“Aaaand submit...yes!”

Mike had just laid back, smiling, when the doorbell rang.  That was when he remembered his partner was coming over.

Mike hadn’t meant to forget, or be cold.  He wasn’t rude or demanding. He just tended not to socialize, especially since his friends were back in Gallup instead of here in Albuquerque.  So when his last class ended, he’d just gone to his apartment, ordered some American Chinese, and gotten to work. He vaguely remembered talking to the woman next to him, but he’d been busy finishing a story.  And then the doorbell rang.

In a flash, he shot himself out of his chair.  For being thirty pounds overweight, he managed to clear his bed effortlessly and pull the bedroom door open in one easy motion.  He then sped through the dining room/kitchen, taking a napkin to dab at his mouth (not that he needed to, he knew how to eat properly if not healthy).  Finally, he gracefully plunked the napkin in the trash can, strode through the living room, and opened the door.

Kira (he remembered her name at least) was easily six feet tall, which made his own five-foot-two height feel a little more obvious.  She was a little on the thick side herself, but that was probably muscles, based on her bare arms and flattish chest. Her skin was on the dark side, and her long, luscious, black ponytail gave her a Native American appearance, though she also had very bright blue eyes that really popped on her.

Thankfully, she was smiling as she held onto a sketchpad and various art supplies.  “So, ready to start?” she asked.

Mike’s head cleared and he nodded.  “Uh, yeah,” he said, his voice soft.  He motioned inwards. “Please, uh, set your stuff down and make yourself at home!”

Kira inched her way past him with a quick “thanks” and walked to the dining room.  Mike couldn’t help but straighten up proudly. Unlike most college students, he kept his apartment spotless.  Floors swept, dishes washed, counters and tabletops clear, toilet scrubbed. He even took great care of his own appearance, bathing daily and dressing in black collared shirts and khakis.

In the kitchen, Kira’d set her stuff down and taken a seat.  Mike realized he didn’t have anything in the fridge. “Uhh, you wanna’ have pizza?” he asked.  “I can-”

Kira waved her hand at him.  “That’s alright,” she said, still smiling.  “I ate already.”

She leaned back, causing her sky blue tank top to ride up a little.  This had the effect of showing off her abs, hard and deeply defined. This made Mike pause for a moment before her chuckle made his eyes shoot back up.  “Enjoying the view?” she asked.

Mike blushed, his hand drifting to the back of his head.  “Sorry,” he mumbled.

“Don’t worry,” she said.  “As long as you’re not trying to catch me naked, I don’t mind too much.”  Her hands slapped down over her tummy. “After an hour a day in the gym and carefully watching what I eat, I like knowing it’s worth it.”

“It is.”

The words slipped out of Mike’s mouth before he could really stop himself, and he froze.  To his relief, Kira just smiled. “Thanks,” she said.

Mike sat down next to Kira.  “I tried exercising once,” he said.  He smiled as he ran his hands over his flab.  “But I couldn’t remember to get down to the gym all that often, so I just stopped going.  I actually forget to eat a lot,” he explained. “But I spend a lot of time writing, so I tend to get whatever’s fast, even if it’s not very good.”

In response, Kira smiled again before leaning forward.  “So, got any ideas for the project?”

Mike’s mouth pinched shut as it quirked to the side.  “A few,” he said. He had more than a few ideas for their comic, but several of them were… eclectic.  Not sexual in any way, the class wouldn’t allow that, but definitely off the beaten path. “What sorts of things are you interested in drawing?”

Kira flipped open her sketchbook.  “Take a look,” she said.

Almost instantly, Mike noticed something.  He smiled. “Furry fan?” he asked.

“Eeyep,” Kira responded.  All over the page was a series of wolf women in army fatigues, wielding various types of firearms, from rifles to hand-cannon type pistols.  Kira motioned with her hands. “They just look more interesting than regular people.”

Mike felt a sudden jolt of enthusiasm.  “I know, right?” he responded. “I mean, you’re playing a game and you get the option to play as a cat, why wouldn’t you take it?”

