

Sir Ramsey the Ravenous

By: Indi

Sir Ramsey crept through the ruins of the old fort, on the lookout for any sight or sound of trouble. The white, black-striped snake wore chainmail underneath a tabard adorned with the face of a grinning, purple dragon. The chains of his armor rattled faintly as he went along, forcing him to make slow, careful movements to avoid making excessive noise. His foes could be anywhere in the ruins, and an ambush was the last thing he needed.

The paladin had accepted a job to track down—and hopefully rescue—Prince Sterling, a rather distant member of a minor branch of the royal house. The prince's carriage had been attacked a few days before, and the evidence pointed to every member of his small entourage being eaten. Shredded clothing and belched up gear had littered the ground around the wrecked cart. None of it had belonged to the prince, though, so he was assumed kidnapped. No one had sent ransom demands, nor claimed responsibility. More likely than not, the kidnappers simply intended to eat Sterling as well—if they hadn't done so already.

Time hadn't been a concern of the ones who'd hired Ramsey, though. He'd gotten the impression the royal family didn't necessarily care if Sterling returned safe and sound, only that the perpetrators were dealt with. And if anyone could take out kidnappers it was Ramsey.

No one in the kingdom came close to matching Sir Ramsey's reputation. He'd foiled the plots of numerous villains throughout his career, from simple smugglers to powerful necromancers. He'd defeated entire bandit gangs and pirate crews on his own. He'd even slain a dragon.

Ramsey adored the praise his deeds garnered. Having strangers cheer his name and offer him gifts made him beam with pride. He also believed he'd done a great deal of good in the process. Admittedly, though, the source of his power was a somewhat shameful secret.

Like many paladins, Ramsey drew upon the power of a patron deity. His was Octavio, the draconic god of cultivation—and indulgence. Octavio lavished him in considerable boons, providing him with the strength and abilities to take on large groups of foes and come out on top. Those boons came at the cost of occasionally insatiable hunger.

The snake's stomach rumbled. *Be patient*, Ramsey told himself.

The mouth of the dragon face on Ramsey's tabard suddenly began to speak. "Are you ready to feast yet, Paladin?"

Ramsey wished Octavio would use a more dignified manner to commune with him. Or at least a stealthier one. "I'll eat when the time is right," he grumbled.

"I *know* when you're hungry, remember? You should've snacked on that fox you

passed on the road a couple hours past. He was nice and plump; I bet he made your mouth water.”

The fox *had* looked tasty. Even now he could clearly see the curve of their belly, and how their rump bounced as they walked. Coiling them up and scarfing them down would’ve been easy. Ramsey scowled. “I have to choose my meals wisely—especially when I’m not sure who or what I’m up against.”

“You’re only going up against two kidnappers—*maybe* three. Do you doubt my power would be enough to handle them?” Octavio asked. “Besides, the fuller you are, the stronger you are. That’s the beauty of my gift to you.”

“More like the curse of it.” Far too often he’d ended up wading into battle with a bulging belly, full of either food or foe. Though effective, it lacked elegance. He certainly didn’t want any bards singing tales of him stuffing himself while fighting. “And think of how much damage would be done to my public image if people knew I didn’t just eat criminals?” Merchants, drunks, squires, travelers on the lonely road...he’d eaten them all when his hunger got the better of him. Sacrifices for the greater good, despite their understandable reluctance to add to his valiant waistline.

“No one would’ve known you’d turned that fox into a snack. And if by chance someone had? Well, there are plenty of other kingdoms you could glut your way to glory in.” Octavio snickered.

The god told the truth, as much as it frustrated Ramsey to admit. But he had no plans of waddling away in failure with his reputation tarnished, no matter how much it would amuse Octavio.

In the distance, the sound of conversation reached Ramsey. “Quiet down; it’s time for me to work.”

“Of course. Eat well~” The depiction of Octavio’s face on his tabard grew still.

Ramsey made his way along a low wall, the chatter growing louder as he neared. He traced it to a partially collapsed, one-room building. The snake found a large hole in the side of a wall and peeked inside.

The room was cluttered. Debris had been shoved to one side in a messy pile. A pair of bedrolls were on the floor, with two large packs beside them. The remains of a fire were in the middle of the room; broken bits of furniture had fueled it. A chubby hyena and a plump snow leopard stood near the burnt-out fire. They were obviously the kidnappers—the only ones, if the bedrolls were anything to go by.

The real surprise was Prince Sterling. Not only was the lion still alive, but he was also fat. *Incredibly* fat. He’d been described to Ramsey as a little bit chubby, with golden fur. The lion tied up in front of the kidnappers sported a round, doughy gut completely uncovered by the stretched tatters of his once-regal robes.

“This has gone on long enough! Let me go this instant—I am a prince!” Sterling demanded. His soft cheeks wobbled as he whined.

The snow leopard sneered at the prince. “The only way you’ll be leaving is around

my waistline, tubbs.” He crouched down and grabbed a pawful of Sterling’s belly, squeezing so hard the lion yelped. “You’ve really fattened up wonderfully. Practically doubled in size, right?” He looked over his shoulder at the hyena.

