

They say that "Curiosity killed the Cat."

What they don't say so much is that it can just as easily kill anyone else.

More to the point...whoever said that, probably never envisioned a world where the Cat was the one who did the killing. But what one doomed soul was soon to learn was that, this world he was now stranded in...?

It sure as Madness wasn't his...

The realm in question seemed fairly normal at a glance. It was a massive, rather lavish mansion, one from a bygone era. Impressive to bare witness to, but at a glance, just another mansion. A massive, empty mansion...safe for one lonely traveler. He was a brown-haired man in his thirties; an unassuming man in a frilled, button short with black slacks, leather dress shoes and a rather expensive looking pocket watch strapped around his neck. The man in question looked frazzled, like he had just been screaming at the top of his lungs moments earlier, and in a state of complete shock.

On the surface, he seemed like an ordinary individual. But much like the mansion, there was something sinister beneath the surface...in case the crusted blood across his dress shirt didn't already make that apparent. His name was Davian Northwater, a well-respected banker to the nobles of Reveil. Davian's breathing was still shaky and unstable. He clenched his eyes shut, muttering incoherently to himself, until eventually, that muttering turned into, "...*It's just a dream, Davian...just a dream...just a dream...j-just a dream...just...*"

It didn't matter how many times he tried to convince himself otherwise. Nothing would make this surreal plain of existence he now found himself in any less real than him or his crimes. Slowly, he undid the top buttons of his shirt and pulled the collar back, exposing his bare shoulder and a portion of his left breast. He knew what was there, and didn't want to see it; didn't want to face it. His eyes were still clenched shut, and still, he shook his head, unwilling to allow himself to face the reality of what was grafted onto his body.

Eventually, one eye peaked open, and as soon as it did, Davian's face went white as a ghost.

It was plain as day, on full display. A jet black, spiky tattoo of what looked like a clock, one whose hands had both made a full revelation.

There existed beings referred to as Chains. These were creatures born from the infinite plain of madness known only as 'The Abyss.' Chains were all-powerful, often frightening creatures, beings capable of unleashing untold destruction on the enemies of anyone who signs into a contract with them, binding both the Chain and Contractee together and creating one, singularly focused will...

But as the saying goes, “*There's no such thing as a free lunch...*”

Everything has a price. And the price all Contractees would have to face one day, is being dragged into the Abyss back with their Chains. It didn't who they were or why they did what they did, the bill would always come due. Every Contractee would find themselves branded by this mysterious symbol somewhere on their body. Over an unknown period of time, the “clocks” hands would steadily move. Once the full revelation had been reached, the Contractee's time was up, and both they and their Chain would be dragged into the Abyss.

Nothing short of an untimely death could nullify such an agreement.

And those who ended up in the Abyss would always meet one of three fates.

One? They wander the plains of insanity and steadily lose themselves in perpetual madness...

Two? They are maimed or devoured by other Chains or putrid, disgusting, lower beings, referred to as 'Trumps' (*not **THAT** one...shockingly*)...

Or Three? They themselves transform into Chains, and become bonded with other Contractees as the centuries pass.

The instant Davian saw the clock, he knew, plain as day that his time was up, and that his life was over.

...And yet, he wasn't horrified so much as he was confused and taken aback. See, through his contract with his Chain, and through the stories told all throughout his life, Davian had a very clear image of what the Abyss truly looked like. It was an ethereal landscape with no end in sight; a place where up was down, down was up, and time ceased to exist. Decades turn to mere hours in the Abyss, blackness and ruins of worlds past were scattered far as the eye could see; all remnants of civilizations consumed by the Abyss.

Nowhere in any of that was there talk of any mansions.

One thing was certain...

...This was NOT the Abyss...

So then...

...Where was Davian...?

More importantly...to **whom** did this mansion belong...?

Granted, given his predicament, Davian wasn't sure what he should do. But as far as he was concerned, anywhere was better than the Abyss. So, he opted to explore further, venturing through the massive, pristine halls of this mysterious estate. As he did, he accidentally stepped on something hard.

Davian looked down, and, to his surprise, there was a wooden doll just laying on the ground beneath his foot. The doll was a hand-carved toy made to resemble a court jester. Curiously, Davian reached down and picked the thing up, looking it over and observing it with a brow raised.

“...D-Does a child live here...?” Davian muttered to himself with confusion.

“She stopped being a child a long time ago!” replied the DOLL itself.

Davian shrieked with fear and, without even thinking, chucked the doll a mirror that, Davian would swear, was not there a second ago. But the mirror didn't even so much as crack as the doll slammed into it with full force and toppled onto the ground.

The doll started giggling like a child itself, amused to no end.

Davian's heart was racing so fast, he'd swear that it would burst right out of his chest. He inched away, and...soon realized that he wasn't in a hallway anymore. Rather, he was now in a large, circular room with various shelves surrounding the place. Atop each shelf was a series of wooden dolls and various picture frames of what appeared to be a young blond man and a white haired girl, all in very scenic, happy scenes...and each one with their faces smudged out.

How the hell did Davian end up from the halls to this room...

...Was a question not even passing anywhere in Davian's mind. Not when the doll he'd chucked across the room's giggling turned hysterical...or when the doll suddenly and rather jankily levitated into the air, as if being pulled up by invisible strings.

The jester doll wasn't the only one laughing either. All the dolls in the room were laughing like raving, giggling hyenas.

“She isn't a child! She was never a child!” All the dolls shrieked with hysterical amusement.

*“She never liked children! Other children were mean! Hurt her! Hurt her kitty!! Scissors! THOSE TERRIBLE SCISSORS!! HEE HAHAHAAAAHA!!! SO AWFUL! WHAT THEY DID TO HER KITTY! **AWFUL! HEEHAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!**”*

Davian shrank in a corner, eyes wide with terror as all the dolls loomed over him, laughing right in his face, mouths all gaping far too wide with laughter.

The haunted man clenched his eyes shut, nearly shrinking into the corner of the room, too scared to face the madness around him...

...Then, there was a jingle in the air...

When Davian's eyes peaked open, all the dolls were once again stacked lifelessly on their respective shelves. The picture frames were all nowhere to be seen.

And the mirror was gone...

