

Journal Entry Four,

Tension was building between Vex and me. The next morning, when I woke up, I decided to change my outfit. Instead of just wearing pants and the top half of the ripped dress, I put on a shirt as well. I folded the bottom of the shirt to avoid tearing it as I pulled it over my stomach. Once dressed, I went out to explore the castle. As I walked around, Vex opened a door and dragged a leopard behind him. The poor creature begged for mercy, but Vex wasn't paying attention. Our eyes met briefly as we passed each other, and then Vex left the door open. Intrigued, I decided to see what was beyond the door.

Inside, I found a set of cobblestone spiral stairs. The walls were made of cobblestone too, supported by large wooden beams. The stairs were dimly lit, with only a couple of lanterns providing light. At the top of the stairs, I looked out onto a long hallway that was slightly curved to form a circle. On each side of the hallway were cells that housed one or two residents.

"Hey, Lee," I whispered. "I think I found the jail."

"Go try to see if you can find Ginger. She is a deer," He responded.

Every time I passed some cells, looks of terror flew through the air. People would jump to the back of their cells, hidden in a corner. Some hid behind others. Some would gossip, and others wouldn't care. After I passed a couple of cells, I went up to one of them. There was a Lion and an Owl.

"Do you know where the deer Ginger is?" I asked

The Lion nervously lifted up his finger and trembled as he pointed left.

"A-a-bout t-two cells t-to t-th-the le-left," He stuttered, full of fear.

I continued my walk. It took minutes because of the sheer number of cells in the basement. Eventually, I passed a cell with only one occupant, a bright twenty-year-old deer. She had light brown wavy hair, peachy eyes, and freckles that dotted her face. Her fur was brown, with a lighter brown color from the middle of the neck to the stomach, and a darker brown hue that was laced around her arms. She wore a green outfit that was split at the legs. On her chest were two black buttons attached to the outfit. It was wrinkled and had a couple of stains.

"Are you Ginger?" I asked.

She looked at my stomach and then back at me. "Wow. You had quite a dinner, didn't you?" she asked. "I didn't know a thief like you wouldn't savor their food."

“Well, about that,” I replied. “First, I do savor my food, thank you very much. The second thing is about... this,” I touched my stomach. “This was kind of out of my control. Vex was trying to teach me how to eat ani-”

“OH MY GOD!” she screamed. “I’M GONNA DIE! I’M GONNA DIE!!” Each time she said it, more emotion flowed out, and it illustrated a river of sadness and despair.

In the midst of her crying, and my small attempts to calm her down, a voice spoke from the cell nearby.

“We know, hun. We are all dying someday,” she said.

I looked over to the other cell and saw that she was an Ocelot, around thirty years old. Her hair was black and white, spiky yet soft, and located on the top of her head and her chest. She wore glasses with thick black lenses, and her eyes were not visible unless the glasses were taken off. I could see a little of her eye, which was a reddish-orange color. She wore a black sports bra and black pants with symmetrical laces and buckles at the ends. She had piercings made of copper, silver, and gold, which added to her look. She seemed relaxed and indifferent to the current events, sharpening her claws with her teeth. She glanced at me and then looked away.

“You’ll be fine, Ginger. Look at the bunny. Would she ever eat an animal?” she asked.

“Claire!” Ginger yelled.

“What?! I’m telling the truth,” she responded. “Now shut up and let her finish.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Ginger replied, sulking from her loss.

“Well, I’ll save you the time,” I said, interrupting Ginger’s grief. “Vex is teaching me how to eat animals, and, well-”

“I WAS THE SACRIFICE!” Lee interrupted, giggling and accidentally punching my stomach.

All conversations came to an abrupt halt, and all eyes turned to me or, more specifically, my stomach. Their expressions were a mix of terror and surprise.

“Ginger, is that you? In a bunny’s stomach?” Ginger asked, her voice filled with distress. “You, bunny, come closer,” she demanded.

I approached the cell as close as I could and she reached through the gaps to touch my stomach. Lee noticed and joined hands with her.

“It is him,” she sobbed. Her sadness then turned into rage. “YOU! YOU ARE THE MONSTER WHO CAUSED THIS!” she screamed, pointing at me.

"STOP!" Lee yelled.

