



Holidays are for Suckers (Tinsel and Tentacles 2.0)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Ebenezer Spooge is an adult film star who specializes in holiday films. Until today, that is. Today, hes determined that his life will take a new and abstinent turn. After a terrible fight with his director, he swears to give it all up, live a clean, boring life, and never need to worry about fluffers, lubricant, or multiple takes again.

Gorg is an alien from a galaxy far away who crash lands on our little blue planet right in Ebenezers backyard. Although Ebenezer refuses to believe Gorg is real, and that everything he sees is an illusion or delusion, Gorg refuses to give up. Gorg is entranced by the holidays and by the lithe little human who hates them and everything associated with them and is determined to bring joy back into Ebenezers life.

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“Lights! Camera! Action!”

The director’s voice called out the words synonymous with the start of filming. The clapboard snapped, and silence descended on the set as the actors began to play out their scene.

In it, a particularly buff Santa, played by Ebenezer Splooge, had just come to town on Christmas Eve and was giving a very good college boy his Christmas present — a holly jolly blow job in front of the Christmas tree.

Ebenezer, the stunning brunette, blue-eyed, chisel-featured star — he knew what he looked like, worked hard at it, and was justifiably proud of it — of twenty-five holiday-themed movies, including big-budget hits like *Santa Claus is Cumming to Town*, and *Jingle Bell Cock*, the winner of sixteen — sixteen! — Golden Dick Awards for Best Actor, (which he kept lined up on his mantel like a gay conga line), and the most sought-after gay porn star in the business was trying to work.

Trying being the operative word in that sentence.

Cameras, lights, and booms encircled him. The director sat next to the bed barking orders he expected to be followed. The script girl stood nearby with a copy of the screenplay in case someone needed to be thrown a line, of which there were at total of ten in the entire production. At least a dozen people were watching the action, most in total boredom because they’d seen it all a million times before in a million variations, and through it all, Ebenezer tried his damndest to give a blowjob to an actor who was not even remotely in the moment.

He sucked and sucked, rolled his tongue over the head of a long cock, teased at the slit, jerked it hard and fast, slow and easy, played with a pair of hairy balls that could choke a hippopotamus, used every damned trick he'd learned over his long career, and...nothing. The cock in question remained as floppy as a dead fish. Take after take after take.

He finally glanced up at his co-star and was almost startled into speechlessness. Almost.

“Stop! Cut! Allan!” he shouted to the director. “Allan! Do you see this? Do you see what I have to put up with? Look at what he’s doing while I’m trying to work. He’s eating M&Ms and reading a fucking comic book! Why do they keep hiring these straight actors for gay porn films? That old ‘a mouth is a mouth, and a hole is a hole’ bullshit is wearing thin.”

“Come with me, and we’ll have a talk, Ebbie,” Allan said. “Fluffer! Fluffer!”

A young man who looked as if he was just realizing he may have made a very grave error when choosing which college internship to take ran up. “Yes, Mr. Gray?”

“Get that dick stiff for the next shot.”

“But, Mr. Gray, he doesn’t really want to cooperate. You saw how Mr. Splooge—”

Allen sniffed and barked. “I don’t care if you have to tie it to a fucking popsicle stick or encase it in cement to get it to stand up, just do it!”

An assistant threw a silk robe over Ebenezer’s shoulders, which he quickly slipped on and tied with the belt. It was chilly on set once you got out from under the heat of the lights.

Ebenezer started right in. “Allen, we must do something about these co-stars you keep hiring! Is it the money? Does the budget not allow for hiring top-level gay actors?”

Allen shook his head. “It’s not that. It’s not the money.” He spread his hands. “You need to listen to me—”

“Then what is it? There are just as many gorgeous, well-hung gay actors as straight ones. Why are you not hiring them?” Ebenezer brushed a piece of lint from his arm. “The last three actors you hired to play opposite me were terrible! This latest one is the worst! Where did you find him? Starbucks?”

“Look, we can dub another guy’s cock for the blowjob scene. You won’t have to suck him again. But you need to understand that the only one holding up the production is you , Ebbie. You need to come down off that high horse you’re riding and remember your roots. Stop being so goddamn condescending. You do remember how it was before you got here, don’t you? Back when you were waiting tables and giving blow jobs in the alley behind the gay bar?”

Ebenezer was fully aware that everyone on set was staring at him and chose to ignore them all. He also remembered those dark days, slaving long hours slinging burgers and drinks and sucking strangers for rent money. They were the days he’d tried hard to forget, and it pissed him off that Allen had the balls to throw them in his face.

Allen took his arm and hissed a sharp whisper in his ear. “I took you away from all that, Ebbie. I made you the star you are today. It’s not the money and it’s not your co-stars! It’s you , Ebbie. Nobody wants to work with you anymore. Finding anyone in the Adult Performance Artists Guild to drop trou for you is nearly impossible!”