...In its place was the entrance to a blackened chamber, one Davian dared not venture into. Though, it didn't really matter, since, from the blackness, someone else emerged...

Someone unlike anyone or anything Davian had ever laid eyes upon before.

Stepping out from the blackness slowly emerged what appeared to be a pale young man with messy, mid-length black hair which concealed his right eye beneath his bangs, but not his piercing yet rather bored-looking left, red eye. He looked to be in his mid teens and had a very sleek, lean body, sporting a strange, sleeveless black suit, which almost resembled a straitjacket. The strangest part of him were his elongated arms, both concealed beneath black sleeves not unlike his suit with rather large, paw-like hands, which sported razor sharp, metal claws for fingers. And a large, several foot black ribbon with two golden jingle bells tied to their ends, and a red collar-like ribbon tied around his slender neck with a bell at the center of his neck, not unlike Davian's pocket watch.

And though it was easy to miss since it blended so seamlessly with his hair, there were two, cat-like ears protruding from the top of this young mans' head.

He stepped out into the open with a rather dull look on his face, and, surprisingly, yawned, sticking his tongue out like a cat, before...also like a cat, licking the front of his sizable paw, as if grooming himself. A rather un-intimidating demeanor for such an unsettling creature.

A creature known only as 'The Cheshire Cat.'

Davian inched away nervously, all while keeping his eyes on Cheshire, who was still idly grooming himself. Then, against his better judgement, Davian held up a finger and said, "...E-Excuse me, y-young man, do you know where I am...?"

Cheshire's ear flicked, much like a cat when it picks up a sensitive sound. Then, in a rather bored fashion, Cheshire paused just momentarily and looked back at Davian, muttering in a rather bored and indifferent tone of voice, "Mreow, you're in Cheshire's home, mousey." Then, almost humorously, Cheshire resumed grooming himself, paying no mind to Davian.

The man was...taken aback, to say the least...

“...A-are...are you Cheshire...?”

Cheshire just kept grooming himself, not bothering to answer the question.

“...Wh-why am I here...?”

This time, Cheshire stopped grooming and, despite his undeniably bored expression, gave Davian his full attention.

“Mmmraw, you're here because you tried to change the rules,” Cheshire remarked. Much to Davian's alarm, there was a small hint of a smirk across Cheshire's rather small lips. “Alice hates it when mousey's try to change the rules...”

“...Ch-change the rules? Wh-what, I...I don't know what you're talking about...” Davian said uncertainly.

Cheshire's ears twitched idly while he blinked dully. It was honestly impossible to tell if Cheshire was even awake. But then, the young catboy held up an index claw and said, “You got your own Chain killed. Alice said you lured Chain to the army, and the army had bigger guns...bigger guns strong enough to kill Chain...after you used him to kill all those mousey's you didn't like...”

Davian's heart sank upon hearing his crimes laid bare by this strange creature. Like the mansion, like the puppets, like Cheshire himself, that too...was a sin that was far too real for him to bare or even acknowledge.

Then, rather than keep his one index claw held up, Cheshire bared all of his razor sharp claws, and grinned a little more wickedly.

“...So Alice sent you to Cheshire's home instead of her home...because Alice loves Cheshire...*and wanted to give Cheshire a nice meal...*”

Then, without warning, Cheshire leapt into the air and slashed his heavy paw down at Davian. His claws ripped through the shelf behind Davian and tore into the ground while Davian just narrowly dove out of the way. Frantically, Davian scrambled for dear life to his feet, running as fast as his legs could take him into the only exit in the room available, the blackened hall from which Cheshire had entered from...

Davian ran through pure blackness, desperate to escape Cheshire's claws. Where the blackness would lead, he didn't know or care. All he could do was keeping running. Keep running from Cheshire, keep running from the insanity all around him, and keep running away from his misdeeds. Just. Keep. Running...

As Davian ran, he eventually found himself out of the dark and running up a frightfully tall flight of stairs. He didn't even realize he was running up stairs until he was so high up that the mere thought of looking down would've turned his knees into gelatin. Davian was too scared to even look back and see if Cheshire was giving chase or not, but didn't matter.

He just kept on running, praying beyond reason, that the catboy would cease the chase or maybe take pity on him and leave him alone. Davian was near the top of the balcony, when out of nowhere, Cheshire leapt from impossible heights and landed directly in front of Davian. The man instantly shrieked with fear and fell backwards.

...Only, the stairs were gone...

And to his unbridled horror, instead of falling down that massive flight of stairs, Davian fell into a massive, gaping pit from which there didn't seem to be any visible end in sight. Davian hollered and screamed at the top of his lungs as he fell and fell, certain this was his end, and too scared to open his eyes and wait for the inevitable "SPLAT!" that would be his doom...

...Eventually, however, Davian opened his eyes, and the screaming stopped...

He was no longer falling anywhere. Once again, he was standing stock still, back in that hallway from before, where he stepped on the doll and encountered Cheshire. It was getting harder and harder to even determine how much of this was real, and how much was pure insanity.

...Maybe Davian was in the Abyss after all. Maybe so much time had passed that his fevered brain conjured this mad house to escape the unfathomable horror that most assuredly awaited beyond the mansions' walls.

Either way, Cheshire was nowhere to be seen. So, he marked that as a win and kept on moving.

Davian moved through the halls, carefully watching his steps to avoid stepping on any wooden, sentient dolls and face THAT horror show all over again...

As he walked, eyes firmly planted on the ground, his mind began to wander...

...Whether Cheshire was real or not, whether ANY of this was real, the one inescapable reality was that the crimes that Davian committed to end up in this horrid place were very much real. Davian found himself wondering what led him down that dark path in the first place; to willfully sign a contract with a Chain of all terrible creatures.

Davian would convince one that he wasn't a bad person at his core. And maybe he wasn't...or at least, maybe he truly believed that he wasn't.

But goodness and badness aren't dictated by beliefs and words. They're determined by actions. Anyone could say that they're a kind, goodhearted person, but words are all too quickly undercut when your actions immediately contradict them.

No matter how many ways he tried to wrap his head around it, in these desperate moments, when Davian was fleeing for his life, just trying to buy what few precious seconds of existence he could hold onto...the unfortunate, nagging question was pricking his brain over and over again...

