

“Pip?” Penny checked the kitchen. She checked in the pantry. The oven. Even the toaster. No Pip.

“Pip?” She checked the bedroom. Through the sea of naughty negligee she crawled to no avail of her avian master. Beneath the springy mattress there wasn’t a feather. Red eyes glistened like garnets.

“Pip?” Her voice rang out into the closet. It echoed into the bathroom. It rippled across the toilet basin. It was followed by a low hiss.

“Flakka... where are you.....” The fox reformed into her natural state. Bones popped into place, and she rolled her head and raised her nose. Curved claws etched at the door frame. She could smell the bird. Her nose stretched to the scent and she followed it.

Down the spiral stairs she rocked. A tickling at the back of her throat brought a quickening to her step. The foyer. Turning the corner, Penny’s neck stretched and her head rocked side to side. She scanned rigidly like a foxheaded CCTV camera.

Pipit’s scent was strongest here, but once more there was no harpy. The foxwoman growled in frustration, reforming once more to her natural state. Pressing to the front door, a barrier she was denied ever crossing alone, the fox-woman gazed through the peephole. Outside, in the afternoon light, she could see an elderly tiger watering the garden. Penny’s stomach rumbled.

She was well fed. As well fed as an insatiable monster could be kept. And yet there was something delectable about the way the setting light framed the man’s wide-brimmed hat. His fur, though faded, still held vibrancy. Penny drooled, her form smooshing against the door, spreading out like a black ooze. Her throat tickled with hunger. She could feel the edges of the barrier separating her and the outside world.

“Penny?”

Pipit’s voice rang out behind the shapeshifter and the fox woman sprang back into her natural state. She gazed at her master with a mischievous glint in her red eye. “Yes, Flakka?”

“Are you hungry?” A playful smirk rested upon Pip’s cinnamon face.

“Yes, Flakka!” Penny’s tail wagged rapidly.

“Come downstairs to the basement. I have a surprise.”

Penny smirked. “Food?”

Pipit smiled and rolled her shoulders. "Maybe."