Once again, the entire basement fell silent. I walked to the middle of the hallway.

"Everyone, I know you may have a bad first impression of my friend, Jaxx, but I promise you she is safe," he said, desperate for my safety. "I couldn't tell you the whole story, but Jaxx has explained everything. Vex is teaching Jaxx how to eat animals because she was given a 'second life.' She was going to be eaten by Vex until he found her as a 'holy spirit' because it stopped him from being too greedy. That led to him teaching her, and I was chosen by Vex to be Jaxx's 'meal.' Jaxx didn't choose this, Vex did."

Some prisoners gave me dirty looks, some looked away, and some didn't care at all.

"Ginger, do you want me to come into your cell so you can talk to Lee?" I offered.

"That would be nice," she said. "But don't you need a key?"

"Yeah," I replied. "I'm a thief. I got this."

"But what about the guards?" she asked.

"Doesn't matter," I interrupted. "I'll be back!"

She shook her head and watched as I walked away.

As I walked past the other prisoners who hadn't witnessed the events, they still looked terrified. The end of the hallway was in sight, and the flight of stairs reappeared. As I ascended the dimly lit stairs, I kept my hands in front of me to catch myself if I fell. When I opened the door of the cellar, the bright light temporarily blinded my eyes. After giving them some time to readjust, I searched until I found a knight wearing golden-plated armor. He didn't have a helmet at the time, and his spear was down. I walked up to him with a smile on my face.

"Hey, sir!" I called out.

He looked down at me, and I could feel his gaze upon me.

"I need your key for the cellar," I said. "There was something that needed to be cleaned up, and I wanted to do it," I said, trying to sound confident. He looked directly at me, and I could sense his suspicion. Nonetheless, he reached into his helmet, retrieved the key, and handed it to me.

"Thanks! Do you need it back? Because if you do..." I asked.

"Keep it," he interrupted. His voice was deep and menacing.

"Got it, thanks!" I replied, still a little shaken up by the recent events.

The cellar still had a musty and dark feeling, just like last time, and the more I walked, the stronger the smell became. As I passed by the other prisoners, they saw the key and began begging me not to kill them.

These grown people are capable of murder. Why are they afraid of me?

Claire appeared in my sights, and she smiled at me. "Good job, bunny. How did you get it?" she asked, lowering her glasses a little.

"I just told him I was cleaning something. He said--"

"Who's him?" she interrupted.

"A knight in golden-plated armor," I replied.

"Thank you, child. Continue on," she said.

"Thank you! He told me to keep it. That's all," I told her.

"You should probably go see Ginger now. She's been jittery ever since you left."

"Thanks, Claire!" I replied.

"You're welcome."

I took a few steps to the right and saw Ginger. A couple of strands of hair had been ripped out, and her leg was constantly bouncing up and down. She looked up at me and cried a little. I unlocked the door and headed into the cell.

"Lee, please say you're here!" she cried, shaky and full of tears. She wrapped her arms around me and laid her head on my stomach.

"Ginger, I'm here," I replied. "I'm okay. I promise that, Ginger. Don't be sad," I told her, trying to lighten the dark and gloomy mood.

"When you finish hugging, could you please give me a little bit of space," I asked. "I'm not too much of a hugger."

She looked back up at me, crying. "Give me a minute."

No words were said during the pause. I sat down on the metal bed's mattress while Ginger continued hugging Lee, who tried his best to comfort her by touching her face. I sat there awkwardly, trying to think of something else. When she finished hugging, she sat down on the closed lid of the toilet and asked me to start.

"Okay, I have a question," I said to Ginger. "How do you use the restroom privately? Sorry if it's random."

"It's funny you asked. We use the mattress as a wall and put a blanket over the cell bars to block out sound and maintain privacy. The bears let us do this because they think it's fair. They usually come every hour, so that's how we tell time here. I'm pretty new to this, but Claire was able to teach me

everything." She replied. "Lee, how did you end up in Jaxx's stomach?" she asked, her leg starting to bounce again.

"This is going to be a long story," He said to her. "Jaxx. Please listen. It's very important."

