**Moves Like Jäger**

It had been a few hours since Markus had begun his unlikely journey. He’d spent most of that time slowly trekking along the floor of the barracks, diving in and out of various rooms – slipping under the door to avoid the deadly footsteps of the oblivious sixers roaming the halls. Normally, the way from the research lab to the crew quarters was not much of a distance, but for Markus it had suddenly become an exhausting expedition across an alien wasteland.

It only took him one close call with the Thatcher’s boot nearly smashing him into red mist to realize he should keep close to the walls. But even then, any group of three or more people warranted a quick escape from the hallway, lest he wanted his survival left up to chance,

It took him a while, but, having gained a newfound, *terrifying* understanding of his vulnerability, Markus finally arrived at his destination. Once again crawling in through the tiny gap under the door, he saw bunk beds poised above one another but noted a distinct lack of a certain individual – one of the smartest men in this base, who simply wasn’t there. Jäger, the master engineer, who helped assemble the very technological masterpiece that got Markus into this diminutive situation in the first place.

The young man’s heart sank, he was just about ready to give up. Exhausted and disillusioned about his own capabilities in this state, he mused about his chances of getting to the kitchen from here – he’d need food at some point, after all. But even if he *did* manage to survive another trek through the halls of the base, he wasn’t exactly keen on facing the janitorial stuff in the evening.

He sat there, despairing for about half an hour, as the thought of having to resign himself to share the fate of every stray ant that found itself in this base loomed in his mind. And then, suddenly, the door shot open, sending a gust of wind towards little Markus, as a man, equipped with a helicopter pilot’s mask, strolled in, absentmindedly poking at his phone’s screen.

Each clack of combat boots shook Markus to his core. He shuddered as the giant’s legs swung overhead, stretching farrrrrr over the little man, just fortunate enough not to be crushed underfoot by this titan’s aloof approach.

But now the little thing had to hurry, sprinting towards Jäger’s bed, trying to make it into the giant’s field of vision while he was still working the laces of his boots. Gasping for breath, Markus rushed forward as his eyes focused on the massive but surprisingly dexterous fingers, each seemingly thick enough to crush a passenger train.

Though of course, crawling along at an insect’s pace, the little thing was barely halfway to his destination by the time Jäger’s laces came undone. A pair of sock-clad monoliths slipped out from the German operative’s sneakers. Even as far away as he was, Markus’ tiny size ensured he could pick up the sweaty, rubbery musk that collected across the pilot’s skin, permeating the fabric of the sock.

With only a brief pause to give each of his soles a gentle squeeze, Jäger swung himself up and mostly out of view, stretching his enormous body out along the vast, heavenly plateau of the bunk bed. It was a fairly casual motion, yet little Markus on the floor was devastated – how was he ever going to get up there?

Cursing under his breath, he bit his lip as he desperately looked around for some sort of solution, but there wasn’t much to speak off – nothing but flat, uniform terrain around him in seemingly every direction and… the sneakers!

He hadn’t even considered it at first in his panic, but steaming and pungent as they were, the massive pieces of footwear could very well give him the boost he needed! Just enough to make it up to the edge of the draped-down bedsheets with a well-timed leap. His eyes scanned for a potential approach as he paced closer, finding himself faced with a sheer white wall stretching all across the bottom of one of the gigantic sneakers. The other lay on its side, a thick well-worked musk radiating from within – offering no way up either.

Making his way around the upright shoe, looking for somewhere to make his ascent, Markus tried desperately to climb the front mound, where the toes were located; but – try as he might – it was simply insurmountable. And then, making his way further across, he noticed a loose shoelace, draping down over the side of the sneaker, a huge, massively thick tendril. His hands quickly gripped the material, his resolve strengthening as the interwoven strands of fabric made for excellent handholds.

A small part of the little guy was worried that his movements would disturb the lace, erasing his progress with how it lay over the top of the shoe; but at his size, he couldn’t even make the fabric appendage sway; the mere notion of him affecting it – from any normal perspective – would have frankly been laughable.

It did not take too long to get up on top, and, luckily, Jäger seemed to be settling in for the long haul – reaching over and pulling his socks off, idly laying them down beside his leg before reaching for his phone again. He seemed to relax as he flicked and tapped away at the screen, unnerving. But, knowing how quickly that could change, Markus could help but dread the thought of what would happened to him, should the giant engineer decide to slip his sneakers back on…

Passing over the uneven terrain, where the laces intertwined with one another, the little guy arrived at the edge of oblivion – staring down into the gaping mouth of the shoe. The heat was at its most potent here, the ground beneath the little man, even after cooling off for some time, felt like warm desert sand. He stood there, transfixed, temporarily lost in the moment, until a rustle of fabric from above drew his attention – a portion of the blankets drooped closer as Jäger shifted, brushing right up against the heel of the sneaker.