...Maybe he wasn't a good person after all...

Maybe, juuuuust maybe...maybe Davian was trapped here in this slice of surreal insanity because he deserved to be here...

After all, it's said that the vast majority of people who contract themselves with Chains do so because there's something in their lives that needs to be changed. And if that change requires a Chain...odds are good, it's a violent change, which...well, Cheshire himself pointed out clear as day, in Davian's case.

All those people, so viciously slaughtered...

...Why?

Why had Davian been pushed to such desperation?

Why did they always have to laugh at him?

...The dolls...

...The people...

...Always laughing...

It was enough to drive a person utterly mad...

Violently mad...

It was a hard reality to confront, let alone accept.

...This lowly banker was here because at the end of his life, he wasn't a banker at all anymore. He was something else.

...Something worse...

The minutes ticked away as Davian continued racing down the hall, keeping his eyes on the floor, but his twisted, broken mind was providing him just about as much unrest as the fear of being hunted. Then, the instant he took his eyes off the marble floors and back up ahead of him, Davian's heart sank...

...He'd been walking for, easily, ten minutes! And yet...he was right where he started.

Panicked, Davian looked around, and opted to run back in the opposite direction from last time. The hallway seemed to extend much further out than it did when Davian had first encountered Cheshire in that doll room. He was running for dear life, feeling exhaustion setting in, and yet, the more he ran, the further that long, long, IMPOSSIBLY long hallway seemed to stretch.

It couldn't be endless. It just couldn't...!

So, Davian ran and ran.

...The hallway just kept stretching on further and further. There didn't seem to be a chamber or larger room anywhere in sight ahead of him. Just more and more hallway...

More minutes ticked by, but he couldn't keep this up forever...

Eventually, Davian stumbled, nearly collapsing onto his face. He lurched forward, panting breathlessly. He'd run so hard that he was nearly on the verge of vomiting from just how hard he was pushing himself.

...And the instant he turned around to see how far he'd run, that feeling of nausea was only made worse.

...He was STILL in the exact same, damn spot as when this venture from Hell began...

"Running in circles again, Mousey?" called out that familiar, youthful yet deadpanned voice.

Davian quickly turned around and stumbled backwards...

...There Cheshire was, standing directly behind him with that bored look in his one visible eye. Davian fearfully inched away as Cheshire slowly advanced, licking his large paw idly as he did so.

“...P-Please don't...” Davian whimpered pitifully as Cheshire advanced uncaringly.

“Mreow, why not?” Cheshire asked with a soft mew, baring his claws once more and adding, “Alice wants Cheshire to make you hurt. And Cheshire wants a proper meal...”

Grinning wickedly once more, Cheshire raised his clawed hand and struck it down at Davian, who just narrowly rolled backwards while that sizable paw slammed into the ground; claws tearing through the marble with horrifying strength. Davian managed to push himself back up to his feet and dove out of the way when Cheshire charged and slashed his claws out yet again, tearing into the wall just behind the man.

Cheshire pulled his metal claws out of the wall, then turned his head back at Davian, scoffing to himself. “Hmph, is scampering all little Mousey's know how to do?” Of course, Davian was already legging it for dear life, far from Cheshire, who just blinked in bored fashion, ears once again twitching almost adorably at the sight.

Well, that was until the catboy flexed both his clawed paws out. Cheshire then proceeded to drag his elongated, clawed paws across the ground and steadily charged after Davian, scraping and tearing through the ground in the process as those metal claws of his ripped right through the marble like cake. Cheshire was running nearer and nearer behind Davian, about to rip his claws out from the ground and strike Davian down.

Davian's legs were on fire, but he ran and ran, even as his thighs throbbed in exhausted agony.

...But Cheshire was inching closer and closer, and once he was in range, that was going to be that...

...Or so, Cheshire and Davian himself thought.

At least, until Davian felt something rattling against his backside as he ran. Something hard and metal. He couldn't believe it, all this time and he'd forgotten he even had it on him! The thing that gave Davian true power, even beyond his Chain.

After all, Davian might have been scared for his life, but fear didn't change what this former banker truly was...what he accepted that he was a loooong time ago...

In a rather shocking display of unexpected boldness, Davian, as he was running, reached into the back of his pants, whipped out a Walther handgun, spun on his heel until he faced Cheshire, whose eye promptly widened when his prey suddenly pulled out a handgun and-

****BLAM!!****

A single shot was fired, and Cheshire stumbled back. His eye was wide with shock and his mouth parted open, revealing his rather feline-esque fangs. Slowly, he looked down at his upper left bicep, the portion of his arm not concealed by his sleeve. There was a considerable bullet hole that tore straight through his pale, bare flesh. No blood gushed out, rather, black dust-like power slowly spewed from the wound. Cheshire's eyelid twitched as he felt the bullet wound with his free paw and sneered with pain, before turning his full attention onto Davian.

The man was still pointing his weapon at Cheshire, and grew ever more nervous when, for the first time since their little game of Cat & Mouse began, Cheshire looked **PISSED...**

“...*You little **RAT**...*” Cheshire hissed murderously. He raised his paw up to slash that gun clean out of Davian's arm...or rather, slice his gun-arm clean off from his body, but before Cheshire's arm could swipe down-

****BLAM!!****

****BAM!!****

****BANG!!!****

Davian didn't bother giving Cheshire so much as an inch. He fired his gun repeatedly. Cheshire cried out as several bullets ripped into his body, forcing him to stumble backwards with each shot. With a vicious hiss, Cheshire jumped into the air, practically vanishing into his ribbons, leaving nothing but an idle jingle of his bell before vanishing into thin air; the bell being the last thing to visibly disappear while Davian shot one bullet after the other into the air where Cheshire had been standing.

By the time Davian was done shooting, he was left panting breathlessly, still pulling the trigger again and again, even when no bullets came out. Scared as he was; for as fast as his heart was racing, in that brief...just briefest of moments, Davian found the slightest hint of a smirk forming over his face.

...Oh, to regain some semblance of power after all this. Even in this realm, it truly felt thrilling. And the fact that he seemed to even hurt the Cheshire cat gave Davian a tinge of hope that maybe, just MAYBE he could survive this place.

