

## Sven's Catch

By: Indi

Night had fallen on the city hours before, leaving Sven alone as he walked the streets of one of the wealthiest districts. The black-and-turquoise tree frog wore tight-fitting clothing in various shades of grays and blacks that disguised his naturally bright colors. With the stars covered by clouds, Sven blended into his surroundings well, not that there was anyone around to spot him. Yet.

As a rogue, Sven preferred not to stand out when it was inconvenient. Stealth was vital when it came to snatching the riches of others. If cornered he could fight, but it certainly wasn't ideal.

Sven stopped as he passed beneath a large archway that'd once been a gate in the distant past. After checking to make sure no one was within sight, the frog put on a set of enchanted goggles to enhance his night vision and swiftly scaled the wall. His toes stuck to the surface, and soon he was positioned in a corner of the arch, his back to the stone. The arch was tall and wide enough to hide his presence. Unless someone below looked straight up they were unlikely to spot him.

For a while Sven waited in place, patiently, his gaze locked down the end of the small street. Though he couldn't be sure of the exact time, he was confident he wasn't too late or early. And sure enough, eventually three people turned the corner and headed his way.

Two were guards, sporting a few pieces of armor with swords at their sides. Even from a distance they looked annoyed and exhausted. Sven guessed the cause was their charge, the chubby white ferret in between them.

The ferret was a rich, spoiled nobleman named Royce. He was infamous in the city for his childish attitude and eagerness to flaunt his wealth. His robes were made of the finest materials, and he was covered in expensive jewelry. And of course he always had a heavy pouch of gold on him at all times.

Sven had known of the brat long before he'd decided to rob him. Over the last few weeks he'd observed Royce's routines, quickly learning of the ferret's fondness for late night restaurant outings with a minimal escort. It was a miracle he hadn't been robbed a dozen times over already.

"I can't *believe* they ran out of gold-foil fudge!" Royce whined. His two guards didn't respond to the complaint, which was fine as he didn't care for them to speak. "They knew I was coming, and they knew it was one of my favorites, yet they barely had any at all! Settling for the silver donuts was *humiliating!*" His modest paunch wobbled as he spoke, rounder than usual thanks to the huge dinner he'd indulged in. "Tomorrow night we'll have to remind the chef how reliant he is on my dedicated patronage, and that if he makes such a horrendous mistake again I'll be dining elsewhere!"

The trio had just gone under the archway when a vial shattered on the pavement in front of them, a cloud of smoke billowing forth. Despite their general loathing for Royce, the guards still pushed him back and took up a defensive stance. The smoke was still swirling, thick enough the guards could barely see a foot in front of them.

Sven's view from above was much clearer. He smiled at his luck that the guards had separated from Royce. His prize was ripe for the taking.

In a flash Sven's tongue darted out, striking Royce on his collarbone with a *splat*. Royce had only a second to comprehend the hit before he was pulled upwards and off his paws with tremendous speed. He cleared the smoke, only to see a wide open frog maw at the end of his destination. There wasn't enough time to cry for help.

The initial gulp pulled Royce into Sven's maw past his shoulders. Sven made a second swallow immediately after, taking in most of his target's arms and chest. Speed was essential, and thankfully—for Sven—he was skilled at eating people.

Royce gasped for breath as another gulp pulled him into the frog's stomach. He was kicking and wiggling with all his might, but his unknown attacker wasn't letting go. To make matters worse, he

couldn't even rely on gravity to help him out now that he was half swallowed whole.

"Help! Let me out, let me out! Help!!!"

Though the ferret shouted at the top of his lungs, his cries were too muffled to be heard by anyone but Sven, who found them amusing.

Sven's flat middle steadily swelled as he ate more and more of the ferret. His shirt and belt stretched to accommodate his gluttony, enchanted for the purpose. The belt still dug into his ballooning belly a little.

Royce's rump and thighs slipped past Sven's jaws, then his knees and calves. With a strong gulp the ferret's footpaws vanished from sight, reducing the chubby noble to nothing more than a sizable belly bulge.

The rogue grinned as he felt his gut sagging downward and swaying. Royce continued to struggle even as he slipped around in the dark, wet prison of Sven's stomach. His efforts were in vain. Sven released a weak poison, causing Royce to grow sluggish, his speech slurred. While he didn't fall completely unconscious, his struggles were reduced to faint squirms.

It was a necessity, despite the fact Sven rather enjoyed the sensation of his belly bouncing.

Sven's grip on the wall remained solid, the added weight of his captive not loosening it one bit. In the past he'd snatched prey two to three times his size and remained in place--though admittedly he couldn't do so for extended periods.

Below, the smoke was starting to clear, and the guards finally realized their ward was missing. They turned and shouted at one another, before shouting for Royce. When they didn't hear a reply—or see the wobbling belly above—they ran off down the street, under the assumption the ferret had either fled or been taken that way.

Once they were out of sight, Sven carefully made his move. The stuffed frog inched along the arch, then up the exterior wall, finally rolling over the edge of the parapet atop, where no one could see him.

Alone again—mostly—Sven gave his round belly a teasing pat. "Expensive meals really *do* taste better. Shame they tend to be so fattening, otherwise I'd indulge a lot more often."

Royce mustered all of his strength to punch the stomach wall, but only managed to push at it softly. In his daze he could barely hear what Sven was saying.

"I mean, a bit of heft can be fun, but my job relies too much on being sneaky to just let myself blimp up like a toad." Sven was rubbing the sides of his gut, admiring its size and shape. Even the weight of it was delightful. "Maybe one day I'll look into some enchanted compression clothing. Then I can switch between being big and being lean whenever I want."

The ferret within him had little to say about Sven's future plans. It was taking everything he had just to stay awake.

Sven leaned back, letting himself enjoy the sensation of his live meal wiggling around. He was rather proud of his approach to the old snatch and grab. While other thieves tended to just grab a gold pouch and run, he'd grab the whole mark, snagging their gold, their jewels, and a filling meal all at once. The valuables would be belched up afterward, while their previous owner would go missing on his waistline.

He'd feasted on merchants, loaded adventurers, expensive mercenaries—even a particularly massive hyena prince once. But for the most part Sven preyed on nobles, who'd gradually become his favorite snack. He swore they tasted the best.

Royce wasn't moving much anymore, even when Sven gave his belly a hard slap to shake him around. "Well, time to move somewhere cozy where I can process this prize in peace."

Sven slowly got back onto his feet, his gut wobbling idly. Engorged and enriched, the frog made his way across the rooftops towards home, leaving the city with yet another mysteriously missing noble to gossip about.