Lee

It was a day after I was thrown into the cell. They put me with Ginger, which made me smile. The guard snickered at my happy expression and walked off. Me and Ginger looked at each other, hugged, and laughed. I told her it was good to see her again. We talked all afternoon, and before long, it was nighttime. The same guard came up to me, and told me I will be executed tomorrow, and the death would be "burned at the stake." I looked at Ginger, who was uncontrollably shaking her hands. I told the guard to thank you and looked back at Ginger. I told her that "everything will be ok."

*That night I slept, though impending doom ticked as the sun revolved around the planet. In a blink of a second, the whole scene changed. It felt warmer, but I didn't feel any burning, as a warm liquid brushed my back. My vision slowly came back, and through the blur, I saw a color I can only describe as rose. Before my vision cleared up, I raised my arms to stretch. I felt something soft, so I put my palm on the mysterious surface. All of a sudden, I heard a shriek, followed by my body slowly rising in the air, before falling and hitting the ground with a splash. I wondered to myself. **Where am I?***

*I now was fully conscious and tuned into the argument. The more I listened, the more I questioned. **Live? Person? Sleeping? Eat?** These questions puzzled me, spinning my head in circles. I was getting tired of this new space, so I tried to escape it. I gently tried to stand up, only to slip and fall on the liquid. Faintly, I heard, "Oh look, he's squirming."*

*Then, in a flash, it felt like everything paused around me. Every bit of dialogue was silenced, and the weight of the situation thickened, literally for Jaxx. *haha**

I realized that I was in a stomach. I knew it was useless, but I tried to struggle my way out. After trying for a minute, I thought it was no use. I slumped back down into the acid, and, out of boredom, observed the stomach. Seeing that the lethality of the acid was little

to none, I concluded this was a young animal. With more investigation, I was put right back to square one. Young foxes have smaller stomachs, as this one is around the age of adulthood.

When I was trying to think what animal it was, the same voice that shrieked spoke to me. I figured out her name is Jaxx, and she was trying to distract me, and herself, from the current situation. She was soft-spoken, yet firm and confident. She asked me about myself, and while I answered, I was trying to draw my conclusion. Fox's and bear's stomachs are thicker and more firm, even at a young age. I asked her, "You are not a fox, right?" She replied yes, that she is a bunny.

This shocked me. **A bunny eating things whole?!** It would be something I'd write down if I could. I asked if she could let me out, to the horrifying response of, "Don't know how." I lay there, the small bits of acid still soaking my back. Jaxx stayed still, completing the situation she is stuck in. Through the silence and a small bit of talking, her stomach growled something awful. I thought it was over. I thought the acid would splosh in, and all that would remain is bones. I waited, eyes fully shut, my hands over my head. My breathing intensifies, and my pulse sharply escalated. All I could think about is, "**It is over.**" I thought I predicted wrong. Maybe the bunny has eaten many things before. Maybe she isn't new. These thoughts surrounded my head for what felt like minutes. I almost couldn't hold in my terror, and I wanted to struggle, harder than the last.

Then, it clicked. Like a light flicking on, the lightbulb illuminated life instead of imminent death. **She is still hungry.** Her body isn't used to this, so it is working extra hard to remove the foreign object in her stomach. The more it works, the hungrier she is going to get.

I tell her that she is hungry, and she gives me a snotty response back. **Thanks,** I said to myself, as she got up. I asked her if she could give me food too. The jail doesn't feed much, and my stomach was hungry for lunch. She agreed and started the journey. As she walked, her stomach slightly turned left and right, causing me to constantly lean to each side. I tried to sit up, but most of the time, I came sliding back down. Every time I tried, though, she would almost lose her balance. Eventually, I heard a door open, and as it creaked, I

licked my lips, ready for a tasty lunch. Instead, my heart dropped out of her body and rested six feet under. A very familiar voice appeared.

Vex.

From what I could hear, he was tormenting an animal. All I could understand about the situation was the name, Wolfie, so I came to the answer that the animal was a wolf.

What made me shiver was Vex's tone. He sounded evil, yet calming. And the things he was saying. He was talking to the wolf saying, "Oh, look who's stronger now," and, "It'll only be a little till you're a pile of bones."