“What?” Ebenezer pulled his arm away. He spun to face Allen, getting up close to Allen’s face. “That’s utterly ridiculous. I’m a great actor. I’ve won more Golden

Dicks than I can count! If anyone's made anyone, I've made you ! Your production company was teetering on bankruptcy when you hired me. My movies brought you to the top of the field." He began to pace, his arms clasped behind his back. "I'm nothing if not the ultimate professional. Perhaps they're intimidated by me. After all," Ebenezer lifted his nose in the air, "I am a star."

"What you are is a royal pain in the ass, and not the good kind that makes us money." Allen grabbed Ebenezer's arm again and pulled him out of the bedroom set and into the airplane hangar they'd rented for space. In addition to the bedroom, there was a kitchen set, and a living room set, complete with a Christmas tree, a chimney, a recently shed Santa costume, and a shower set. He dragged Ebenezer until they were far enough away not to be overheard. At least, not easily.

Allen pointed a finger at Ebenezer. "You need to get hold of your ego, Ebbie. It's ruining your career, and you don't even see it!" He pushed Ebenezer away from him. "You think the problem is with everyone else — poor actors, straight actors, inept technicians, bad scripts, but it's not. The problem is you ."

"You're out of your mind!" Ebenezer yelled. "I am the only thing keeping this under-budget, untalented bunch of ingrates in business!" He stormed back onto the set with Allen trailing behind him. "Who says I'm hard to work with? Was it you, Norbert?" He pointed at the soundman. "No?" He turned on the script girl. "How about you, Melanie? Come on, speak up!" He turned to his leading man, who was still being serviced by the fluffer. "And you, George? Is that your name? Pete? Harry? I can't keep track. Can you take your nose out of that fucking comic book long enough to look at me?" He spun around and faced Allen again. "See? Nobody has a problem with me. It's this company! This set! Look at it! Motel Hell is what it is, not a bedroom. Those paintings on the wall...where did you get them from? Motel Six?"

He grabbed a corner of the bed sheet and pulled it off along with the comforter. "And these sheets? Thrift store clearance aisle?" He flung them into the corner of the set.

The fluffer came up for air. "I don't think you're difficult to work with, Mr. Splooge."

Ebenezer glared at him. "Nobody asked you, kid."

"Look, keep your head down and keep sucking, Fluffy. I don't care if you have to suck the skin off the damn thing, just get it done!" Allen cried. "And you, Gerald!"

The disinterested actor finally looked up from his copy of Superman Unchained and cocked an eyebrow. "Yeah?"

"Put the damn book down and concentrate! I need a hard-on right now !" Allen bellowed.

Meanwhile, Ebenezer was off on a rant, tearing around the set, fully out of control. "I'll bet nobody treats Ryan Reynolds or Hugh Jackman this way! Nobody pulls Denzel Washington out of the room like a bad schoolboy to take a lecture!" He picked up a plaster cast of some Greek sculpture and threw it, smashing it against the wall dividing the bedroom set from the kitchen set and leaving a big hole between the two. "Nobody tells Brad Pitt the problems on set are all his fault!"

Ebenezer picked up another plaster doodad and flung it, narrowly missing Allen's head.

"Ebbie! Get yourself under control! Nobody said everything is your fault. We'll dub in another guy's cock, like I said. And the next scene is you fucking his ass, and we don't even need to show his face for that! Come on, Ebbie! Be reasonable!" Allen begged. "It's almost Christmas!"

"No. I will not be treated this way anymore! I quit! Do you hear me? I quit. This picture, this industry, and this fucking holiday! I retire!"

With that, Ebenezer spun around and marched off the set and out of the hangar, fully expecting someone to try to stop him.

But nobody did. Not that he noticed. At least, not yet.

The bite of a cold wind couldn't even break through his hot rage to remind Ebenezer that he was running outside with only a very short robe on — one that didn't cover his dangly bits.

He stalked through the parking lot, got to his car, and only then when he went to check his pockets for his keys, did he discover he didn't have any pockets or keys — and that he realized he was half naked.

It dawned on him then that he would need to skulk back to the set to retrieve his clothes, shoes, and keys. It was mortifying, but he'd show them how good an actor he was by walking in with his head held high and ignoring their whispers. Let them talk. Let them bitch. Allen would be on the phone before sunset, begging him to come back.

He hurried the way he'd come, much more aware of the wind's bite and his exposed bits and pieces on the way in than he'd been on the way out. That's what they got for filming in Canada, where it was less expensive than Hollywood — cold dicks and frozen asses. Although he admitted he'd done movies in the U.S. where the sets were so cheaply designed they probably could've filmed in the bathroom of a 7-Eleven and still got the same quality shot. The business was the business, he thought, no matter where they filmed. That's what you got with Allen's company — either better quality and a frozen cock, or terrible quality and possibly hepatitis.