Of course, Davian wasn't one to risk getting too cocky, especially after the madness he had already bared witness to. Quickly, he reached into his pocket and, much to his delight, he still had one more clip left to load into his gun; a contingency in case his Chain failed him in the real world. With a heavy click, his gun was loaded once more, and now, the hunted started to feel like the hunter. He looked around, exploring the mansion further; no longer trapped in an infinite hallway like before.

There was no sign of Cheshire anywhere. Just a massive, eerily quiet mansion with no windows, no signs of an exit. Just a series of chambers, hallways and more rooms that the former banker dared not venture into. Davian kept his gun firmly at hand. His eyes darted left and right. Nervous as he was, there was something harsher, more violent and focused in his gaze now. Davian was starting to feel like he did just before his time ran out...

Part of him was almost hoping Cheshire would show himself so that Davian could finish him off, and continue seeking out an escape uninhibited. In his fear of this rather insane place, Davian had almost completely forgotten how alive he felt when he finally had control. But now, in these moments, he was recollecting that feeling just fine...

Then, off in the distance, he heard a strange noise...

Davian paused, turned to listen again, to try and hear for it a second time...

...Sure enough, a soft jingle echoed softly in the distance. Almost immediately, Davian recalled Cheshire's escape. That was HIS bell...

Pulling the hammer back from his handgun, Davian grinned and stalked slowly towards the sound in the distance. When Cheshire's bell jingled a second time, Davian picked up the pace, advancing quietly yet a bit more hastily.

"...I'll show you, you little bastard...just like I showed the other bastards out there..." Davian practically hissed as he neared closer and closer towards the source of the jingling bell.

But when he finally reached the source of the jingling, he found, not Cheshire, but a large, circular chamber with a lone, circular little table at the dead center of the room. And on top of that table? A small, fine China glass with purple liquid inside.

Davian raised a brow skeptically. Nonetheless, he cautiously advanced, still keeping his gun out, and observed a small note pressed before the glass.

The man snatched the note, still scanning his surroundings and read what it had to say...

“Drink Me...” Davian read in a rather deadpanned manner, seeing that there was more at the bottom, and added, “.....*responsibly*.”

...Well, perhaps the Cheshire Cat had a sense of humor after all. Either way, Davian crumpled up the note and carelessly tossed it aside.

“I'm not falling for your tricks, freak. I have all I need riiiiight here,” Davian insisted, gesturing towards his gun when-

****SLASH!!****

Without so much as a hint of warning, Cheshire's claws swiped out from thin air and sliced Davian's handgun clean in half.

Davian cried out, stumbling backwards and looking down at his hand in horror when he saw his only means of defense destroyed in an instant.

His heart sank that much lower with dread when he looked up and saw Cheshire now standing before him, glaring viciously at the man and baring both of his clawed paws out. “...*Little rats who hurt Cheshire don't get to play...*” Cheshire hissed, stalking closer and closer before snarling out, “...*they **DIE**...!!*”

Davian desperately dove out of the way when Cheshire leaped into the air and slammed his heavy paws down onto the ground where Davian had once been standing, tearing it to shreds. Whatever confidence Davian had moments earlier; whatever thrill of the hunt he was feeling, much like with his Chain's Contract, had been over far too soon. All that remained was a coward desperate to escape. Only this time, there was nowhere to run to. The room had shifted once again. Wherever he had come from no longer existed. There weren't any doors or windows in this room. It was just him and Cheshire...

...And...that glass...

The young catboy snarled and charged at Davian again, swiping his long arm for a vicious slash attack. Davian ducked out of the way, narrowly missing getting ripped in half, if the wall getting torn to shreds was any indication. Then, the man frantically ran towards the table, grabbing the glass and immediately, rather desperately, chugging down the small amount of purple liquids inside.

He gagged as soon as the liquids rushed down his gullet, coughing at the disgusting flavor. There was something so unpleasantly bitter about the liquid. In fact, there was an all around unpleasant burning feeling, not just in his throat but entire body. Davian felt warm, far too warm. Part of him was terrified that he just drank poison. However, he soon learned that it wasn't poison at all...though, it may as well have been for how quickly it sealed his fate...

Much to Davian's absolute dread, the entire room started to grow all around him; the walls, the table...the Cheshire Cat. He soon realized that it wasn't that the room had grown. But rather, that Davian has shrunk down to roughly the size of a child's play toy; mere inches tall, maybe between six to nine inches tall at most.

And now, that tiny man was up against a proverbial colossus in the form of Cheshire. The young creature stepped towards the shrunken, petrified human and, once again, that look of amusement returned to his face. Cheshire tilted his head down at the man, ears twitching once again and, with a grin, said, "Mrrah, now you really ARE just a little Mousey again, aren't you, rat..."

Cheshire knelt down, claws twitching eagerly. Davian immediately started to run, but Cheshire pounced in the air and down before the man, batting him hard in the dead center of his paw, making Davian fly back several feet, sliding onto his backside and rolling onto the ground the way a kitten would bat one of their toys.

The Cheshire Cat grinned almost excitedly, pouncing again and batting his little 'mouse' a second time, making Davian slide across the ground while Cheshire grinned all the while. "...Mreow, you're way more fun for Cheshire to play with like this than you were before..."

Davian scrambled to his feet, stumbling a bit from how winded he was getting from Cheshire swatting him around like a plaything. There were no doors to run to, however, there WERE a few holes in the wall, perfect for a mouse-sized man to run through and maybe evade this creature. So, when Cheshire pounced for him again, this time, Davian just narrowly avoided being batted by those sizable paws of his.

Instead, Davian sprinted as fast as he could towards the wall. Cheshire rose to his feet and ran after him, but when Cheshire brought his heavy paw down onto the man, he zig-zagged in another direction, managing to avoid getting caught from beneath Cheshire's paw. And somehow, some way, he managed to just barely squeeze his way into the mouse hole.

It was incredibly narrow and didn't leave Davian much room to actually navigate from within the walls, but it kept him safe from Cheshire's grasp, which was all he needed. He hoped that it would lead him anywhere away from the one resident of this estate. How long he could stay out of reach, he honestly couldn't say, but right now, all that mattered was just getting as far away from Cheshire as he could.