The hyena nodded and cackled. “Yep! He’s ballooned faster than any other captive. Course feeding him two of the guards helped. Not to mention burning through a few of those scrolls of instant feast we had. He didn’t even need to be stuffed much, either. Just pigged out on his own like he hadn’t eaten in weeks!”

“There’s nothing wrong with having a healthy appetite!” Sterling insisted, as if more insulted by that than the fact they planned on eating him.

“And there’s nothing wrong with becoming a princely meal, either,” the snow leopard laughed.

Ramsey’s stomach rumbled again. With the kidnappers distracted, he had the perfect opportunity to ambush them and secure Sterling. He’d need to move quickly.

Ramsey quietly climbed through the hole in the wall. He took a deep breath and tapped into Octavio’s power. Upon releasing the breath, a cloud of purple mist blew from his mouth. The cloud poured over the hyena, enveloping him before he could react. He coughed, then stumbled, swaying erratically. The intoxicating cloud had rendered him instantly drunk, as if he’d guzzled a whole keg of ale.

Warned by the coughs, the snow leopard backed away from the cloud. The hyena let out a few cackles before belching and falling to the ground in a stupor.

Ramsey dodged a throwing knife from the snow leopard, and two more that followed. Out of knives, the snow leopard rushed over to a table, where a sheathed sword sat. Ramsey unraveled a chain from around his waist and swung, intercepting the snow leopard. The chain wrapped around his target fast and tight, squeezing the feline’s soft middle. A hard tug pulled the snow leopard to the ground and knocked the wind out of him.

The battle had ended in a matter of seconds.

Ramsey walked over to the fallen snow leopard and secured the chain around him. He glanced over at the hyena, who remained drunk and downed. “See Octavio,” he whispered. “I handled that perfectly well on my own.”

The dragon’s voice echoed in Ramsey’s head. *Yes, that drunken breath was clearly a natural ability of yours, and not something borrowed from me, your gracious God.*

Ramsey ignored the dragon, instead focusing on Sterling. He bowed before the prince. “My name is Sir Ramsey, and I’ve come to rescue you.”

“Took them long enough to send someone!” Prince Sterling said in a huff. “If you had come even an hour later, they might have eaten me! *Me!* Such utter insolence, trying to turn royalty into food!”

Ramsey had expected praise, or at least a simple thank you. Instead, the prince belted out petty complaint after petty complaint. He did his best to stay calm. The

reward would make up for the disrespect. “My apologies, prince. Let me help you up.”

Sterling was as heavy as he looked, but Ramsey managed to get the blubbery lion back on his feet.

Up close, Sterling’s belly proved impossible for Ramsey to ignore. It jiggled and bounced as the lion complained. Ramsey’s eyes followed every wobble.

His stomach growled, louder than ever.

It’d been a while since Ramsey had seen someone so delectably doughy. He couldn’t help but imagine how the lion would feel sliding down his throat. How heavy his belly would be right after. The wiggling would be divine.

They did a fine job fattening him up, didn’t they? Octavio’s voice returned. *It’d be a shame to let such a wonderful meal go to waste.*

I can’t eat the person I was hired to rescue, Ramsey replied.

Need I remind you, you were hired specifically to deal with the kidnappers. The prince still being alive would merely be a bonus—but not a monetary one. You wouldn’t be blamed if he were tragically eaten before you arrived.

Ramsey’s gaze hadn’t left Sterling’s gut. The kidnappers would taste good, but they weren’t likely to compare to the lion. *I hate it when you’re right.*

“And they had the gall to feed me bland food, too! Do you know how torturous it was having to wash it all down with wine conjured from second-rate magic?” Sterling scoffed. “That alone is worthy of punishment!” He turned to Ramsey, oblivious to the hunger in the snake’s eyes. “Eat those two immediately. *Harumph!* Daring to treat royalty as food.”

“Don’t worry prince, I was planning on eating them all along.” Ramsey smiled at Sterling. “I just need to indulge in the main course, first.”

A look of confusion came over Sterling. It turned into worry as Ramsey stepped forward, looming over the doughy lion. “W-Wait, you wouldn’t dare! I’m a prince! You won’t get a reward if you eat me, you fiend!”

“Don’t be so sure. They already think you’ve been eaten; I was just sent to bring the kidnappers to justice. A lowly, portly, prince won’t be missed at all.” Ramsey’s tongue flicked out.

The snake couldn’t help himself anymore; he needed the lion in his belly. He lunged at his terrified prey, shoving Sterling’s head into his maw with little effort. His jaws stretched around Sterling’s round face. Frantic protests echoed down his throat as he began to swallow with glee.

With his wrists still bound behind his back, Sterling could only squirm in desperation. Ramsey grabbed his doughy sides, feeling the soft pudge in his grasp. He preferred fatty, decadent prey. Octavio had influenced his tastes, which he begrudgingly accepted.

