara.

- Huh.

Anise pulled it closer to her face, taking a closer look and trying to discern the mysteries and secrets it held. The golden gleam, the blue glow, was mesmerising to look at, making her plastic crown look a bit more real. And the light was not as intermittent. Or that was Clara's sensation.

- Mind if I take a closer look at it? - Asked Andrea, from where she was sitting. - There is something I want to try.

- Don't make any rash choices Andrea.

- I'll try.

None were sure how picking the thing heeded Clara's advice, but after picking it carefully, Anise offered it to the other woman. There was a moment of hesitation, but she picked it from the hands of her friend with a single one.

- Eep! - She had greatly misjudged how much it weighed, quickly using both hands before it slipped off her fingers. - Yeah, better use both... huh, no new symbol?

- Hieroglyph, Andrea.

The woman gave Anise a bit of a glare, but otherwise looked at the pyramid, specifically at the face that remained completely blank. It was a bit of an unspoken agreement, but none took their eyes off the artefact, trying to figure out why it had not been the case. The metaphorical light bulb switched on Clara's head. It was just a hunch, but still...

- Andrea, can you check the base?

- The bas- oh.

As suspected, it was there. A fourth symbol, glowing in blue against the golden background. A dog of sorts, with pointy ears, and laying prone. Almost like it was waiting for her owner, standing guard at attention. Or it could be just that she was relaxing, after a long day of doing something. Neither thought displeased Andrea though, even if she did not voice them. Instead she merely handed it back.

- Four out of five. -Pointed Sara.

- Clara, if you don't mind, next monday I'm taking this to the museum. - Said Anise.

- Yeah... might be for the best. - Nodded Andrea in agreement.

- Maybe we should put it elsewhere...

- Put elsewhere what Anise? - Asked Marisa, finally coming out of the bathroom.- Well that's something.

- Ooh, shiny~ -Said Veronica, the woman quickly kneeling next to Anise and taking a very close look.- And pretty...

- You two ready? - Asked Andrea.

- Yep. Where did that come from, though?

- An odd store at the mall. - Said Clara.- It's a long story, but I am not sure what possessed me to buy it.

- Well, it can be a miniature of our palace. - Veronica joked.- The real one was too big to bring with us.

- Welp, good thing you got me to carry it.

- We are all quite capable Marisa. - Said Anise, giving her a deadpan stare.

- I'm sure of it. Now let me carry it and let's roll.

Unsure as of why, the towering woman let her friends pick it up. Not that it was needed, but the glee in Veronica's face was obvious when the two of them picked it up. That glee quickly turned into curiosity for one and surprise for the other. Before their eyes, and as it had happened before, a symbol appeared. The blue glow came forth, growing in strength and drawing lines on the gold, completing the set.

- Uh... girls? There's this weird symbol-

- A hieroglyph. - Blurted out Clara, correcting the woman.- It happened to all of us when we touched it.

- This tingly feeling too? - Asked Veronica.- It's not bad, just... odd.

- Maybe we should let this be then... - Said Marisa, handing the pyramid back to Anise.

Immediately taking it, the woman set it down on the table once more. They were all ready to go, as Marisa had said, but none paid attention to that, and the thought didn't last either, vanishing from their minds. Instead, they only had eyes for the artefact before them. Their gazes basked in the golden radiance and the blue of the hieroglyphs. It was mesmerising, and the symbol that each of them had lit up felt comfortable, nostalgic even. As if they had stumbled on a very old photo of themselves.

The glow only grew brighter and brighter, shining on them and engulfing the room and all of them into the shine of gold and blue. And then it vanished. There was no gradual dimming or flickering, or anything of the like. It was like someone had turned off a switch. Clara's sight was filled to the brim of golden and blue sparkles. A myriad of tiny little fireworks that shone brightly and promptly vanished, another taking its place.

Clara rubbed her eyes, but it did little to help, as the entirety of her vision was coated in gold. She felt light headed, and a bit dizzy, so she slumped back on the bed, laying next to Sara. And the woman next to her wasn't very clear headed either.

- Ugh... you alright?

- Yes, it's nothing, Sara. But thanks.

And she went by the groans of the rest, they were not alone in that.

- Vero, when did you put on that necklace?

- Neck...