Sadly, this was one game that wouldn't last as long as Davian might have prayed it would. For mere moments into trying to push himself further through the insides of the wall, Cheshire's razor sharp claws tore right through the wall and ripped it wide open, exposing Davian once more to the lean, "giant" beast. Debris crumbled down onto him, making Davian stumble about before Cheshire reached down and, using his claws in a surprisingly tactile manner, snatched Davian right up, yanking him forcefully out from the busted walls and up in the air.

"Mrah, caught you at last, little mousey!" Cheshire said with a victorious grin. His claws were firmly wrapped around Davian, keeping him pinned into his giant paw and using the tips of his steel claws to press ever so slightly into Davian's body. Not hard enough to draw blood, but hard enough for the man to know that if he moved the wrong way, he would quickly see what his insides looked like...

Davian couldn't even squirm as a result. All he could do was look up at Cheshire with absolute horror. "...P-Please, I-I'm begging you, y-y-you don't have to do this..."

Cheshire's rather bored expression soon returned as soon as he heard that. His ears twitched as the catboy tilted his head ever so slightly and said, "Cheshire WANTS to do this. Alice is nice enough to give Cheshire food. Cheshire doesn't want to be rude to Alice. Cheshire loves Alice..."

The catboy pulled the man up so he and Cheshire were face to fang-filled maw, a maw that was now grinning back at Davian.

"...Cheshire loves his mousey treats too...especially when Cheshire is soooo hungry..."

Just then, a rather loud, inarguably IMPATIENT sounding roar bellowed from Cheshire's lean, concave stomach. Cheshire grimaced, but grinned shortly after as he planted Davian right up against his flat stomach, forcing Davian's head right up against the leathery surface of his straitjacket-concealed abdomen. Cheshire's stomach felt firm beneath his suit, not an ounce of give or fat to be felt, but the rumbling bellowing from his belly made Davian turn white as a ghost.

"...Y-You can't do this...! Y-You just can't-!"

Cheshire pulled the man off from his gut and held him high in the air with just his index claw and thumb claw, making Davian dangle helplessly in the air as he hung over Cheshire's head. The catboy blinked boredly back at Davian and said, "Little mousey's always say the same thing to Cheshire. But Cheshire CAN do this. Cheshire DOES do this. So do you."

"...Wh-what the hell are you talking about?!"

Cheshire didn't respond. Instead, he pulled the man closer and closer to his mouth, making Davian cry out in fear as he squirmed and resisted in vain to keep himself from sinking any lower. But Cheshire didn't swallow him...not yet. Instead, he ran his tongue firmly across Davian's torso, specifically, the blood staining his shirt, causing it to smear messily across his shirt while Cheshire tapped his tongue and hummed pleasantly before grinning back at Davian and answering his question.

“That. Cheshire is talking about that. *That* is why you mousey's always end up here, and why you all end up in Cheshire's tummy. You always say that Cheshire can't do this or that to you, but you can do this and that to all the mousey's you want...”

The tone in Cheshire's voice let Davian know clear as day that Cheshire wasn't actually judging him for his hypocrisy. It was equally clear that Cheshire couldn't even pretend to care about human life. After all, there was only one person in the entire world whom Cheshire truly loved, and she was nowhere to be seen.

“Alice doesn't care what you do to other mousey's. But when you try and trick Alice; try and get out of your deals the way you did, then Alice sends you here. Because then, you stop being a mouse...*then*...you become a *rat*...the kind of rat who thinks he can hurt Cheshire and get away with it...” Cheshire hissed at that last part, gesturing to his bicep which, much to Davian's dread, was already nearly healed as if nothing had happened. “...And while Alice knows everything...one thing Alice knows better than anyone...?”

Cheshire's tongue sloooooowly ran across his upper lip, baring his fangs as he spoke. Davian could see the catboy's maw beginning to salivate, and quickly, his heart raced like a jackrabbit...

“...No...n-no, please, n-no, no-”

“...What Alice knows best...*is that Cheshire **LOVES** rats...*”

...That was it.

Cheshire promptly opened his mouth nice and wide, and no amount of screaming, squirming or thrashing was able to prevent Davian from descending right into the catboy's gaping maw. Davian's shouting with protest was cut short when Cheshire clamped his mouth over Davian and dipped his head back, causing his entire body to jerk inside of Cheshire's mouth. It was unbearably humid with a rather pungent stench that most assuredly wasn't going to get any better anytime soon. Cheshire's tongue lathered all across Davian's body, as if to sample his flavor, if the pleasant rumbling that vibrated from Cheshire's chest was any indication.

Davian squirmed as best he could without getting cut to ribbons by Cheshire's fangs, but it proved worthless once Cheshire dipped his head back even further and sent Davian sliding to the back of Cheshire's maw and right down his throat. Then, with a rather slick, wet-sounding swallow, Davian was pushed through Cheshire's rippling, flesh throat.

The moist, rubbery throat muscles pressed against Davian's body, squelching wetly as they pulsed all around the tiny human's body, sending him further and further down Cheshire's gullet. Outside, Cheshire dipped his head back as a considerable bulge protruded from his pale, slender throat. He was normally used to consuming his prey in bites. But from time to time, Cheshire opted for a cleaner, squirmier approach. This was one of those times...

Cheshire clenched his eyes shut and dipped his head back even further, swallowing again, but harder...

G L L I I L K!!!

An especially hard, almost painful-sounding squelch erupted from Cheshire's gullet as Davian's body squeezed just down to the point where that bulge was now squeezing FIRMLY against Cheshire's lean collarbone. The catboy tapped his chest with his heavy paw firmly a few times to help work his meal down. Inside, Davian's head and shoulders were squeezing unbearably tightly against his esophagus, pressing through the narrow, rubbery fit so firmly that Davian was half-certain that he'd be crushed by the sheer force of it.

But eventually, with one final, incredibly wet...

G L L U U U U L L P!!!!

...Davian's body pressed through the esophagus, down the sphincter and plummeted unceremoniously into the cavernous belly of the beast. The man fell flat on his back into the center of the catboy's dank, humid stomach. To call the inside of Cheshire's stomach nauseating would be an understatement, to say the least. The stomach lining all around Davian, from top, front and bottom alike was a dark red, fleshy surface, one with a thin, clear, sickly slime caking everything around him. All around him, Davian could hear an idle, really sickly and wet burbling sound erupt from every which way, from the 'walls' ahead of him, the dripping upper stomach, right down to the 'floor' beneath him.