Kira’s hand came down on the sketchpad.  “Exactly!” she said. “Anything but your usual, boring human!”

She turned over the page, revealing coyotes.  However, these were different, all feral and spread throughout a desert landscape.  They also had an odd green light behind them. “Were-coyotes?” Mike asked.

Kira shrugged.  “You could call them that,” she said.  “Technically. They’re called yee naaldlooshii, and they’re a type of Navajo witch.  They transform into coyotes to hurt people and disrupt good magic.”

Mike listened as Kira spoke, then nodded once she was finished.  “Huh,” he said. “That’s cool.” He looked back up at Kira, pausing for a moment as her bright blue eyes stared into his.  “So you’re-”

“Ute,” she said.  Then she looked up with a smile.  “And thus ends my knowledge of yee naaldlooshii.  The Ute are more interested in cool things with quartz.”

Before she could say a whole lot, Mike held up his hand.  “Hang on,” he said before darting out of the room. A few moments later, he’d grabbed his notebook and was flipping through it on his way back into the room.  “It should be right here…” Finally, he found something and put his book down on top of Kira’s sketchbook. “What do you think of this idea?”

Kira didn’t even have to lean over to read the book.  Mike stared at her for a moment. She was tall and trim, muscles almost broadcasting themselves.  Her hair was expertly maintained, ponytail flowing down past her shoulders. All the while, her bright blue eyes were scanning over the page like lasers, quick and intent.

She was beautiful.  Mike knew that. And Mike also knew that he didn’t quite match.  He looked down. His hand went to his middle and he pinched at the layer of flab hanging there.  Good as his wardrobe was, he couldn’t quite cover up being short a foot or having a few extra tens of pounds.

“Looks good,” Kira said.  “I haven’t done ferals a whole lot, so this should be fun.”

Mike took himself out of his ruminations and looked up.  She was smiling, so he smiled back. “Awesome,” he said.

**<\*>**

Four days later the sun was rising over the desert.  It was cold out, courtesy of a sudden wind from the north.  It was still clear out, though, and only slightly muddy. Thus, the day trip could proceed as planned.

Mike turned his jeep off the road.  He’d been working through the wee hours of the morning, but he was too intent on this to feel tired.  His passenger, though, dragged out a snore as she lay curled up in her heated seat. She’d taken her coat off to use it as a blanket, and had curled into it as much as humanly possible.

Still, some of her face popped out of the coat, and Mike couldn’t help but glance at it when he stopped the car.  Her hair spilled over it because she didn’t have the time to put it in a ponytail, so it covered one of her eyes. The muscles in her face were completely relaxed.  Add in a light snore and the image was complete. Mike took in the image for a moment. Then, though, he leaned forward. “Hey,” he whispered. “Kira?”

Kira jolted, then her eyes shot open.  In an instant, they were awake and trying to focus.  She turned her coat around and shoved it back on, zipping it up and straightening up.  Her bag of tools was ready and quickly slung over her shoulder. “Mre’ee,” she mumbled.

Mike just chuckled as he opened the door.  “Brace yourself,” he said.

As soon as he pulled his door open, a gust blew through.  Kira cursed as she curled up in a ball, trying to shield herself with her bag.  Mike just laughed. “Shall we sally forth, milady?” he asked her.

She shot a glare at him, but shoved her door open.  While Mike walked around, standing tall and straight, Kira curled over herself like an old lady, ducking behind the car.  “Tell me when the wind’s over,” she growled.

Mike just stood over her.  “Well,” he remarked, “I don’t think that’s going to happen,” he said.

In response, Kira sighed.  “Yeah, I figured,” she groaned.  So she stood up straight. Another gust made her bend over, though, and thus she started to walk.  “I h-hope we f-find something.”

Mike chuckled as he sped up to get in front of her.  “Don’t worry,” he said. “I haven’t been out here in a little while, but I know where everything is.

After thirty minutes of walking around, Mike stopped.  “Wait,” he whispered. One hand went in front of Kira’s stomach to stop her.  The other pointed out. There, several feet away, was a coyote, standing on a rock and staring out at the landscape.  “Over there.”