Maybe he wouldn't even come back when Allen called. Maybe he'd go rogue. Get an agent. Make movies you could take your grandma to see.

Oh, no fucking way. I'm not starting all over again. I didn't work all these years to end up playing a corpse on CSI.

Taking a deep breath, he centered himself, then lifted his chin and stalked inside the hangar.

Where nobody noticed him at all.

They'd gotten the fluffer to take his place as Santa.

The fluffer .

And what was even worse, they'd traded out the straight guy they'd hired to play the college boy with one of the cameramen, who was having the time of his fucking life. His cock looked hard enough to split a coconut. The fluffer must've chosen the right internship after all.

The speed at which they'd replaced him gave him pause and doused his rage. In its place rose a thick plume of regret.

The scene was underway, and everyone's attention was on the action happening on the bed. Nobody even noticed he'd returned.

He quietly crept into his dressing room, feeling like an impostor, and gathered his things. He threw on a pair of pants, a T-shirt, his coat, and sneakers. He stuffed the rest into a duffle bag, which he carried out with him.

Refusing to look back at the set where the action was going hot and heavy, he walked steadily out of the hangar again and never looked back.

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Gorg found himself facing an important decision. One that would impact his entire trip, and possibly decide the future of his home movie screening parties.

He could turn right and head into the Andromeda Galaxy, or left, into the Milky Way Galaxy. There wasn't much to do in either Galaxy that he knew of, but he'd been to Andromeda a couple of times already on school trips. It was quite beautiful but so boring one would want to bash one's own head in with a mallet after a week or two.

He decided to go left to the Milky Way. He'd learned in his Astronomy 101 class back in his University days that it had one hundred billion planets and four hundred billion stars. That should keep him busy for a while.

And that was the sole purpose of this trip after all — to find something interesting to do. He was bored; bored with his job, bored with his planet, his friends, his family, and his life in general. Nothing ever varied. One day was as dull as the one before it and the promise of the one after was just as tedious.

Every day when the three suns rose in the morning, he'd get up out of his bed, eat breakfast — if he was fast enough and interested enough to catch it — shower, dress, and go to work at his job where he would stare at a screen all day looking for anomalies in numbers that were never there. He'd never caught an error, not once in all the moon cycles he'd worked there. The data entry people were too damn efficient, in his opinion. Would it kill them to throw him a bone once in a while and make a mistake?

But they never did, and life went on with its boring parade of monotony. Hence why he decided to go on this little trip to a different galaxy instead of taking part in his

family's usual vacation trek to the shores of the Great Purple Inland Sea.

He finally decided his first stop would be the Heliocentric Solar System with its nine pretty planets and bright sun. The third planet from the sun was his first objective — he'd never been there but had heard a rumor that there was intelligent life on it. Octopi, they were called. The rumor said they lived underwater in great seas, which would be sort of a drag because Gorg could only hold his breath for twenty minutes or so before needing oxygen again, and really, how much meaningful conversation could one have in twenty minutes?

But any creature with as many tentacles as an octopus might have had the forethought to create some sort of tourist stop where he could get informational brochures on the different beasts that inhabited their world.

They might even have a zoo. That would be awesome. While he disliked the idea of creatures being kept in cages, he thought having them all in one place would be ever so much easier than wandering all over the Earth, seeking them out one by one. Earth wasn't big by any means, but it was still large enough to make a self-conducted tour problematic.

He liked convenience. It was...convenient.

Beyond brochures and zoos, he really wanted some excitement, something interesting to happen, to experience some sort of grand adventure, and to have a tale he could tell his grandchildren when they gathered around his tentacles on the holiday.

Not that Bloober Day—there was only one holiday on his planet, which in part contributed to its overall boring nature -- was exciting or even especially interesting. It was tiresome, like every other day, except there was more food and storytelling for groups of bored grandchildren.

Bloober Day commemorates the first time his people discovered that flatulence was a renewable source of energy.

That was it. The entire extent of the single global holiday was based on a fart.

B-O-R-I-N-G.

Gorg wondered if the Earthling octopi had holidays and decided they were too smart not to have them. They probably had lots. One for every one of their tentacles, at least. Maybe two.

He was startled by a loud thump that made his entire spacecraft shake. He'd been so wrapped up in his internal monologue that he'd completely missed the fact that he'd flown directly into the middle of a meteor storm.

Another thump followed the first, and he winced at the damage the meteors were doing to his craft. He'd worked so hard refurbishing it this past moon cycle, too. It was an antique and cherry. Or had been until it started being pummeled by meteors.

The fiery meteors with their long, sizzling tails were beautiful but deadly as they shot past his ship in a dazzling display.