It was a relentless litany of churning and burbling sounds echoing all around the frightened, frazzled little man. He was taking heavy, panicked breaths, not even seeming to pay heed to the putrid taste on his tongue from the sheer unbridled stench of Cheshire's innards. Once again, Davian's heart was racing. Whatever the Abyss was, it COULDN'T be worse than this...

“...N-no...no no no, t-this isn't happening...th-this...this isn't real...it CAN'T be...!!” Davian cried out, practically frozen with fear, knowing exactly what any stomach was designed to do to whatever objects inhabited it, living or otherwise...

But outside, Cheshire sighed heartily, sticking his tongue out as he did so before running it across his fangs and giving his concave stomach a hearty pat of satisfaction. “Mmmraaahh...rat or not, you taste so yummy, human...” Cheshire rumbled pleasantly, running his sizable paw up and down his trim, slender stomach, opening his mouth and letting out a burp of satisfaction as he did so.

The catboy smacked his chops contently while his claws kneaded into his lean stomach, firmly yet soothingly feeling up his flat stomach as it rumbled pleasantly with his meal.

“Mmmmm, Alice is so kind to Cheshire...she knows how great these rats feel in Cheshire's tummy...” Cheshire cooed, once again licking his small lips before adding, “...and she knows how FILLING he'll be soon too...”

It wasn't long before the panic overwhelmed Davian and the man immediately rushed over to the front of Cheshire's stomach and proceeded to savagely thrash the stomach lining as best he could, given his tiny frame. The little man shouted as loud as he could over the stomach's constant gurgling, “LET ME OUT OF HEEEEERE!!!!”

Cheshire's feline-esque ears twitched at the shouting, as Cheshire, in a rather bored fashion, looked down at his stomach. He tapped his index claw against the portion of his stomach where he felt Davian battering away, as if to get his attention, then said, “Cheshire's food never leaves Cheshire's tummy.”

“I'M NOT FOOD, GODS DAMN YOU!!!” Davian shouted right back, kicking the stomach wall as hard as he could.

The only response he got was Cheshire's maw cracking open as he expelled another hearty belch from the kick.

UUUUUUURRRREEEEEEUUUUURRPH!!!!

When it ended, Cheshire grunted and smacked his chest, expelling a smaller burp before smacking his chops and giving his stomach a couple of hearty pats, causing the inside of his stomach to echo and reverberate incredibly loudly all around Davian. The man reeled back from the unbearably loud thumping of that heavy paw smacking into Cheshire's stomach.

Cheshire just smirked and picked at his fangs with the tip of his free claw and said, "Mmmm, you sure TASTE as good as most of Cheshire's food." As Cheshire spoke, he rubbed his stomach contently, all the while walking through an exit within the chamber that wasn't there minutes earlier. And as soon as Cheshire walked through it, he was right back into his bedroom; a rather sizable room with a nice, large, red, mattress-sized pillow for Cheshire to ease himself down onto, resting his rump contently against the pillow and leaning back with a relaxed sigh.

But as Cheshire sat there to relax, Davian was anything but relaxed...

"...PLEASE," Davian shouted back, adding, "...I'll do anything you want...ANYTHING...!!!"

Cheshire tilted his head at Davian's begging, but his bored expression suggested that Davian's pleas were falling on deaf...or more accurately, disinterested ears.

"Cheshire doesn't need anything. Least of all, from rats like you. All Cheshire needs is for you to digest, and you'll do that soon enough," Cheshire remarked. Then, Cheshire smirked to himself and added, "...It may take a little longer for you though, since you won't be that small for long..."

Davian was just about to ask what in the name of the Abyss Cheshire was talking about, but before he could say a word, his body once again started to burn from the inside. Not an unbearable burning, but a deeply uncomfortable one, not unlike when he first drank that strange, purple compound. Only this time, rather than shrink down to a few mere inches in height, Davian proceeded to grow rapidly...

Cheshire had anticipated this, hence why he sat himself down before the serum wore off. Because the instant Davian began to return to his normal height, Cheshire's flat, concave stomach proceeded to balloon out exponentially. It swelled out like it was rapidly filling itself to the brim. What was once a trim, flat stomach rounded out to a huge, medicine-ball-sized belly, one so big that Cheshire couldn't even heave himself off from his resting spot even if he tried. The catboy rested both his hands atop his expanding belly, moaning pleasantly to himself as he began to feel impossibly stuffed, which, for Cheshire, was one of the best feelings in the world...

Inside, Davian's body constricted right up against the stomach lining. His entire body was forced into an agonizing fetal position, with the stomach lining squeezing all around his body, barely giving him an inch to move.

If one were claustrophobic, not even Hell itself would be as unbearable as this...

Cheshire's stomach grew so massive that his straitjacket couldn't even contain that burgeoning mass that was Cheshire's now immensely large and stretched out stomach.

SHRRRIIIIPH!!!!

Rather comically, Cheshire's straitjacket burst wide open right down the middle, ripping apart and exposing Cheshire's bare, massive belly as it spilled out onto Cheshire's lap, forcing him to spread his thighs apart as that monstrous dome liberated itself from its constrictions.

Cheshire's stomach had bloated outwards by WELL over four feet! His bare belly was as pale and soft as the rest of Cheshire's flesh, looking drum-tight as it completely constricted Davian behind the Chain's powerful stomach lining. Had Cheshire been human, his stomach would've most assuredly burst open in gruesome detail. However, due to his being a Chain, and one of the most advanced Chains of Alice's collection at that, Cheshire was made of far sturdier stuff.

As a result, the catboy wasn't in any pain. But he was well beyond STUFFED at this point...

That huge, beyond-pregnant looking boulder of a belly churned and gurgled more loudly than an alchemists' cauldron on the fritz. The gurgling was so intense that Cheshire's taut, round belly quivered with its' prey-filled cargo well encased within. Said cargo would be screaming his lungs out, but his face was being constricted by the stomach lining itself. All he could do was muffle out some cries of agony and protest, which was drowned out by a symphony of deeply gastric burbling sounds, bubbling away relentlessly within the belly of the beast.