“I see it,” Kira whispered back.  Very slowly, she reached into her bag, drawing out a digital camera.  Mike slowly ducked out of the way. Kira pointed, the focus on the camera extending.  Then, she pushed the button, and a slight buzz came from the camera. For several seconds, Kira snapped pictures, checking the display on the back after each one.

A little while later, the coyote jumped down and walked off, out of sight.  Mike walked back over to Kira. “So, how was that?” he asked.

Kira was thumbing through the pictures.  “Decent,” she said. “At least, as good as I can expect without bringing one into a studio.”  She sighed. “Man, I wish I knew someone with a dog. Thank goodness you’ve been out here before.”

Mike gave her a smile in response.  “I used to go hiking with my great uncle,” he said.  “Every year, my family’d go to visit him and he’d take me and my sister out to the desert, point out how to get close to the wildlife, stuff like that.”

Smirking, Kira turned back to Mike.  “It didn’t take, I take it?”

She motioned to his gut and Mike shrugged.  “It was more fun when he did it,” he replied.  “But he was already getting up there by the time Dad had to move.  After he died, I just… stopped. Obviously.” Mike patted his stomach.  “I should probably do it more often.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Kira told him.  “You’re not that flabby. Oh, look!”

Kira turned away to snap a picture of some mice.  As she stalked away, Mike stared after her, frowning slightly.  He pulled open his notebook as she got to work, but he looked up every once in a while.  She was just so… intent. And her strong frame and her bright blue eyes just heightened the effect.  Mike couldn’t help but find it captivating.

Finally, he cleared his throat.  “Kira?” He made sure to be quiet.

Kira straightened up, checking the pictures.  “Yeah?”

Part of him held back.  She was too strong: she probably didn’t want him.  But he went for it anyways. “Are you doing anything tomorrow night?” he asked.  “If you aren’t, I was thinking that maybe I could treat you to dinner.”

He watched Kira’s eyes close briefly as she chuckled.  “I thought you’d ask that,” she said. “I take it you don’t just want to discuss the comic?”

Mike paused, then shook his head.  “Just us.”

Instantly, Kira’s smile widened.  “It’s a date. Here, hold this.”

Kira handed Mike the camera.  Then she reached into her bag and pulled out her sketchbook.  He held up the camera so she could see the display. “Gonna’ do this here?” he asked.

Kira nodded.  “It’s actually warming up here,” she remarked as she pulled out a green pencil.  “Besides, I had an idea and I wanted to get it drawn up. Thought I’d break in this new pencil while I was at it.”

It took Mike only a few seconds before his curiosity got the better of him.  Trying to hold the camera in the same place, Mike inched his way over to see what Kira was drawing.  “So, whatcha’ got there?” he asked.

In response, Kira tilted the sketchbook a little.  “My fursona,” she said. She traced out an outline around the fuzzy shape.  “It’s a wolf,” she said. Then she blushed a little. “It’s… orange.”

Mike shrugged.  “So?”

Kira smiled.  “Thanks.” Then she chuckled.  “Let me do you.”

She moved the pencil over and started sketching.  Given the size and the position, Mike didn’t have to think too hard to imagine what she was drawing.  “You’re making me a mouse?” he asked.

“Why not?” she asked.  “Short, fat, cute. He’s perfect for you.”

Mike groaned.  “Yeah, but don’t make me a mouse,” he asked.  “Make me something awesome, like… I don’t know!  Something awesome!”

“Hey, mice can be awesome!” Kira shot back.  “Don’t you remember Redwa-OW!”

The pencil and paper fell to the dirt as Kira clutched her arm.  “Kira?” Mike asked. “Are you-AH!”

Mike then doubled over.  His body itched all over, the air being forced out of him.  It felt partly like his lungs were being squeezed but also that they were collapsing of their own volition.  And he started feeling… warm… all over. Despite his shortness of breath, he could also feel his heart start racing.