Veronica's words died when she touched her neck. And Clara's vision became pristinely clear, the woman sitting up in a single swift move, almost like someone had activated a hidden resort. And the same applied to Sara, the woman kneeling on top of the bed.

It was true. Veronica's neck was surrounded by an elegant piece of jewellery. Two lean and stylized strands of dark metal danced around the other in a helix pattern, before locking together over the collar bones of the woman, forming a cobra. Her eyes widened at its texture, rubbing her fingertips against it, looking at her girlfriend.

- I did not... - her tone betrayed a hint of nervousness, looking at the rest. It lasted little before it became full blown confusion.- You notice *my* necklace but not that?!

All eyes turned to Andrea, the woman confused and simply following their sight. She looked down, being greeted by her bare bust. And under it, visible through the cleavage, the dark hood of the reptile.

- Oh.

All eyes remained on her, as she looked down, processing what she was seeing. It finally clicked, her cheeks quickly taking on a redness while she slowly and calmly covered her bust and crotch.

- So that's where the crown went. Right back at you, Vero.

They looked at each other, inspecting their bodies from head to toe. One way or the other, they all lacked the crown they had worn before, all except clara. Instead, they shared the same piece of jewellery; two strands of dark metal that interlocked in a helix, until they became one, forming a cobra head, standing and the hood in full display. Although that paled in comparison to their beauty, now that their forms were bare and for all to see. In fact, Veronica and Marisa exchanged a rather lusty look.

- AAAAAAAAAAIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!

Anise clamped down over herself. Despite being quite tall, it was amazing how small she could look like that. She sat on the floor, legs flexed and covering her big breasts, while her long hair tried its best to conceal her face. Not that it stood a chance against that incandescent red. Lucky for her Andrea quickly knelt by her side, rubbing her long mane despite her own red cheeks.

- Come on, Anise, it's not that bad... At least we are all like that. That has to count for something, right?

The woman just whimpered, while Andrea sent a pleading look, although it quickly turned into a glare directed at Veronica, who was gleefully giggling. Marisa quickly noticed, pulling her close, and pretty much burying the head of the woman in her bust.

- There, there, Vero... How are you holding up, Anise?

- ...how do you think?

Marisa couldn't help but let out an uneasy chuckle, turning to Clara too while making sure her petite girl kept her mouth shut. Sara too turned to her, although her eyes were elsewhere, squinting at her forehead.

- Well... yours is the only one that's golden, Clara.

- O-oh, I see - She tapped it with her fingers, getting a faint metallic clang in return. *"That was not plastic..."*

- By the way, nice bracelet you got yourself, Sara. - She joked, trying to lighten the mood.

- Ha. Think of it this way, we all got some free jewellery and some... delightful vistas.- She smiled, looking around.- Nothing compared to that golden crown of yours, it goes wonderfully with the blue of your hair.

- My... what?

Both looked at each other, Clara quickly reaching for a strand of her hair. Its trademark dark colour was quickly taking a different hue, turning into a delightful lapis... black?

- What do you mean blue?

- Exactly that.

- It's... - Clara squinted her eyes at the sight of her hair, trying her hardest to see the azure that Sara mentioned. It was there, but it was such a dark blue that to her it seemed pitch black. "Wait..."

- Sara, are you sure this is blue?

- Totally.

It wasn't just that, as it felt... different. Impossibly smooth and alluring, it felt solid and unbreakable, the dark surface reflecting the light with a wonderful sheen. Each individual hair looked like a perfectly sculpted masterwork, but they would merge into larger locks the moment they were put together. She separated and put them back together once and twice, speechlessly looking at Sara.

She felt a bit light headed, her sight a bit blurry as the golden gleam seemed to permeate everything, leaning back as she was sitting, propping herself up with her arms. She closed her eyes, focusing on her breathing. There was this odd feeling in the back of her head, spreading all over it and moving downwards, to her neck. And a continuous faint metallic grazing, like someone gently rubbing a sheet of metal. A noise that sounded in her own mind.

She should have been panicking, completely freaking out, but instead she was... calm. It was not painful, and the metallic noise could even be comforting. Whatever it was happening to her, it was spreading. But rather than despairing, what she felt was... reassurance?

- Clara?

Sara's voice oozed disbelief, immediately snapping her eyes open. It was... odd. Like someone had put a veil over her eyes, as everything had a very faint golden sheen. And meanwhile, the blue of Sara's bracelet darkened, almost turning pitch black.