Carefully, Markus traversed the circular edge of the shoe – cold floor on one side, and a musky deathtrap on the other. At one point he almost slipped, just barely managing to regain his balance before he slid face-first into the huge crater, left in the wake of Jäger’s heel. He gulped, gathering his courage, and leapt from the shoe onto the hanging sheets, grabbing on and beginning his agonizingly slow ascent.

Not even three minutes later, the little man’s arms felt like they were about to fall off, muscles strained to their limit as dread began to once again settle in. He felt his grip loosened, failing, as he made the mistake of looking down. The drop of barely more than a few inches now looked like certain doom. He was just about to cry for help, desperately begging an ignorant giant for help, when the familiar rustling noise sounded form above – Jäger was adjusting himself again! With a yelp, Markus was yanked upwards, holding on for your life as the German restlessly adjusted his position in bed. The added G-forces did little to alleviate the micro’s exhaustion, unlike the adrenaline rush from the sudden surge of movement. Markus’ muscles felt like they were *on fire* as he crested over the side of the bed, finally letting go and immediately falling limp, trying desperately to catch his breath.

When the little thing lifted his gaze, he was greeted with a wall of denim – jeans that concealed the titanic thighs of the giant now right in front of him. A quick gaze to the right, in the general direction of the operative’s head revealed a convenient line of stitching along the denim – less than ideal, but entirely functional path up closer to-

**\*SLAP\***

**“Sheiße!”** The titan exclaimed at the screen in frustration as the palm of his hand connected with the very spot little Markus was sizing up to climb. It sent out a whooshing shockwave that knocked the little fellow flat on his back, while Jäger merely adjusted his grip on his phone.

Markus hadn’t noticed it until just then, but Jäger seemed to be playing some sort of game up there. And by the looks of it, he was very into it – arms jolting left and right, fingers rapidly tapping away…

With a sigh, Markus turned his head to the left, and immediately felt an alluring call…

Down along the slim edge of the bed, lay a black void – Jäger’s discarded black sock, emitting a rough and masculine odor. “Perhaps...” Markus thought “His foot might be an easier path?”

And so he set out once more – the vast valley of doom to his left, and the wall of the man’s body to his right, extending like a border wall into another country. As he took his first step over the sock, the ground felt… softer, almost spongey, as he continued to tread across it – very faintly there are traces of sweat among the stitches of fabric. The thick, damp air left the little guy feeling a little light-headed.

But, eventually, he crossed over, rounding Jäger’s giant ankle like one would round a city block. And there it was – a wall of Caucasian skin looming before him, creases decorating it with every ridge – like a vast array of handholds.

Markus found himself frozen in awe, only now stopping to fully appreciate just how enormous the German engineer truly was in comparison – this was just the beginning of the micro’s journey.

With a grunt, he firmly grasped at one of the ridges, pathetically small hands fitting nicely in-between them, allowing him to begin hoisting himself up. At least for the first few minutes…

Without warning the foot clenched in a curl, forcing Markus to instinctively let go, hoping to avoid getting his hands crushed within a stray wrinkle. With a short-lived scream, he fell all the way down from the top of the heel, cushioned by the surface of the mattress below.

Though at this point it was hardly a deterrent – there was no turning back now. And so, with a stubborn growl, he got up and began again. Scaling across the smooth mounds that naturally form on the curves of the human foot. This time he could feel the entire surface clench, as the toes pushed downwards. The flesh locked tight around Markus’ hands and feet – hurting a little but not enough to break his grip, yet more than sufficient to keep the little thing from breaking free himself…

Eventually though, the absent-minded operative’s grip relented, allowing the micro to begin his ascent along the ball of the foot. Looming toes casually drifted overhead with motions similar to swaying trees that were savoring the open air.

As he got closer though, he felt the wall of flesh shifting beneath him. With only a split-second to react, he managed to narrowly avoid being caught up in an idle curling clench of the big toe, shuddering at the thought of how easily such a simple motion could have obliterated him.

Not at all eager to try his luck again, the little micro shifted his approach further towards the valley in-between. And then, with just a few more minutes of effort, he could finally stand again, making his way through the small canyon between Jäger’s toes and coming ever closer to the operative’s actual visage and – with luck – to being spotted.