He eventually started to drift back into full consciousness as his vision returned.  He staggered on his feet, but he managed to steady himself on his hands and knees. The ground felt courser than he was used to for some reason, and the way everything smelled was hard to describe.  It was like everything was turned up to eleven, but still perfectly clear. Mike began to realize that something very strange was happening, and he looked down.

His hands had changed.  His fingers were skinnier, and they ended in claws.  As he followed them up his arms, a layer of brown hair started.  Mike quickly noticed that it was all over him. A theory forming in his mind, Mike put his paws to his face.  Sure enough, it was a snout, he’d wager anything it was just like the one on a mouse. But did that mean…

A wuff of hot air made him freeze, and he slowly turned around.  Standing behind him was a massive orange wolf. Even by mouse standards, the wolf seemed enormous.  Probably even bigger than a human. And if Mike had turned into a mouse, then Kira… Mike tried to scamper away.

He was stopped by a paw slamming down on him.  The air rushed out of his lungs, leaving his body stiff.  Mike tried to suck in a breath, but his lungs weren’t allowed to expand.  Though he tried to squirm and find a little room, the paw was way too big.  He couldn’t move.

Kira’s nose coming down made him pause.  His fur wiggled back and forth as she sniffed at him.  It kind of tickled, what little he could focus on as his vision started to tunnel.  Mike put all the effort he had into his next squirm, but it was hopelessly uncoordinated.  Finally, he lunged out with a blind bite. Kira jerked back.

And suddenly it was over.  In the blink of an eye, Kira had shot down to six feet and Mike exploded out to five.  Fur disappeared, clothing reappeared, and muzzles melted back into faces. At last, both were human again.

As Mike wheezed, he noticed that Kira was frozen, a strange expression on her face.  He couldn’t focus his eyes enough to read it, but her breathing seemed a little fast, and she seemed to wobble on her hands and knees.  As the black spots in his vision faded away, he could pick up more detail. Her eyes were wide and her mouth had dropped open. She appeared to be… panting?

After a few moments, Kira shook her head, and she stiffened up a little.  “Ughhh,” she moaned, one hand going to rub her face. “Mike?” She looked up.  “Mike, what happened?”

Mike could feel his face contracting.  “You…” He started, but he was still catching his breath.  “...you don’t… remember?”

Kira’s mouth opened.  Then she stopped herself.  For a handful of seconds, her eyes widened, her jaw dropped open.  She looked up at Mike. “Did I hurt you?” she asked.

It took Mike a few moments to reply.  He scanned Kira’s face, trying to weigh his answer and calm his heart.  He eventually shook his head. “No,” he said. “I was just winded a little.  I’ll be fine. How’re you?”

Kira took in a breath as she brought herself to a kneel.  “Weird,” she said. “I felt kinda’ fuzzy. Like… like a part of me was missing.”  Kira sat down. Putting her hands to her head, she groaned.

Mike stared at her for a moment, but then he turned to her sketchbook.  “Look.” He reached over and picked up the sketchbook, flipping it so Kira could see.  Covering the picture was a muddy pawprint. “I’ll bet that undid the magic,” Mike remarked.

For several long seconds, Kira stared at the picture.  Then she crawled over to her art supplies. She picked up her pencil, staring at it.  Nothing was said. Instead, she just stared at Mike, who stared back at her. The question hung between them unasked.

**<\*>**

A week later, Kira walked into Mike’s kitchen.  Mike looked up from his laptop, his gaze lingering on her face.  “Hey,” he said. “You got anything?”

Kira shook her head.  “Dad didn’t know anything,” she said.  “He found the pack at a flea market and the vendor said he just found them on his shelf one day.”  Kira plopped down into a chair. “Any luck online?”

“None.”  Mike closed his laptop.  “I’ve been asking around and no-one’s heard anything about a magic pencil outside of the Warehouse 13 wiki.”  He leaned back in his chair. “And I don’t think that reflects actual magical artifacts.”

“Maybe it did,” Kira said.  “Or maybe it inspired one that did.  What did it say?”