- ...Yes?

- You... how do I put this... - Sara looked at her, mesmerised and in disbelief.- You're... golden. Literally.

The woman moved her hand towards her face, leaning slightly forward while she knelt on the bed. And Clara offered no resistance, instead letting her run it through her lapis locks, her fingers feeling warm and tender. The mere touch was enough to send a chill down her spine, curling her lips into a smile. One that only widened when she took notice of the woman's left arm.

- You're about to be too.

Sara quickly followed her gaze, staring at her arm. Spreading from the bracelet, the same transformation was taking hold of her. Her fair skin took on a golden tan, growing brighter and stronger as the texture changed. It still looked malleable, but a quick touch from her right hand revealed the smoothness and firmness of metal. All of it accompanied by a delightful metallic tune when she did so.

They crossed gazes again, the blonde moving her hands to her hair, and quickly taking a lock. Before their eyes, it lost its golden colour, darkening into a very familiar dark hue. It did not lose its lustre though, still gleaming in the light of the room despite its new dark hue. She stared, either her lapis dark mane or the gold that was steadily spreading through her arm, before looking again at Clara. The woman's new lapis eyes beckoned to follow, both looking around as one.

Andrea stood next to Anise, watching speechless as the gold spread from her waist in both directions. She looked like she wanted to comfort their friend, still curled and looking diminutive, even as the gold spread from the bracelet that now decorated Anise's right arm. And given how she was clutching her head while murmuring something, the transformation had taken the chance to jump at her head from her hand. Her long and dark mane would soon look like a match to Clara and Sara.

Next to them, Marisa and Veronica simply enjoyed the whole thing, trying to keep their giggles as muffled as possible. The athlete's legs were turning to gold, as the transformation crawled up from the bracelets in her ankles; and she was all for it, watching the gold claim

more and more of her with delight plastered on her face. And Veronica was loving it just as much, the transformation spreading from her neck in all directions.

Her neck and chin had already transformed, giving her darling girlfriend pecks and loving kisses as they both felt the lips harden into glittering gold, bouncing in place while the metal claimed her breasts and moved down her arms and trunk. However, when Marisa pushed her against her and whispered something in her ear, the petite woman slimed as brightly as she could, squealing in delight. She immediately stood before her lover, both watching as the golden waves came closer and closer, having claimed Marisa's shapely rear and having passed Veronica's belly button.

- M-my head...

- Anise? - Asked Andrea.

- Something is... growing?

The woman looked up at her friend, her lapis eyes and golden face confused. Her hands moved into her long indigo mane, going through it briefly. Her eyes widened, as a couple of silver horns grew out of it, her hands touching them while did so. They grew long and curved, seamlessly emerging right on top of her ears and parting her mane as they did. The woman opened her mouth, closing it right after and repeating several times.

- Um, Andrea...

- I-it's okay Anise, we can...

- There's... something over your butt.

The woman immediately reached for her lower back. She was right. Looking past her golden bust and curves, there was a patch of dark in there, and a quick touch made its nature clear. It grew longer, taking volume and shine as it did so. Perfectly sculpted lapis, that when she ran her fingers through it, it felt smooth and even pleasant. Maybe a bit too pleasant, as she let out a pleased hum.

- I-it's not as bad as it looks...

- Well, you're not the only one.

Marisa's voice carried almost glee in it, as both herself and Veronica spun around and showed their rears to them. Both of their lower backs, right on top of their golden butts, sported a long and sinuous tail of indigo. The only difference was that the athlete's had a small tuft on the very end, setting her apart from her lover.

- Cheer up, Anise! At least we are really going as a matching set!

As her own arms grew spots of dark, Clara groaned at Sara's horrendous attempt at cheering her friend, but it did work, as Anise slowly stood up, the gold having spread through most of her body. She even sported her own tail, one clearly matching her bovine theme, although it was hard to ignore her bust, her breasts having grown into bountiful gleaming melons to match. She gently caught the tail between her hands, giving Andrea a sheepish smile.

- Yeah... I guess we are.

The mood felt lighter. Anise and Andrea sat down, waiting for the gold to claim them whole while the horned woman gently combed her friend's hair into two long pigtailed. They probably could do it once they were fully transformed, but the other woman was content both with her attention and more than willing to distract her a bit. Even as the gold moved into her head and a few hair locks.