From what I can infer, I was fed to Jaxx because Vex forced me down, and he had the wolf for himself. The thought of that makes me want to throw up my insides. Jaxx asked where the kitchen was, and not surprisingly, Vex's answer was, "Didn't you just eat an otter?"

Predicting what the conversation would turn out to be, I had to alter the outcome. I yelled out that it will take me three days to digest. I crossed my fingers of hope, and without knowing, was shaking my leg pretty hard. Jax lightly punched the area of impact, and I stopped. I was nervous. I don't know why or how, but I felt safe around Jaxx. She wasn't rude or mean, and she tries to be as nice as possible.

As both of them talked, all I could think about was lunch. I would always grab the ready-to-go sandwiches, which were the most popular choice throughout the castle. Instead, I want a fish. Not just any fish, a **raw** fish. It has always been a dream food of mine, but I was too nervous I would die of some disease, so I never picked one up. Since I only have a couple of days to live, there were no consequences if I got sick. **Oh well, I'll die anyway.** I paused for a moment, thinking again.

That's probably the worst thing I have ever said.

I shook away the thought and tried to sit up again. But alas, I slid back down, this time dunking my head into the acid. I poked my head up quickly and readjusted myself so my head rested up. Jaxx asked if I was ok, to which I replied, "Yeah. I just went face-first into acid. Telling the truth, though, felt like dumping your head in a hot tub... Only your entire body feels grimy and sticky afterward. By that, I mean the saliva dripping down your throat, and into your stomach.

She told me I was grossing her out, so I stayed silent.

She kept on moving, and I kept thinking. It's about all you can do inside of a stomach. Not much to see or taste. The only surface is the rose, soft, squishy walls, and the only liquid is the yellow acid, which ever so slowly arose.

After she finished talking, the door opened, creaking the entire way. My stomach growled, anticipating the scrumptious fish that I would eat. As I fixed my position, I heard another door creak open. "Where are we," I asked, but instead of being in the kitchen, Jaxx replied that she was in the bedroom, getting a new change of clothes.

She took what felt like minutes, which makes sense, but my hungry stomach thought otherwise. I asked her if we could hurry, and her response was "Be patient." Her response made me angry, but I couldn't do anything to change the outcome. I grabbed a little bit of her stomach and squeezed it a little bit. I thought she would notice, but not a sound came out of her mouth. Instead, a story flowed out like waterfalls after a flood.

She told me how she avoided death from Vex, which made me jealous. **Why does she get to live as I get to die?** I didn't ponder on it much because the rumble of my stomach took me out of my trance. I told her nicely if she can find the kitchen, and what I wouldn't expect, she sat down on the floor. I could lightly feel the rough cracks of the stone. After we had our little argument, she stood back up and continued forward.

Another door opened, and the pleasant aroma of food pierced through her and into my nose. My stomach jumped in happiness, and I almost got fully up. I stood up for a quick second, to instead go face first into the front of her stomach. I lay there, defeated, as a hand touched my head. Jaxx giggled a little and pushed me back lightly. Instead of helping, I slid right back to the acid. **Thanks.** She asked me what I wanted, and through impulse, asked for raw fish. She picked up her item and walked out of the kitchen. She still held my fish, though.

After a minute or two passed, another door opened. I asked her where we were, and she replied that we were in the bedroom. Before I could nag more about food, she immediately started thinking about how she would get the fish to me. After a little pause, she acquired an idea. She told me she would try to eat the fish whole so I could enjoy the full thing. I nervously chuckled, and seconds later, a large salmon, the size of my whole body slipped down her throat and onto my

face. Its eyes stared coldly at mine, still as plastic. He slipped off and was about to plunge into the acid, but my quick reflexes saved him from becoming Jaxx's meal instead. I bit through what I could of the fish, savoring the rich meat. As I ate, chunks of a sandwich fell onto my body. Jaxx apologized, saying that sandwich chunks may fall down, which they already have.

She finished her meal and asked if I was doing ok. From what I could see, she was rubbing her stomach softly. I replied to her that I was ok, so she told me she was going to sleep. She laid back, and eventually, managed to lay on her side.