He banked left, then right, threading his way through the meteor storm, trying to avoid the big ones while taking his lumps from the little ones.

Eventually, he flew out of the storm, and when he did, he spotted a pretty blue planet in the distance. Finally, something went right for him for a change! His destination was in sight, and he hadn't even had to consult the EGPS – the Extraterrestrial Global Positioning System. Sweet! His mother had insisted he install it because he hated to stop and ask for directions. He'd argued that he hadn't needed it, and now he proved it by finding Earth all by his little lonesome. Meteor shower notwithstanding.

He descended into the atmosphere, hoping the dings he'd taken from the meteor storm hadn't damaged his shield to the point where he'd burn up during entry, which would undoubtedly suck.

When he remained flame-free, he breathed a sigh of relief. That is until every light on his console lit up, and all the alarms went off.

He struggled with the controls, fighting them. They wanted him to plow into a mountain range while he tried to aim for a water landing. He almost won the fight but missed the water by the skin of his tentacle. He kept the nose up long enough to avoid a jetty of big black rocks, then crashed head-first into the sand lining the shore. The belly of the ship skidded and bounced along for quite a while before reaching a stop, its nose buried in a dune.

When he stopped shaking and started breathing again, he figured it was time to debark. Seeing the planet was, after all, why he was there. He could check his craft a little later to see how badly damaged it was. In his heart, he knew he was just stalling — he didn't want to know how terrible the destruction was and knew instinctively from the roughness of the impact that it would be devastating. He'd probably totaled it. Chances were good he'd need to phone home for a ride back, which would be mortifying. His dad had been after him for at least seven moon cycles to get a new craft, or at least an updated version of the one he had, but he'd insisted on keeping the antique. Now look where he was. Stranded on a distant planet with a busted craft you could barely get parts for anymore, and out of warranty.

His dad would say he told Gorg so, and worst of all, he would be right. His mother would wring her tentacles and wonder where she went wrong. Ugh.

Gorg decided he could worry about that later. For now, he had a planet to explore and Earthlings to meet.

He checked his instruments to ensure the air was breathable — no sense in taking a chance on his head exploding even if rumors said the atmosphere was perfectly sustainable — and was pleasantly surprised to find the air quality was very similar to that of his home planet. That was great news; his ship's portable breathing apparatus was as antiquated as the vessel — it was bulky and uncomfortable to wear all the time. Not to mention inconvenient, and he'd already made clear to himself how he felt about being inconvenienced.

He opened his hatch and popped his head out. When they called this the little blue planet, they weren't kidding, he thought. There was a blue ocean to his left, extending as far as he could see, all the way to the horizon, with waves lapping at the shore and a giant bowl of blue sky above him. There was a structure on his right, a residence of some kind, he presumed, and even that was painted blue. Perhaps the color blue was sacred on this planet. That would be an intriguing factoid to add to a tale. Not exciting, but interesting at least.

The rhythmic sound of the ocean was soothing, reminding him of the Great Purple Inland Sea back home on Jizm. For two moon phases every tri-season, he and his family would go to the shores of the great inland sea and camp there, contemplating its impressive purpleness.

Why? He had no idea. The inland sea was always purple. It was purple last tri-season, it was purple this tri-season and it would be purple next tri-season, of that, he had no doubt.

It was boring to sit there and stare at it, which was why he'd skipped the latest family gathering to go on this trip.

One of the smart things he did was intercept satellite broadcasts from Earth as soon as he entered the space close enough to do so. He couldn't understand the language yet, so he just watched the images. He was amazed that the octopi he'd thought were the

predominant species on the planet were, in fact, not. Humans were. Handsome little devils, they were, except for their sad lack of tentacles. Otherwise, some of them were quite attractive. The discovery made him excited to learn more, and he watched their satellite broadcasts with eager anticipation.

The first thing he did was learn their language. It was easy enough with his supply of LBMs—Language by Mouth—a pill that allowed one to absorb any oral language overnight. Just pop one before bedtime, leave a recording of the language you wished to learn playing all night, and by morning, you would instantly be able to communicate.

Of course, everyone used it to get through all the language courses at University, although the instructors considered it bad form.

Screw them. How many times would one need to speak Ancient Hizabethian, anyway?

In any case, he was glad to have a supply onboard his ship. He took one and, by the next morning, realized he could understand and speak a language called American English. He was quite grateful to the pill — he'd never have been able to muddle his way through learning it organically. Not with eight different sounds for the letters "ough" alone. Rough, couch, through, thorough, plough, cough, brought, and hiccough. It was mindboggling and quite unnecessary if one asked him, which no one had.