Veronica and Marisa picked up on it with surprising ease, and without a word spoken. Both had their fun, striking duo poses, mismatched as they could be. Marisa flexed her toned muscles a bit? Veronica struck the girliest pose possible, clinging to her while flexing a leg. The petite woman tried to strike a graceful pose? Her lover picked her in her arms and lifted her overhead. With surprising ease at that.

From her spot in the bed, Clara enjoyed the show. The dark spots in her arms had grown in size and closed the distance between them, turning into a lustrous and graceful lapis

plumage... even if her new sight rendered it almost completely black. Regardless, two elegant and beautifully carved wings that took from her wrist to a bit past her elbow, but her hands remained fully human.

“And thanks for that, because that would have been a pain...” She simply enjoyed the show, watching the gold reach her feet, shaping them and merging her toes into avian talons. It didn't matter much, but she had a hunch that Anise could easily tell who each hieroglyph represented by now.

But, thinking of her luck again, she was not the only one. Andrea found out by herself, while looking at her limbs. It was imperceptible and hard to notice at first, but they had lengthened a bit, feeling light and nimble. Her fingers, lean and sleek, touched her face and hair. The changes were not limited to her limbs, as her nose had changed a bit, becoming an inverted triangle fitting of the jackal, while her ears had emerged from her hair, now long and fluffy, twitching at the slightest noise in the room.

Veronica found herself in the same boat, feline ears having carved their way through her short hair, tied in a beautiful bun in her back. They were brand new, but they looked like they had always been there, sculpted into the lapis hair. And although not easy to notice at first, she did display a flexibility that was not there before, every move graceful and calculated, or at least looking the part before her goofy side overwhelmed it.

And the woman next to her followed the trend. Marisa's changes weren't as noticeable, but two small round ears stood on top of her head, worming their way through it while her hair cascaded down her back, her ponytail having come undone. It contrasted nicely with the toned muscles of her new golden body and seemingly naturally encroached around her neck. Not too dissimilar from a carefully and painstakingly decorated piece of armour or a mane... even if the latter belonged to the king of the jungle, not the queen. Not like it mattered though, as she eyed Anise's treatment with longing.

“So, the big scary lioness is still a kitten after all...” Thought Clara, her lips curling into a small smirk.

- Uh oh. Uh oooaaah-

She was about to shift her attention to Sara, when the woman fell over her. There was a delightful clang of gold in the room, sending a pleasant chill down the body of all, but physical contact was... something else. The former blonde had fallen over her, both of them dazed as they tried to untangle themselves.

- Ah crap... sorry.

- What just... happened.

Sara's long legs had taken an unexpected turn. Instead of gold, they had darkened, turning into lapis. Previously ignored, a pattern had grown in them, dividing itself into smaller and smaller units, as if the woman was becoming a living mosaic. It was not the case, as the legs coiled around each other, losing their curves and definition, becoming instead thick and solid instead.

The woman bobbed in place, trying her hardest to remain standing. Arms spread, she struggled to keep her balance, and once she was standing steady, they could take a better look. The curves remained, her human torso seamlessly giving way to her new lower body. In fact, they reached the very end of her brand new snake tail. Starting at her waist, the gold gave way to an intricate and carefully sculpted snake tail, one that stretched on and on. Should she be able to stand up its whole length, she won by a mile. Her long hair, now lapis, reached all the way to where her rear had been, now armoured scales in place. Realisation and panic flashed across her eyes.

- Don't tell me that...

Her hands quickly moved to where her snake body started, frantically looking for something. Her relief was visible a mile away, shoulders slumping as her new armoured lower half bulged and formed a shapely rear and a clean slit on the front. They disappeared just as easily, only for them to reappear at the woman's whim. Off and on, twice and thrice.

- That's a relief.

- That's your first worry? - Asked Clara, motioning the whole room and its radiant occupants.

- It would be if it was you.

Sighing in defeat, Clara stood up, approaching the pyramid while Sara fully figured how to slither around. Something she quickly did, joining Veronica and Marisa in an impromptu dance, trying to use her body to coil around them. Anise and Andrea joined the winged woman, looking at the pyramid. It gleamed and shone like never before, projecting an aura of light around it. Indigo lightened to cyan, turning to lilac and then to purple, only to revert to indigo.

- It did not do that before... - Mused Anise.