The entire night was very rough. I tried to sleep, to only be awoken by the growling of Jaxx's stomach, the sloshing of the acid, and the constant movement Jaxx did all night. As the hours passed, it felt like Jaxx's belly was slowly closing in, like nets trapping a fish. Though the change was slight, it was noticeable enough for me to feel. Now that she was asleep, I tried to find a way to escape. I punched, kicked, pinched; anything I could do to escape from this closing prison. No matter how much I did, though, I didn't even do a dent in Jaxx. I was starting to feel tired, but if I slept, I would risk my face planting into the weak acid, killing me in my sleep. After managing to keep myself up for some time, I felt my eyes get heavy, and my vision slowly turned black.

I suddenly opened my eyes. Immediately after, my whole face stung, especially my eyes. I lifted my head slowly and looked down in fear. I was face first into the Acid. I wanted to say something, even if it was a little yelp, but I didn't want to wake up Jaxx. Instead, I readjusted and tried to lay on the side of her stomach without diving back into the acid.

I tried to think of something, but at the time, my whole mind was blank. The only bit of info I can think about is Jaxx and her stomach. I sat there, and while I started out, I felt something lightly tap my leg. I looked down, and it was the fish, which I ate about a quarter of. Most of the other meat has been broken down, with only a couple of chunks left. I salvaged what I could, and started eating the small bits of the fish.

**Why was the fish being digested normally, and I am still alive?
Is it because I'm alive?**

Though I was confused and stressed, these two questions kept me up for a long time. Even though I just ate a fish, I was still very

hungry. I pushed slightly on Jaxx to wake her up, but she didn't budge. I didn't want to hurt her, even though I should. **If I hit her hard enough, I'll be able to escape.**

I could never figure out why I didn't escape, even to this day. Honestly, It pains me that I didn't escape. Instead of escaping, I nagged her more, telling her to wake up. The slight mumble turned into a yell, and before long, she jolted up. Now, with her fully awake, I pushed on her stomach, which made a little dent. After she noticed the dent, I told her I was hungry again. She asked me the time, which was entirely stupid, because the only thing I can see is the walls of her stomach. After a little more talking, I was able to get her up, and she started to go to the kitchen. I heard the door creak, and faintly, another door. The voice called out to Jaxx. "There's my little eater."

Vex, again.

She talked to him a little, then told him that me and her are going to get dinner. I felt a little bit of pressure on Jaxx's stomach, either a gesture from him or her. He told her to not feed me, and she stood her ground back, even if she said things I didn't want to hear. Though Jaxx put on a good argument, I heard her breathing start to rise, and I could feel her heart start to rapidly pulse. Vex, very clearly says that we don't make friends with our **meals**.

The last word felt like a gunshot. **Meals. Is that who I am? A meal?**

I thought about those words until I saw a dent in Jaxx's stomach. I saw a hand, which was squeezing tightly. Soon after, another hand. I was surely convinced that Jaxx would be eaten by Vex, but something unexpected happened. The walls of her stomach started to close. As it got closer, the acid rose with it. Suddenly, the two hands were touching my body, and then, it closed in more. Jaxx was screaming in pain, and I was starting to also. The acid rose to my mouth, and it took everything to not swallow any. The hand kept closing in, and it started to squeeze me. I lifted my head up as high as possible, not down in the acid, and I let out a yelp. It felt like my whole body had given out. I wanted to just stop struggling. It would save some energy, though it could lead me to my death. A tear ran down my cheek, and into the rising pool of acid.

Out of nowhere, I heard Jaxx scream to stop, and Vex let go. The stomach expanded to its normal size, and it jiggled a little. As for

me, I slid right back to the walls again, like I did before. I held my right shoulder, which felt very sore. Jaxx kept a close grip on her stomach, clearly in pain. I tried my best to comfort her by reaching my hand out and touching hers. Instead, it might have spooked her, as she hastily let go of the grip, and moved her hand to another location. Jaxx and Vex had an argument, where I was brought up. To what I heard, Vex didn't care about me, and still referred to me as a meal, though he knows my name.