However, learning the language helped him decipher the satellite transmissions, and the first thing he learned was that in North America, it was what they called the "holiday season." Not just one holiday — an entire season of them! He saw images of white, frozen water called snowflakes, with many of them molded together to make snowmen, or swept into snow angels that looked like the imprint of big birds, small round ones called snowballs, snow forts that he doubted would survive a siege but

were interesting, nonetheless. There were beautiful, colorful, twinkling lights hanging on houses, trees decorated with lights, brightly colored balls, and strands of metallic silver. He learned that every time a bell rang, an angel — whatever that was — got its wings and so much more; it was overwhelming. One particular station broadcasted nothing but holiday documentaries. Hallmark, it was called. It seemed everyone fell in love during the holiday season, which made him believe it must be synonymous with mating season, what they called Renewal Season on his planet. It was all quite enlightening.

He quickly checked his charts and found he'd had the luck to crash land in California, a part of North America where people spoke American English. He wouldn't even need to waste another sleep cycle learning another language! California was on the coast, which explained the ocean and the sand.

He climbed out of the craft and was immediately disappointed to see there was no snow anywhere, just sand. He descended to the sandy dunes. The sand here was white and soft, but when he tasted it, he found it grainy and inedible, not at all like the white, sweet sand at the Great Purple Inland Sea back home. He spat it out and went to wash his mouth out with seawater.

And almost choked on the salt. Ugh! Someone had definitely over-seasoned this planet.

Where could he go to get something to wash the sand and salt out of his mouth? All he had left in the ship were emergency supplies and he'd be foolish to dip into those reserves yet. Especially if his father sent one of his egg-brothers for him, who would, no doubt, take his sweet ass time getting there.

The structure! The residence, if that's what it was. Maybe he'd find something in there. Despite what he'd learned watching the transmissions from Earth, he refused to believe anything with as many tentacles as octopi could not be masterful teachers. If

the octopi had coached humans to build it, surely they would have stocked it with supplies. The octopi would've instructed them on preparing for interstellar visitors.

He stood on his two legs and gathered his eight tentacles closer, holding them up in delicate swirls and curls. They were so sensitive, and the sand was prickly. He felt stupid not to have packed long tentacle sleeves for the trip. But he'd opted for short sleeves because it had been warm in the ship. Perhaps they sold long sleeves somewhere on the planet. He felt confident the octopi would've thought of telling humans to stock them.

He found a wooden walkway leading up from the beach to the grassier knoll on which the house was situated. The house was built on stilts, and a long flight of wooden stairs led up to a porch where a door awaited.

Gorg negotiated the stairs easily — they had them on Jizm, too — but paused at the door.

He didn't know the protocol.

Should he walk right in? Knock? Utter a secret password? Was there some sort of interpretive dance that needed to be done to gain entry?

He settled on walking in.

Maybe he should have chosen to do the interpretive dance because the Earthling inside screamed when he saw Gorg and fainted dead away.

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The first thing Ebenezer realized when his eyes blinked open was that he was staring at the kitchen ceiling. What was he doing on his back on the floor?

The second thing he noticed was the six-foot-two-inch creature standing over him. The creature looked semi-human, and quite handsome if it wasn't for the eight tentacles swirling around him. They were iridescent, which made them pretty, but...tentacles!

Ebenezer was dreaming. That was it. Except it wasn't. He was wide awake – he could feel the floor beneath him, and smell the tuna he'd left on the counter for lunch. Then he must've somehow slipped, fallen, cracked his skull, and was now having a hallucination or a flat-out delusion. That was the answer.

“I am Gorg,” the creature said in a deep voice that rumbled in Ebenezer's bones and tickled at his balls. He pronounced it “gorge” as if it were short for gorgeous, which Ebenezer had to admit was appropriate, except for the tentacles. They were a bit much, even for a hallucination.

He closed his eyes and tried to wish them away, leaving only the half-naked, buff, iridescent guy in his kitchen. That he could work with. But, when he opened his eyes, the tentacles were still there.

“Who are you?” Ebenezer asked. “What are you?”

The creature — because it couldn't rightfully be called a man with all those sinuous tentacles attached to it, nor could it be called an octopus, not with that handsome face, broad chest, and shapely legs, not to mention the thick cock it was displaying —

smiled widely. “Oh, I’m so glad you asked! As I said, I am Gorg,” he repeated. “From the planet Jizm in the Bloob Galaxy. Have you heard of it? It’s just past the JADES-GS-z14-0 galaxy. No? I suppose there’s no reason you should know it — your people haven’t mastered interplanetary travel yet, have they? I’m sure the octopi are working on it. Oh, I am so excited to meet an Earthling! You’re a human, yes? I can tell by your lack of tentacles.”

“O-octopi?” Out of everything the creature — Gorg — said, that was what Ebenezer’s mind latched on to.

“Yes, the masters of this galaxy. The great tentacled ones that live in your seas. I simply must meet one before I leave here.”

“So, you’re not an invasion force here to take over our planet?”