- Anise, do you think the museum will know what it is?

- I...

- Our palace. - Clara sentenced.- It's our palace.

- Clara?

The woman turned around, so that all could see the thing on her hands. Its golden shine, and the light that surrounded it was reflected by their bodies, each time feeling like a gentle caress. Veronica and Marisa approached them, while Sara made sure to surround their entire group with her armoured tail. The pyramid left Clara's grasp, hovering gently before them. It kept rising, higher, until it levitated over them. The light shone brighter, as the symbols of the different faces were projected over and over, sometimes one, sometimes the other. But no matter how many times they flickered on and off, they all showed up, eventually all of them taking place at once. A warm feeling filled them, one that only grew stronger.

"Well... we are all like this, so maybe I could cut loose a bit?" Anise wandered, her arms behind her head, and displaying her beauty. *"It feels kind of nice..."*

"We are all the same, and we'll stick together." Andrea reassured herself.

“I’ll keep us all safe.” Marisa thought, feeling Veronica cover her mouth. *“No matter what comes next.”*

“So shiny...” Veronica purred in her mind. *“So much golden goodness...”*

“Such beauty...” Sara giggled in her mind. *“I could squeeze us all together~”*

None seemed to notice that Clara had spread her arms, levitating with her eyes closed. The pyramid floated right over her head, spinning gently in place. However, it did so ever faster, the glow growing stronger and brighter. Gold filled their entire sight, merging with the blue and purple light. A curtain of light that surrounded them, engulfing their silhouettes and clinging to their bodies. It held them strong and steady, pulling them in.

The light vanished, as if someone had turned off a switch, and the pyramid hovered gently back down to the floor. It sat down quietly and gently, its golden shape gleaming like never before. The room was empty, completely devoid of life despite the light that filled it. And unless they noticed the clothes that had been tucked away and the slightly rustled bed, none would know it had been used.

Not one of them could tell how long they had been there, but they cared little either. Their new palace had all they could desire and more. In fact, should they desire anything, they only had to think for it, to give it shape, and it would form out of thin air. A complex of light stone has no permanent layout, instead consisting of a main hall, with a large pool in it. The crystalline water was as still as a mirror, and the occasional silver shine further cemented that look.

Long hallways displayed lines of lapis and gold along their walls, like finely tuned and clean circuitry that ran through the entire place, interrupted by gorgeous depictions of themselves. Sometimes in displays of grandiose, in poses that made them look larger than life. Other times in displays of lust and desire, their beauty in full display, and their lust unleashed in

scenes that oozed passion and love. And others merely pictured them leisurely enjoying their existence.

They would gladly spend their time like that in their new home. Be it exercising under Marisa's guidance or playing at Veronica's whims. In calm meditation with Andrea or practising arts with Clara. Even Anise had taken the lead with their new garden, looking after carefully created and sculpted flora. Flowers of blue, white and gold adorned small patches around the pool, and the cow woman had been quite vocal about putting some pond lilies in the water.

Or they would spend their time displaying their affection for each other, thanks to Sara's never ending lust. A frequent occurrence, but not that anyone minded though. In fact, it was a very welcome thing. And it had brought them together and closer like never before... *"even if it's because she likes coiling around us."*

And right on cue, she heard the faint noise of friction. Lapis scales rubbing against the floor as a certain someone approached the room she was currently sitting in, a small light page in her hands.

- I can hear you, Sara.

- Damnit, I thought I had gotten better at this.

- You have, but you still collide your tail with the walls sometimes.

- Noted. - Sara slithered into the room, coiling over herself as she leaned forward.- Painting again?

- Mhm.

- Mind showing me?

- Not yet. It's still a very early sketch.

- What, not even a tiny peak?

- Not yet.

- Boo... but fine. We are exercising a bit, you coming?

- Exercise, or “exercise”?

- You’ll have to come to find out~ - Sara sang as she left the room.

She both sighed and smiled at her antics. Despite everything, despite the changes, they were still them. In fact, Anise had been a very welcome change, as she gradually casted away her former shyness and embraced her presence and her beauty. Even if it was just between them.

As the sketch flickered off, to be continued later, she walked out of the room and made haste for the main hall. She wasn’t worried about it, even if she forgot, she would remember eventually. After all, time was the one thing they had now; well that, and each other. And she would not change it, even if it meant remaining like this.