Cheshire himself huffed breathlessly, running his clawed hands up and down his massive, pale dome of a belly, almost unable to even comprehend how impossibly full he was in that moment.

But that moment of silence soon came to an explosive end.

An especially loud grumbling emitted from Cheshire's stupendously stuffed stomach. It soon rumbled from his gullet and steadily rose up Cheshire's throat. Then, Cheshire threw his head back, parted his mouth wide open and expelled a belch so massive, so forceful, so impossibly long, that it could be felt reverberating all throughout Cheshire's estate at an impossibly LOUD volume...

**"BWWAAAAAAAAAAAA
UUUUUUUUUUURRRR-
HHOOOOOOORRRRAA
AAAAUUUUUUUUURRRR-
EEEEEEOOOOOOOOO
OOORRRRPH!!!!!!!!!"**

It was an impossibly loud and crude sound, one that echoed all throughout the mansion and beyond...if beyond even existed within this realm, blasting out of Cheshire's maw for a good ten, wholly uninterrupted seconds straight...!

Cheshire's stomach rattled with Davian firmly trapped within, getting rattled right alongside the stomach itself. He would have punched the stomach wall, but he could barely move an inch.

When it ended, Cheshire sighed heartily with immense satisfaction and weary relief, giving his belly a resounding slap of satisfaction. His stomach was tight as could be, so with that slap came a rather hefty thump; the kind of thump one would get from slapping a massive watermelon. Cheshire looked positively spent as he ran his heavy paws against his infinitely heavier and considerably larger stomach.

“Ahhhh-ha-haaaaaaah...” Cheshire groaned euphorically, eye barely open as he ran his clawed hands up and down the entirety of that big, round surface, feeling it gurgle with his prey still trapped inside, picking up what little movements Davian could even make inside of there. “Mmmm, ohhh...Cheshire feels so fu-

UUUUUULL-LUUUUUUURRRRRRUUUUUUUUP!!!!!!

Cheshire barely managed to finish his sentence before burping out the last part of his sentence, before it reached its crescendo and just turned into another big, guttural belch.

Cheshire grunted when it ended, slapping his hand down onto his big, fleshy dome of a gut. The catboy could feel more pressure festering within his monstrously engorged stomach. So, Cheshire gripped his belly tightly to displace the pressure, before throwing his head back and expelling another huge, throaty belch.

**AAAAHHHRRRRRUUU
UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUR
RRRRRAAAAAAAA
AAARRRPHEEEEE**

That immense sound not only violated the airwaves but hit with such force that Cheshire's entire bedroom seemed to reverberate slightly in its wake. Each massive, crude belch that erupted from Cheshire's toothy maw caused Davian's air supply to diminish while his head continued to spin like mad from getting so relentlessly rattled over and over with each passing eructation.

“...Rgh, y-you need to stop that...” Davian whimpered pitifully, barely conscious.

“Guhhh, heh, Cheshire can't help it, you rats and mousey's are so-

AAAAARRRRRUUUUP-guh, mph, so filling...” Cheshire insisted, a sharp burp cutting him off mid-sentence.

Cheshire continued to savor how impossibly full he was. His claws tenderly stroked all across the smooth, round, fleshy surface of his stomach. They ran all the way up from the upper crest that connected Cheshire's chest to his stomach, all the way down to his hefty, smooth and soft underbelly. Cheshire's belly burbled pleasantly as his ministrations. The catboy eased his claws back, allowing himself to use his open paw-pads to press up against his belly, which Cheshire proceeded to use in order to stroke his massive fleshy dome from the sides.

Cheshire rubbed at the sides of his belly in small, consistent and soothing circles. He rested his eyes shut and rumbled pleasantly at the feeling. His 'thumb' pushed into the sides a bit more firmly, expelling a deep, guttural belch in the process, followed by another right after that, then a rather adorable-sounding hiccup, which made Cheshire's eye widen somewhat unexpectedly.

Then, Cheshire's metal claws wrapped themselves around his underbelly, and then, in an uncharacteristically lively fashion, Cheshire grinned and heaved that huge, prey-filled ball of flesh up with ease. Bloated and unbearably heavy as Cheshire felt, being a Chain also made him impossibly strong as well. So for him, heaving up a good hundred sixty pounds of man packed away behind a ball of flesh was nothing for the young beast.

“Mmmm, you may not like it in there, but Cheshire feels great right now, little rat...” Cheshire practically purred.

Then, with his rounded belly still in his grasp, Cheshire gave his gut a hearty jostling. There was next to no give, simply because of how impossibly taut Cheshire's stomach was in its ridiculously bloated state. But the whole of Cheshire's stomach was still wobbling and jostling from the sheer force of the shaking.

This caused Davian to once again face-plant right into the very front of Cheshire's stomach. His face was smearing against the fleshy, slimy stomach lining; it was enough to make the man nauseous as he desperately just barely managed to pry himself loose. Then, Cheshire unceremoniously heaved his belly up as high as he could and released, letting his huge gut slap down back onto the ground, and expelling another giant burp in the process.

**'BRRRUUU
UUUUOOOO
OORRRRRR-
HHUUUUUUUU
UAAAAAAA
ARRRRRUUU
UUUUUUUUUU
UUPH!!!!'**

It wasn't quite as long or as loud as his previous behemoth of a belch, but it was still enough to deprive Davian of a great deal of oxygen, as well as cause the whole of Cheshire's bedroom to shake a little. When it ended, Cheshire sighed with relief, slumping back as best as he could, one elongated arm rested against the pillow for support while the other reached over and proudly, almost possessively slapped the side of his belly, causing another satisfying thump sound to emit from his gut and dislodging another short but deep and guttural belch to erupt out of Cheshire.

“Ahhh, feels nice,” Cheshire purred, using his one hand to rub all over his vast belly in big, wide circles, all while tracing the very tip of his metal index claw around his bellybutton. Cheshire once again rested his eye shut and rumbled pleasantly from his athletic chest, savoring the feeling of his prey festering away within him, powerless to fight back...