Gorg laughed. “No! Of course not. I’m a tourist. Tell me, do you have any products that might wash away the salt water from the ocean? There really should be signs warning of its sodium content.”

“Water. Um, sure.” Ebenezer wondered how long he would be having this particular delusion. Maybe he should pop a couple of Tylenol and call his shrink. But Gorg really did look thirsty, and what harm could it do to give one’s delusion a sip or two of water?

He got to his feet, feeling a bit sore but really, no worse for the wear, and went to the refrigerator. He opened it and took out a bottle of water. After twisting off the cap, he handed it to Gorg, careful not to brush against any of the slowly undulating tentacles.

Gorg examined the bottle, then tipped it to his lips. The moment he realized it was tasteless water was evident when he sucked it down so hard he collapsed the bottle. He handed the decimated bottle back to Ebenezer. “Thank you. I have learned it is

appropriate to say those words when someone does you a kindness here.”

“You’re welcome.” Ebenezer considered Gorg, looking him over, even walking around him to see the back. Gorg was...gorgeous if one ignored the tentacles. Which, Ebenezer had to admit, had a certain beauty and charm of their own. All Gorg wore was a short sleeved t-shirt, with eight extra sleeves for his tentacles. “Perhaps I should’ve been a writer instead of an actor if I could dream up someone as perfect as you.”

Gorg’s pearlescent skin pinked. “How kind of you to say, except you haven’t dreamed me up. I’m real, of course. Just as you are.” A tentacle reached up and gently touched Ebenezer’s face, tracing the contour of his jaw. “What is your name?”

Ebenezer expected the tentacle to be cold and slimy, but it was the opposite. It was warm and soft, and he actually leaned into the touch. Hey, it was his delusion. Who was to say he couldn’t explore and have fun with it?

“Um, Ebenezer. They call me Ebbie. Why are you here? You say you’re a tourist...shouldn’t you be at Disneyland or someplace?”

“I don’t know about this land of Disney, but I am anxious to see your land. I have picked up many Earth programs from satellite transmissions. It’s the holidays, you see. I’m fascinated by them.”

Now, that was something he never would have expected a delusion of his to say. “I hate the holidays!”

Gorg looked as if he’d been smacked in the face by one of his own tentacles. “W-what? How could you? Without holidays Earth would be boring. Earth would be...Jizm!”

“Earth would be just fine without them. Stupid snowmen and Santa Clauses and trees. Who needs them?” Ebenezer huffed. “I played Santa in umpteenth films and what did I get from it? Replaced by a fucking fluffer.”

“I...I don’t know what any of that means.”

“It doesn’t matter. You won’t find any holiday stuff around here. You’d better be someone else’s delusion if holidays are what you’re looking for.”

Gorg looked totally gob-smacked. “No, Ebbie, I cannot accept that. I saw all the snowmen and snowballs and Christmas trees and garland and tinsel and presents and...and...” Tears formed in his pretty, dark eyes. “Please, I’ve come so far, and my ship is ruined and I’m going to have to call my parents to come get me and—”

“You don’t understand! I’ve had nothing but trouble with the holidays since I was little! Nothing good ever came of them.” Ebenezer turned his back on his delusion. To his surprise, it didn’t go away.

“Do you know what I think? I think you’ve forgotten how lovely the holidays can be. When was the last time you celebrated them?” Gorg asked and sniffled. “I think you need to be reminded of how wonderful they can be. Even Bloober Day isn’t as bad as you say holidays are. It’s only boring, and I bet your holidays aren’t like that.”

“I have no idea what a Blooper Day is, but boring? You have no idea.”

“Bloo be r Day. Do you sit around farting at each other all day? That’s the extent of Bloober Day. That, and food and tales for the grandchildren.”

Ebenezer sighed. “Okay, you got me there. We never farted at each other. At least, not on purpose. Uncle Scottie sometimes let one rip, but I don’t think he meant it. Then again, Uncle Scottie was a piece of work.”

Gorg sighed softly. “You’ve just forgotten, Ebbie, I think. Come here. Let me help you remember. See that tree outside in your yard? It’s an evergreen, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, it is. So what?”

“Let’s go see it. It’s the kind people decorate for the holidays, isn’t it?”

“I don’t want to go down there—”

“I’ll carry you,” Gorg said and scooped Ebenezer up into his arms. Using his tentacles to hold on to the handrails, he descended the staircase to the sandy dune and around the side of the house where a single evergreen grew. He set Ebenezer down, then reached for a branch. “Here. Smell it. Does it smell like the holidays?”

Ebenezer was stunned. How the hell did a delusion just carry him outside and down the stairs to the tree? And why did he suddenly smell pine? He’d passed under this tree a million times and never smelled the scent of pine. “I-I...”