Mike was already shaking his head as he started to answer.  “Walt Disney’s paintbrush and Edgar Allen Poe’s pen, neither of which did this.”

Kira smacked her forehead.  “It doesn’t make any sense!”  She then pulled the pencil out of her pocket.  “Something like this, you’d think somebody would’ve mentioned it.”

In response, Mike nodded.  “Yeah.” He paused for a moment, then leaned over to take a closer look at the pencil.  “I wonder what else it can do.”

Kira turned back to Mike, a smile starting to spread over her face.  “You just want to be a mouse again,” she told him.

Mike shook his hands.  “Oh, no,” he said. “No more mice.  I want to be something more impressive this time.”

Putting a hand over her mouth and ignoring a glare from Mike, Kira pulled her sketchbook out of her bag.  “OK,” she said. “No mice.” She set the book on the table. “So, what’s your fursona?”

Mike was just about to open his mouth when his brain caught up with him.  “I never really decided,” he said. “So I was thinking-”

Clapping her hands together, Kira turned to face him.  “It’s a mouse, isn’t it?” she teased.

“No.”  Mike sat down, now frowning.  Then he laid his chin in his palm, his elbow on the table.  It took him a few breaths to continue. “It’s a… ferret.”

That made Kira stop smirking, instead just smiling as she nodded.  “Ferret, huh?” she asked. Then she turned back to the sketchpad. “Ferrets can be badass, she said.  “Downright vicious too.”

“Get it off your chest,” Mike told her.

“And so, so cute!”  Kira continued to sketch out a long sinewy body as Mike hid his face in his hands.  “I take it Redwall gave you the idea?”

Mike nodded.  “Killconey,” he said.  “The smart guy. I was sad when he died.”  He turned to Kira. “What about you? Balto?”

Kira shrugged.  “I don’t really remember,” she replied as she rounded off an ear.  “I don’t think I ever got around to seeing that. I probably…” Kira paused for a moment, tapping the pencil against her lip.  “...yeah, probably the wargs from the animated Hobbit. I used to watch that all the time as a kid. Here you go.”

Kira presented the drawing.  Sure enough, it was a weasel.  Mike smiled. The weasel seemed to be dressed in a chain shirt and holding a sharp pike.  “Nice,” he said.

A few seconds passed.  Nothing happened. Mike and Kira looked down at the paper.  The drawing of the ferret was still there, unblocked. “You sure you did it right?” Mike asked.

“Pretty sure,” Kira told him.  She put the pencil back to the paper.  “Hang on.”

Mike opened his mouth to protest as Kira scratched out the ferret, but he ultimately didn’t make a sound.  Instead, Kira just turned the paper over and started drawing again on a fresh piece of paper. A few seconds later, Mike’s eyes widened.  “Kira!”

Too late, the mouse was finished.  The process of transformation was just as painful as it was before, though Mike had just enough time to exhale a little.  It did little good, and he almost passed out as his hands became paws. A few moments later, though, he managed to lift himself up off of the floor.

Right at that moment, a paw came down on top of him.  Once again, he was squished to the point where he couldn’t quite breathe.  Once again, he couldn’t struggle his way free. That didn’t stop Mike from struggling until his vision started to tunnel, trying to nip at Kira’s paw.

And then he felt something hot and humid.  The pressure from Kira’s paw lightened up and Mike turned himself around.  She’d put her nose to her paw. Cold air rushed over him as Kira sniffed him over for a few seconds.  Then her mouth opened.

That kicked Mike out of his frozen state.  As Kira’s paw slowly tried to sweep him forward, Mike bolted to the side.  Kira tried to follow, but she was unable to maneuver between the table and the wall.  Mike was safe. At least for a few moments. He knew he had to vandalize the drawing, which meant getting up to the table.

Mike’s bolted to the other side of the table, eyes on one of the chairs.  Nothing was going through his head, just staying away from Kira while she was trying to eat him.  He leapt and managed to get his claws into a chair leg. Before Mike could scurry up to the seat, though, Kira came barging through, knocking over the table.