Swallowing Sterling’s shoulders and chest took only seconds. Ramsey never took his time eating meals; Octavio demanded gluttony, and the sooner he ate one meal, the

sooner he could move on to the next. A useful trait in combat, though the snake regretted rarely getting to savor food as helpless and juicy as Sterling.

Ramsey's belly swelled as he continued to gorge on the prince. His enchanted chainmail and tabard stretched to contain his ballooning belly, neither ever feeling more than a little bit tight no matter how big he grew. Only his belt resisted, squeezing his rowdy middle gently.

Octavio's strength allowed Ramsey to lift the hefty lion off the ground and into the air, as if he were a third his size. Sterling kicked his legs wildly, but there was nowhere else for him to go but down. He slid down the snake's gullet in seconds, falling into the pit of Ramsey's stomach with a satisfying bounce.

On Ramsey's tabard, the face of Octavio noticeably fattened, as if the dragon himself had been pleasantly stuffed.

"Damn, he was delicious!" Ramsey moaned. He cradled his bulging belly in his claws, feeling it wobble as his prey wiggled and kicked. "Nobility has always tasted good, but royalty is even better. I need to 'rescue' royals more often."

Indistinct whines echoed from Ramsey's gut. He ignored them; food wasn't worthy of conversation, no matter how tasty.

"And to think you were reluctant at first," Octavio teased.

Ramsey rolled his eyes. "Caution's a virtue. I *am* still going to have to deal with all the weight this fattening treat will pile on. Good thing I—*uworrrrrrp*—enjoy hiking."

"Being fat's never slowed you down before—I've made sure of that~"

"Sometimes I fear you won't be satisfied until I'm almost too fat to move!"

Ramsey hissed, then belched. "Though perhaps it'd be worth it just to eat this well on the regular." He rubbed his claws over his massive gut, feeling every squirm the prince made.

Ramsey slowly lumbered around to face the kidnappers. The hyena remained out of it, while the snow leopard looked on with terror. Ramsey's voracious gluttony tended to have that effect on people. Especially ones on the menu.

"I can't exactly leave any witnesses to my princely feast. Course the plan was to eat you both anyway, so all that's changed is how much weight I'm gaining." Ramsey closed in on his next two meals. The snow leopard cowered as the shadow of the snake's enormous middle fell over him.

"I'm still so distraught I arrived too late to save poor Prince Sterling." Ramsey frowned, shifting his gaze to the surface of the table before him. He shifted in his chair, his soft belly wobbling in his lap. "My best guess is he'd been eaten a day or two before I found the hideout. The kidnappers had grown so fat off of him and the others they'd outgrown their gear. As sluggish as they were, they still put up quite a fight. I had no choice but to

eat them.”

He spoke as if it'd been the hardest thing he'd ever had to do, rather than one of the funnest. Stuffing himself with three prey had been euphoric. They'd struggled to the very end, rocking his immense gut from side-to-side the whole while. He'd nearly passed out in joy.

Across from Ramsey, a silver wolf merely nodded. Chance—a captain of the Royal Guard—had shown little emotion since being told of Prince Sterling's fate. Just as Ramsey had hoped. “The outcome is tragic, but we understood it to be the most likely one from the beginning. All that matters is the prince was avenged, and others will be less likely to target other tertiary royals now that they know the fate of those who get caught. Thank you once again for keeping our kingdom safe, Sir Ramsey.” The wolf pushed a pouch full of coins towards Ramsey, who made a show of reluctantly accepting the handsome reward.

“It's my honor. And you're right, I guess some good did come of my actions.” Ramsey offered a slight smile. “Though for now, I must take my leave. My work is never done.”

Chance dismissed him with a nod.

Ramsey lifted out of the chair, holding back a grin as he felt his belly jiggle. When he left the estate, he did so with an undeniable waddle in his step. The once-fit snake had become downright fat. Pudge had buried his muscles, and every part of him jiggled to some extent. His tail had thickened, losing its nimbleness but gaining power. Coiling people would be harder, but knocking them out with a heavy smack would be a breeze.

I'd say that was the best possible outcome for this little venture, don't you agree? Octavio asked. *Three fattening meals, and a weighty bag of gold.*

“It may have been rewarding, but it *is* harder for me to find work when I'm fat,” Ramsey said under his breath. “I may even make less in the long run because I didn't space out my meals.”

Does that matter when compared to the rush of rampant gluttony I blessed you with, Ramsey the Ravenous? Laughter echoed in Ramsey's head.

Ramsey despised the nicknames Octavio liked to give him, no matter how accurate. “I admit the experience was a blissful one. And having a belly isn't bad, either.” He gently slapped his gut. “As long as my reputation remains pristine, I'll put up with your gluttonous gift.”

The snake's stomach rumbled. The reward he'd gained by gorging would buy him more than enough food to sate his increased appetite. He'd just need to avoid waddling past any bounty boards. He didn't need them to start looking like menus...at least not until he'd shed some weight.