“You do, don’t you? I do, too. I can understand why people like this tree. It smells so good, so...homey. I like it. I know!” Gorg cried happily. “You just need a new memory to associate with it, so you’ll like it, too.”

He held Ebenezer’s back to his chest, his arm crossed over Ebenezer’s body. Dipping his head, he nibbled at Ebenezer’s throat. “Does that feel good? We like this on our planet. Or most of us do. Some of us favor no touching at all, and others prefer cuddling.”

“I...Oh, fuck it. I may actually enjoy having a delusion. Yes. I like it.” Ebenezer tipped his head to give Gorg better access.

Gorg’s hand smoothed over the bulge at Ebenezer’s crotch, fingers gently probing.

“Is there a way in?” Gorg asked. “A way for me to feel you without this fabric in the way?”

Ebenezer unzipped his jeans, and pushed them down past his hips, freeing his cock, which was swiftly filling.

Gorg’s fingers wrapped around it as he continued to nip and tongue Ebenezer’s neck. He gently sucked Ebenezer’s earlobe into his mouth as his hand worked Ebenezer’s cock.

Ebenezer began to moan, to rub his ass against Gorg’s body, feeling a thick, hard cock push back.

Damn, when he has a delusion, he goes all the way! Hard fucking body, handsome, thick, dark hair, the deepest, darkest eyes Ebenezer had ever seen, and fingers that were working his cock like a maestro.

He came, tipping his head down to watch his come arc in spurts to the ground. His orgasm was swift, but sharp, exploding within him like a fireball.

He felt so limp and drained afterward that he sagged, grateful Gorg’s arms kept him upright. “Oh, fuck! That was...that was amazing.”

“Good! Now you have a good memory to associate with a Christmas tree.” Gorg chuckled happily. “Can you walk, or shall I carry you upstairs?”

“No, I can walk and why are you still here? I figured I dreamed you up because I needed to get off, but now that I have, shouldn’t you disappear?” Ebenezer frowned at Gorg. He pulled up his pants and tucked himself away.

Gorg grinned. “You are weird, but in a good way. I am not imaginary! I’m real.” He

took Ebenezer's hand and placed it on his face. "See? Flesh and blood. Mostly."

Ebenezer shook his head. "It's impossible. You're impossible. Unless you're in my head, you're absolutely, positively inconceivable. There's no such thing as aliens!"

Gorg shrugged. "And yet here I am. By the way, you're the alien. And this is an alien planet. Just pointing that out to you."

Ebenezer climbed the stairs, aware that Gorg was following him but hoping it was just his imagination. It would be so much easier if he were delusional. Then he could eat an edible, take some meds, or check into a spa for a rest, and then get on with his life.

But if this thing, this person, this alien was real...

Then he'd need to consider his options.

He could call the police and turn him in. That would probably be the right thing to do. The patriotic thing.

Or...

He could make the rounds of daytime television appearances and do the nighttime show circuit with Kimmel and Fallon. Maybe get his own HBO special or a reality show. That would be sweet. Good money and he wouldn't need a fucking fluffer, either.

Maybe having his own honest-to-Christ alien might not be so bad after all.

Except for this holiday obsession it had. That had to go.

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“I’ll be happy to show you around. We can be a team — I can get you gigs on all the daytime and late-night shows. The paparazzi will go nuts over you. There may even be a television special in the future. A feature film. Merchandising! Action figures, board games... The sky is the limit, but you need to let go of this holiday obsession you have first.”

“Oh no, that is most unacceptable,” Gorg said. “I didn’t fly halfway across the Universe to experience the holidays and end up with the one human who detests them!”

“Then hop back in your spaceship and go find someone else!” Ebenezer cried.

“I can’t. I’ve told you already — my ship was destroyed on entry into your atmosphere. I’m stuck here, and I’m determined to see the holidays.”

“Then find another tour guide.”

“I don’t want another tour guide. I want you.”

“Well, you don’t have me. I don’t want anything to do with the holidays, not anymore.”

“But why? What has happened to destroy your love of them? Surely, you liked them once upon a time?”

Ebenezer started to lie but it stuck in his throat. He shook his head and turned away.

“It started a long time ago. Many years back, when I was a child. I lost my faith in all

the magic of the holidays back then, and never found it again.”

In a soft voice, Gorg asked, “Tell me about it, Ebbie. Tell me what hurt you so badly.”

“I haven’t spoken about it in years, and I’m not about to start now. To a stranger, no less. Not even to a stranger from another planet who gives excellent reach-arounds.”

Gorg became visibly upset. “Who stole your joy, Ebbie? I must know. It’s a mystery, and I cannot stand leaving mysteries unsolved. Did you know I once missed an entire tri-season of school while doing a multi-dimensional, four-million-piece puzzle because a single piece was missing, and I had to find it? Thank the Purple Gods that I found it wedged between the table and the wall. I wrote such a touching and emotional essay about the experience that it moved my instructors to tears and scored me a passing grade, or I might still be in University trying to pass Rudimentary Starship Navigation.”