Mike barely jumped off the chair before Kira’s head slammed into it.  It gave Mike a brief surge of relief to see Kira stuck under the chair.  As she tried to free her head, he turned around. There! The notepad was in easy reach.  He sprinted over and leapt onto it.

As soon as his paws made contact, he started to claw at the paper.  It did nothing. Panicking, Mike looked up. Kira was still stuck in the chair, smashing it against the wall.  He didn’t have a lot of time. Thus, he turned back to the drawing and started to chew. He tried spitting to the side, but a loud cracking noise drove him to swallow the mulch instead.  His stomach lurched, but another crack drove him on. Then something splintered....

And then he zipped back to full size.  Without wasting a beat, he leapt back, spinning in midair.  Kira was on her hands and knees, uninjured, but very, very dazed.  Mike scowled. “WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!” he snapped.

Kira didn’t respond.  Thus, Mike stomped forward and grabbed the collar of her shirt.  “Hey, wake up!”

After a few seconds of shaking, Kira’s eyes finally focused.  “Eh. Huh?” She tried to pull back from Mike, her eyes widening.  Mike refused to let go. “Mike, what happened?”

Mike stared at Kira.  “What happened?” he asked.  He was about to start shouting when a thought caught up with him, and his fury abated a bit.  “You don’t remember?”

“Remember what?” Kira asked.  She took a brief look around, muscles freezing as she did.  “Last I remember, I drew you as a ferret…”

Her eyes fell towards the sketchpad.  It was ruined, but enough of the last picture remained to tell what it was: a copy of the sketch in the wilderness.  Kira’s hands flew to her mouth. “I don’t remember drawing that.”

Mike soon located the pencil and picked it up.  “How many more pencils do you have?” he asked Kira.

He could see Kira pale.  “A whole pack,” she squeaked.  “At least eighteen.”

\*SNAP\*

Mike got up, broken pencil in one hand.  “We’d better get rid of the others,” he said.  Swiftly, he stalked over to the sink and dropped the wooden part of the pencil into the garbage disposal and switched it on.  “I’ll get the grill ready. You-”

“Mike?”  Kira grabbed onto his sleeve.  “I… can I stay here tonight?”

Mike turned to face Kira.  She was still pale and stiff, and her lips were almost pinched shut.  Mike’s resolve slacked, but a thought perked it up again. “What about your roommate?” he asked.

“I don’t have one, remember?”

Mike thought for a moment before snapping his fingers.  “Oh, yeah. Um, OK. We can go over together first thing tomorrow.”

Kira hugged him.  “Thank you,” Kira almost whimpered.

Mike was surprised, but he almost instantly returned the hug.  “Don’t mention it” he said. A moment later, his stomach rumbled, and he turned his head to the side to let out a small burp.  “Sorry,” he said, smiling a little. “Paper doesn’t agree with me.”

It took five minutes of hugging after that for Kira to stop crying.  He let her have his bed while he lay on the couch.

**<\*>**

It was midnight when Mike heard something he couldn’t place.  Very slowly, he lifted himself up and grabbed the ink bottle on the floor next to his couch.  As he passed his table, he stopped, then grabbed onto a chair leg. Just in case. He passed through the kitchen and carefully pushed the bedroom door open.

There was a shape on the floor next to the bed.  Mike immediately switched the lights on, improvised club at the ready.  To his relief, it was just Kira, still in human shape. “Kira?” he asked.

Instantly, Kira got up, pushing herself up onto her hands and knees and spinning around.  As soon as she saw Mike, she relaxed. “Mike,” she said. “What’s going on?”

Mike’s eyebrow raised for a moment.  Then it fell. His mouth, though, remained a thin grim line.  “You fell out of bed,” he said. “I’m guessing the other pencils are screwing with you.”  He walked over to Kira, helping her up. “How do you feel?”

Kira accepted the hand, her own hands almost hooking themselves into him as she stood up and hugged him.  Mike wrapped his arms around her instantly. “You want a glass of water?” he asked.