He clamored up the web of the toes and rolled down along the incline before settling into a ‘pocket’ of sorts. Immediately following him though, was another clench of the titanic digits. The light above was snuffed immediately, and little Markus was immersed in a tight darkness, filled with only the warmth of a body, the scent of musk amplified threefold, and the sound of skin brushing against skin – a tactile sensation that proved just as comforting as it was threatening.

“Ugh, do we have ants again?” A voice, accented slightly with German, penetrated the muffling skin, and the light leaked in again once more.

As the toes parted, Markus would finally get a desperately satisfying gulp of fresh air. However, almost as soon as he was out, he snapped frozen at the sound of Jäger’s voice.

“Huh...” The operative hummed, leaning forward a bit with a chuckle. “I suppose this is better than ants!” Sitting up in a more comfortable position, he bent his leg in the knees, dragging the foot closer inwards.

Nearly falling over from the jerk of motion that he could barely even perceive at his current size, Markus grabbed hold of the clammy appendage to support himself.

Jäger didn’t seem too concerned with the little man’s plight, a distinct note of amusement evident in his voice as he spoke. “Looks like my little experiment was a success, even though *someone* was poking around with it.” His voice was pointed, scolding, but overall happy. “I’m amazed that you made your way here *alllll* the way from the lab.” Hand rubbing his masked chin, the German leaned closer. “Likely a desperate need to find me? It must have taken a little creature like you *all day* to get here.” He gave his toes another shift – a playful, deliberate one this time. “Not to mention the hike that you had to make at the end.”

Patting the side of the side of the bed, Jäger threw a glance in the general direction of the lab before focusing on the puny human being between his toes again. “But... honestly, why would I want to change you back, now that I’m thinking about it? We’ve already got a bit of an overcrowding problem on base, we get one or two new people every few months after all.” His fingers whimsically tapped against the mattress. “Maybe this is a more extreme method of *‘downsizing’*, yeah?”

Jäger let out a gentle chuckle, shaking his head as he humored himself and leaving little Markus to simply stare up at him, unsure how to express a protest.

“Very extreme. I wonder if what you’re feeling now is at all similar to my first time on an aircraft carrier?” Jäger stroked across the Kevlar chest rig, like it was a long and flat runway. “Seeing all of this stretch out so far… It must be so intimidating. At your size you could probably launch a plane off of here.”

Fearing where this was going, Markus felt a renewed sense of urgency, immediately snapping out of his stupor and jumping up, again and again, waving for the giant’s attention, silently begging for help…

“Yes, yes, I obviously see you, small thing.” Jäger said, clenching his toes around Markus once more. The grip tightened around his form, causing the tiny man to roll into a tight crevice in the bend of Jäger’s second toe. It was a little rough, yet no injury was inflicted as of yet. “I’d rather not just undo all the hard work I put into my first minimization experiment. Especially when it performed so flawlessly!”

Dizzy and exhausted, Markus felt on the verge of passing out as the gigantic German toyed about with him, rolling him this way and that…

“Besides, you fit so much better down there, don’t you think?” The toes parted once more, letting Markus once again fall into the crevice between them. “You are more durable than I expected though.” The giant observed, once again rubbing his chin as he reached forward and pinched the little guy between a pair of gloved fingers. “I should really keep you in the lab until we’re finished with testing but…” The hand moved over, hovering the struggling little man over a familiar abyss – the steamy opening of Jäger’s sneaker. “I hope you don’t mind the slight breach in protocol.”

And just like that – without another word – the fingers parted, leaving Markus to freefall down, down and into the cavern of the sweaty sneaker. Finally smacking into the warm, damp insole with a wet slap.

Despite the rough landing though, Markus didn’t feel particularly hurt. Rubbing a sore elbow as he quickly got himself up, he gazed at the towering walls that surrounded him before looking deeper into the shoe – just about managing to make out the farthest wall, all the way where the toes usually rested.

“Don’t fret, little guy!” Jäger exclaimed after a few moments of rustling noise coming from outside. “At least in there I’m fairly certain I can’t lose track of you.” The looming figure quickly became eclipsed by a dark cloud – the familiar sight of a socked foot hovering overhead as Jäger made to slip his sneakers back on. “Do sit tight though, yeah?” He cocked his head inquisitively before allowing the socked behemoth to slip inside, toes wiggling as they slooowly slid along the insole, chasing the little speck of a human deeper inside. “Not that you have much choice, I suppose~”

And just like that, darkness enveloped the human again. A formidable weight settling in around him – toes curling overhead and stretching an expanse of moist black fabric over his little body.

All while above, Jäger nonchalantly slipped his other sneaker on, stuck his phone back in his pocket and set off down the hall, whistling an old, jolly tune to himself…