Davian coughed weakly. He could barely keep his own eyes open since Cheshire's playing with his belly as well as his constant belching was making him both woozy and oxygen deprived at the same time.

“...I...I don't...I don't deserve this...” was all Davian could just barely manage to say.

Cheshire's eye opened slightly, once more, he looked bored as ever, even as he continued stroking his remarkably full stomach all over with his one paw.

“Mmmm, yes you do, rat,” Cheshire said as dismissively as ever, his tone of voice still too pleased with his engorged belly to even express whatever disgust or disinterest he may have been feeling. “All the mousey's and rats insist that they don't deserve ending up in Cheshire's tummy...urf... **HUUR-UUURRRP**...mph, or killed. But they always forget how they ended up here with Cheshire in the first place. But Alice never forgets. Alice... **beeeerruuup**...ooh, Alice, knows all the bad you do. Alice knows how bad you all are...every single one of you. If you're here, it's because Alice thinks you deserve to be, and if you deserve to be, then you deserve whatever Cheshire does to you...”

There was silence on the other end, save for the relentless burbling of Cheshire's expanded stomach. Then, Cheshire got a reply...

“...Y-you...you don't even care about good or bad...s-so, why do you care what I do to other people...?”

“Cheshire doesn't,” Cheshire replied, blunt as could be, still contently stroking his bulbous midsection before adding, “Cheshire just wants to be fed. And lowly rats are the most filling meals Alice ever gives Cheshire, because Alice loves Cheshire...and Cheshire loves Alice. Mmmm, Alice is everything to Cheshire, nothing else matters to Cheshire except her. Not even Cheshire matters to Cheshire...but all you rats care about is yourself. You don't know what love is. All you know how to do is hurt...mph...”

Cheshire paused for a moment. The look on his face indicated that he could feel another burp coming. So he slapped his gut firmly, threw his head back and let loose yet another aggressively loud belch that rumbled out of his maw for several seconds straight. When it ended, Cheshire sighed with satisfaction, giving his belly a few more pats of equal satisfaction.

“Heh, that and you know how to fill Cheshire's tummy up real nice...”

“...Th-they...they hurt me,” Davian replied, insisting, “...they hurt me so bad. Whatever I did...they all got what they deserved...!”

Cheshire's satisfied expression dipped somewhat upon hearing that. His ears twitched, but there was something in his eye...a rather distant look. Cheshire's gaze fell off to the side, as if lost in a memory for a moment. And judging by his furrowed brow, not the most pleasant of memories either...

“...Cheshire...” Cheshire started to say, almost debating with himself if he even wanted to bother finishing his sentence. But after a moment, he carried on and added, “...Cheshire was hurt by someone too...someone who made Cheshire like this...hurt Alice too...hurt her so badly...”

“...Th-then...then you get it...!” Davian weakly insisted, as if finding some sliver of hope in reaching the young Chain for something resembling reason. “...You understand revenge, d-don't you...?”

There was another pause. Then, Cheshire's expression once again retained its disinterested form as he looked down at his belly and resumed rubbing it and purring to himself. “Hmph, revenge doesn't mean anything. It can't bring Cheshire's eyes back. Can't take away Alice's hurt...or bring HIM back. You rats always use silly words like 'revenge' to justify your silly slaughters. But in the end? The only thing you and Cheshire have in common is this...”

Cheshire leaned down and gripped his belly firmly to get Davian's attention.

“...We both like playing with our prey...”

And just to punctuate the point Cheshire was trying to make, he gave the dead center of his belly a resounding slap, one heavier and heartier than any slap he'd giving his stomach prior. In the process of doing so, Cheshire had disrupted what was perhaps the biggest pressure pocket festering within his belly. It promptly rocketed up Cheshire's throat with an audible gurgle before rushing into Cheshire's mouth, momentarily puffing out his cheeks before Cheshire threw his head back, mouth gaping wide open, and expelled a truly titanic, ground-rumbling BELCH...

••BWR44
4444444
UUUUUUUU
UURRRRR
WWOOOO
OOORRR
UUUUUUUU
URRRRRR-

HAHAHA

HAHAHA

RRROOO

OOOOOO

OOOOOO

OOORRR

RRRPH!!

!!!!!!

What erupted from Cheshire's maw in that moment could only ever be described as...inhuman. It was this colossal, DEAFENINGLY bassy eructation, one so aggressive in its sheer force that any debate as to whether the ground was actually quivering went out the window when some of the dolls on the shelves clattered onto the ground, muttering "excuse you!" to Cheshire over and over. All the while, that BEASTLY belch exploded from Cheshire's gaping maw for even longer than his previous record-shatterer. The burp just kept going and going and GOING, only getting louder and more rumbly with each passing second.

When it ended, Cheshire lurched forward, salivating and heaving breathlessly, his heavy belly rising and falling with each labored breath he took. He was absolutely winded from such a monstrously gaseous display. But he could feel something lodged uncomfortably in his throat. He gagged for a moment, lurching his head out and thumping the side of his gut, expelling a few more burps in the process, before squeezing his belly with both hands and expelling one last deep, sonorous belch...

**"BEEEEELLUUUURRRRR
RLLUUUUURRP!!!!"**

With that final eruption, something slimy flew out of Cheshire's mouth and splattered onto the ground before his pointed boots.

It was Davian's pocket watch, a gunk-covered mess that had broken from the sheer impact of being burped out of Cheshire's system. Cheshire gasped with hearty relief, wiping his maw clean with his forepaw. Then, he looked down at the time the watch stopped on.

Cheshire tilted his head, then felt around his stomach.

No movement.

That final eruption had finally done in Davian's oxygen supply. The catboy merely scoffed softly to himself, then looked back at the watch indifferently.

"...Eleven fifty fifty. That's the time you died and became Cheshire's dinner..." Cheshire remarked, before slumping back into his massive pillow and rubbing all over his big, burbling belly with satisfaction. "Mmm, stupid rat...time doesn't mean anything in Cheshire's world. Just like how you never meant anything in *yours*. Cheshire doesn't care what that rat who 'donated' his eye to Cheshire thinks...without someone to live and fight for, life is meaningless. And Cheshire...Cheshire will always fight for Alice...especially if Alice keeps feeding Cheshire more tasty, worthless rats like you..."