For a few moments, Kira was silent.  Mike was about to repeat his offer when he felt Kira nod.  “Yeah,” she almost breathed. “Milk would be better.”

Mike patted Kira on the back.  “I’ve got milk,” he said. “And chocolate mix.  Come on.” He kept his arm around Kira as he walked her back into the kitchen, stopping to pull the milk gallon out of the fridge and a glass out of the cupboard.  “Here.” He disentangled himself in order to hand Kira both before stepping over to the pantry. “We’ll beat this,” he said, fishing out the box he wanted. “Just you wait.”

As he turned back to the table, the bottom dropped out of his stomach.  The milk and the glass had been set down. Instead, Kira had a pencil in her hand and a sheet of paper.  By the time Mike was halfway back, chocolate milk mix fallen to the floor, Kira was drawing his whiskers.

And then Mike felt himself shrinking again.  Too late to scream for help, his vocal cords had changed into a mouse’s and too late to run, he’d shrunk down.  He was reduced to a mouse, and Kira had caught him. He opened his mouth to bite, but she’d grabbed the glass and upturned it over him.  He was trapped.

Kira leaned down.  She was panting heavily, and her breath fogged up the glass.  No words were said, but a glimpse of her eyes told Mike enough.  They were orange. They were orange, and they were hungry. And Kira was licking her lips as she put pencil to paper.

A few moments later, she’d grown back to ten feet, and she was drooling.  Mike leapt against the wall of the glass, but it was thick and heavy. It didn’t tip over.  For him at least. Once Kira leaned down, her paw easily knocked it over. Mike tried to break for the pantry, but her muzzle closed around him in an instant.

If he thought her paw was uncomfortable, that was nothing compared to her jaws.  They were even stronger, and they ended in points. Mike was free to struggle, but he had no air.  Soon, the corners of his vision were fading into darkness, and his struggles were turning into wild flails.

At last, though, the pressure let up.  Mike sucked in a breath, then started to cough out the spit he’d sucked in as well.  All too soon, he was being lifted up and pressed into the roof of Kira’s mouth. He still hadn’t replaced the air in his lungs, so his head still swam and his vision darkened.

He finally stopped coughing.  As his vision cleared, he could feel the heat all around him, and the saliva coating him.  The tongue kept him in place, and it rubbed him all over. The pressure helped him focus a little.  And then he remembered what normally happened to food. He tried to struggle, but the tongue pressed him upwards once more.

\*GULP!\*

Mike suddenly felt himself squeezed from all sides.  Spit trickled down all past him as he scrambled to grab a hold of something.  Alas for him, there was nothing. His paw just slipped downwards, and his body went to follow it.

The pressure released him, and Mike fell free for a moment.  It was too dark to see anything; all he could perceive was a strong, sour odor.  Soon he fell into bitter fluid that burned his nose. He tried to cover his nose, but the offending liquid still seeped through his claws.

As soon as his mind collected itself, Mike tried to scramble to the side of the stomach.  He remembered how sharp his teeth were, and they were his best chance of escaping. Finally, he reached the stomach wall.  He grabbed on with his paws, then sank his teeth in!

He was shaken free as the stomach lurched around him.  Mike spared a brief moment to mentally celebrate before swimming back.  He opened his mouth to latch on again, stronger this time. Before he could, though, a wave of acid crashed into him, flooding his mouth.  He sputtered it out, but the tingling remained in his mouth. Desperate, he bit down again, even stronger!

This time he held on, but the second time after, he wasn’t so lucky.  He still swam back and tried again. And again. And again. As time went on, though, his whole body started to not just tingle, but itch.  It soon felt like teeth were piercing him all over. All Mike could do was try to give as good as he was getting, and last as long as he could...

**<\*>**

Kira paid no mind to Mike for the rest of the night.  For some reason her wolf mind couldn’t fathom, he was a lot more filling than he looked.  So, she spent the rest of the night roaming around the city. Occasionally she’d leap down and scare people out of alleyways, but she spent most of her time running along the rooftops.  All the while her stomach churned under her fur.