Jaxx raised her voice, and from what I could infer, she was smacked against a wall. Acid hit the side closest into her body, which is where I was located. **This damn acid.** Vex spoke, which I could care less about. Instead, I looked around at the stomach, and noticed it had started to shrink to the point I started to notice. As the shrinking happened, the acid would rise. It has also risen since the day started. I knew my life was ticking slowly. **All I want to do is to talk to Ginger one last time.**

Jaxx mumbled something incoherent, then took off running. Her stomach swung from one side to another, sloshing and splashing with every step. I got knocked around constantly, bouncing from one wall to another, taking a pit stop in the acid, and the cycle repeats. I ask her what she is doing, and she replies that she is running away from Vex. I scoffed at her attempt, but had faith in her. **Why am I rooting for a person who is killing me?**

Another door opened, and I can feel Jaxx slowly shifting downwards. She sighed in relief, and placed her hand on my stomach, signaling that she is safe. Just as she placed her hand, a flickering sound emitted from the other side of what I could think of a room. Jaxx and someone had a quick conversation, before I felt, once again, hands touching both sides of her stomach. It felt like her whole body was being picked up, and all of a sudden, I felt my body levitate in the air, until one side of her stomach hit my back, crashing me into the other side. She crashed down with a bang, and I crashed down into the acid shortly after. Recollecting myself, I got back up, trying to shake some of the acid off my hands. After trying for a while, it was no use, so I decided to lay back again. As I did, the top of Jaxx's stomach started to collapse. It slowly shrunk, and a massive force came with it. As it slowly came crashing in, my whole body started to get squished.

It felt like my whole body was breaking, bone by bone. I yelped in pain, begging for the nightmare to subside. It kept on pushing a little more, the force locked up, and kept me in the squeezing pain. A tear went down my cheek, fully knowing this will happen to me when I die. As I kept on crying, a voice spoke, and my sadness quickly morphed into fear.

It was Vex, again.

His words sent a chill through my back, as he talked about his liking for pain. I wanted to break free from this personal prison, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not move. As both of them argued again, all I could think about was the everlonging pain he was causing to my entire body. They talked for what seemed like hours, and every second passed, a horrible pain ached my entire body. The force Vex was putting on Jaxx's squashed stomach was ever-so-slowly starting to release, but not enough for me to move.

I felt tired.

I was close to suffocating.

I was close to drowning

I thought it was over.

I couldn't feel my body anymore. My eyes became heavy, and I thought I was going to die, but the force lifted, and Jaxx's stomach resided to its normal state. I took a very long breath, gasping for air.

Jaxx quickly got up, said something to Vex, and walked off. We got our food, and Jaxx went into her bed, though she did not sleep immediately. We both instead discussed what happened earlier.

And that brings us here, and you officially have been caught up with my story.

Ginger's eyes welled up with tears, and as she concluded her story, she embraced my stomach, holding on tightly in the hope that Lee could sense her presence. The other prisoners watched in awe as I wrote down everything Ginger had shared. Once I finished writing, I closed my journal. Still hugging Lee, Ginger glanced up at me, her surprise evident. "Did you write all of that?!" she asked me.

"Yeah," I replied, rubbing the back of my head. "It's just a talent I've had for a while."

"Jaxx, you should consider becoming a writer," she suggested. "With your quick writing skills, you could effortlessly create captivating stories."

"I've thought about it, but storytelling isn't really my forte," I admitted. Giving me one final look, Ginger rested her hand on my stomach and slowly pressed down until she felt Lee. It was uncomfortable, but I allowed her to have her moment with him.

"I'm sorry," Ginger told Lee, her voice filled with devastation. "It's my fault. I shouldn't have asked you to help me kill the fox. He was my enemy, not yours."

Lee could only offer a consoling response, saying, "It's okay, Ginger. Everything will be alright."

Now overcome with grief, Ginger began to cry, her tears soaking into parts of my fur. "But it's not okay," she sobbed. "You're going to die, and it's all my fault! I should be the one being eaten, not you!"

Her despair was many, and I sensed her willingness to bear the burden for others.

I hope she will be alright. She's too anxious and stressed to be consumed.

I will protect her and keep her safe.

I promise.

Releasing her grip, Ginger wiped away her tears. "You better get going, Jaxx," she said, composed. "The bears will be arriving soon."

"Cya, Ginger!" Lee called out. "Hope you enjoyed the story!" "Yeah..." Ginger responded softly.

I opened the cell door, locking it behind me as I exited. Clarie looked at me, winked, and signaled for me to leave.