Finally, the sun rose, and Kira returned to her dorm.  The drawing was scratched up and Kira dwindled back into a human.  She collapsed onto her bed, the haze overpowering her. Instantly, she dropped off to sleep.

She was woken a few hours later by her phone beeping.  Still in a bleary haze, Kira rolled out of bed and stood up.  No memory came to her as she shambled out the door, satchel in hand.  By the time she’d gotten to her building, her mind was still only barely firing, and she’d only managed to get her eyes all the way open as graphic novels started.

It was a long time before she realized that Max wasn’t there.  She frowned as she checked the room. He hadn’t taken another seat.  He just hadn’t shown up. Her heart sank. She didn’t mean to… what? Her memory still felt patchwork.  She knew she’d seen him last night, but-ow! Why did her stomach hurt?

Kira’s eyes widened, and she didn’t even bother with an excuse as she bolted out the door.

A few moments later, Kira’d made it into the bathroom, and the next second after that, she was at the sink.  She tried to bend over. No good, the pain just spiked. Small tears coming out of her eyes, Kira put her hand up to her mouth.  “Sorry,” she breathed. Then her stomach heaved, trying to bring something up.

A minute later, nothing, and the pain was getting to be too much to continue.  Sliding to her knees, she realized it was probably too late. He was probably in her intestines now.  Her much smaller, human intestines. “Dammit, Mike,” she hissed. “Why’d you have to be so fat?”

Her outburst distracted her.  Had she really just said that?  Her fingers slipped into her pocket, closing around the pencil.  She had to get rid of it. And the others. But first, she had to go to the hospital!  Save Mike!

She’d only gotten to her feet when she stopped.  The doctors probably wouldn’t look kindly on her even eating a mouse, much less one that had been human originally.  And then there’s how they’d react to her ‘I turned into a wolf’ story. The blockage stabbed at her again. Besides, Mike was probably dead already.  And he hurt so much…

She fell to her knees as she pulled the pencil out of her pocket, almost banging her head on the sink.  Her pad was back in the classroom, but no matter. It marked the underside of the sink just fine. In a handful of moments, the scrawled wolf was complete.  As she grew, her changing vocal chords let out a whine of relief. The stabbing pain faded to a soft throbbing, and then to a pleasant relief.

The moment the door opened, the wolf pushed her way out, barrelling past whoever was in the hallway.  She didn’t care. She just pushed her way through the doors and outside to freedom.

For several hours, Kira hid herself in a nearby grove of trees.  Pacing back and forth, the mouse somewhere in her intestines was all she could think of.  She couldn’t even feel him, and that terrified her. So she waited.

Finally, twenty minutes after sundown, she felt something stirring in her colon.  She knew it was him. Thus, she squatted down, her haunches right above the grass.  And she pushed.

There wasn’t much effort.  Just a little pressure that swiftly passed out of her.  In an instant, she turned around. Laying in the grass was Mike.  His fur was burned off, his skin red and cracked, his eyes thankfully closed.  Kira bowed her head.

Then she saw movement.  Kira’s eyes widened. Even after everything, Mike was still breathing.  It was shallow, though, and Kira’s ears could barely pick up the sound of breathing.

Kira quickly opened her mouth, then remembered she wasn’t able to make any kind of words.  So she lifted her paw up and, gently as she could, laid it down on Mike’s body. It felt too soft; too limp. She whined a little, but Mike didn’t move.  He didn’t even attempt to struggle. Her heart sank.

For several seconds, she stood over Mike, her jaw dropping open.  Then she closed her eyes and she pressed her paw down. He still didn’t move, even as she shifted more of her weight onto him.  Very barely, she could feel his breathing stop under the weight of her paw. Still, though, she stood. She wanted to be sure.

Kira lifted her paw a minute later.  Mike had stopped moving. She waited for a few moments, but nothing happened.  No miraculous recovery, not even a transformation back into being human. Mike was dead, and not even human.  Kira dug a quick grave and pushed Mike into it before piling the dirt back on top.

And then she took off into the night.  No-one would ever see her again.