“Lovely story. The answer is still no.”

Gorg shook his head. “Something in you is cloaking the truth from you. Surely not every holiday season in your life has been miserable. Humans cannot be born hating the holidays!”

“That’s not how I remember it.”

“How long ago was it that you were a child?”

Ebenezer frowned. “Are you seriously asking me how old I am?”

“I am thirty-two tri-seasons.”

“You don’t look thirty-two.”

“I do not think our years coincide,” Gorg mused. “But I have told you my age. You should return the favor.”

Ebenezer rolled his eyes. “I’m thirty-five. Old for the porn business. I’ll be aging into the Silver Fox category soon. Oh, God. I’ll be a DILF.”

“I have no idea what that is.”

“It means Daddy I’d Love to Fuck.”

“Ah. I see. DILF. I’ll need to remember that.” Then Gorg grinned, and it was a smile full of secrets and desire that made Ebenezer feel a little weak in the knees. “Now that we have a baseline for age, we’ll have to test your memories against the truth.”

Ebenezer scowled at him, his recent warmth dissipating. “And exactly how do you expect to do that? My family hasn’t spoken to me in years, not since I went into the adult film industry, and not much before then, either. My friends have deserted me now that I’ve walked out and been replaced, I’m sure. How do you propose to examine my memories, aside from what little I remember?”

Gorg reached into his pocket and pulled out a small device. He pressed a button on it, and a long, thin antenna extended out.

“Oh, hell no! You are not probing me with that thing!” Ebenezer cried. “Ordinarily I don’t mind a good probing, but with a cock not some sort of electronic torture device!”

“Electronic torture device? Oh, this isn’t that sort of apparatus,” Gorg said and laughed. “You thought I was going to probe you? That’s going to make a great

anecdote for when I get home.” His tentacles bobbed with the force of his chuckles. “No, no. This is a handheld time-shift processor. It’s the newest technology. Out of all my egg siblings, I was always the one who wanted the most recent gizmos and gadgets on the market. I saw this one on the Abode Buying Network.” He grinned at Ebenezer. “I wondered if it might come in handy on this trip, so I bought it, but I’ve never had a chance to use it until now.”

“Stay away from me with that thing.”

“Oh, don’t be such a baby. It doesn’t hurt,” Gorg said. He grabbed Ebenezer’s hand and touched the unit to it.

Ebenezer felt a twinge on the palm of his hand as if it had been scraped.

Then Gorg thumbed a series of buttons on the handheld unit, and everything went fuzzy.

They stood on top of a steep, snowy hill. Children were flying down the hill on a variety of conveyances, some rectangular, some square, some round. An angelic-looking brown-haired boy with big blue eyes was seated at the top of the hill. He sat on a red, round plastic object built like an overly large, somewhat flattened contact lens.

Gorg noticed Ebenezer’s eyes widened when he saw the child. “That’s you, isn’t it?”

“Y-yes. I was nine. How did you know where to go?”

“DNA. Everything is stored in your DNA, if one knows where to look. Even your memories.”

“Oh, I’ve forgotten how much I loved to go sledding! That was my saucer sled. I haven’t thought about it in years!”

“Was it handed down to you by your parental units?”

“No, my grandad told me he and his friends would use the tops of metal garbage cans to go sledding, and my dad had a Flexible Flyer. I got my sled that year for Christmas. It used to go so fast! It was just really, really hard to steer it.”

Just then Little Ebbie pushed off and went flying down the hill. He hit a bump and went airborne for a moment, then came down in a spin. Finally, he reached the bottom and slowed down to a stop.

The grin on Ebenezer’s face was so wide one would have thought he was the one sitting on the sleigh. Which he was , technically, but not in his current physicality. Time travel was tricky that way.

“See? You had fun in the snow,” Gorg said. “That’s a good memory.”

“Yeah,” Ebenezer said. “Right up until the time I went down and hit a tree and broke my arm. I was housebound for the entire holiday.”

“But this day was a good memory. This is the one you should hold on to. Let’s go see something else.” He took Ebenezer’s arm before an argument could arise and thumbed another button on the time travel console.

They found themselves in a living room. At first glance, it was shabby. The sofa and ottoman had tears that had been stitched; the walls needed painting, and the blue rug underfoot was worn flat and gray in places.

But the feeling of happiness and love that permeated the place was unmistakable.

There was great joy here. The room practically glowed with it.

A tree stood centered in the large picture window, and around it were two adults and three children. They were decorating it with shining strands of silver. Balls of every color and strings of lights already adorned the tree.

The children laughed as they threw bits of silver at the tree and watched it cling to the branches and shine.

Then the man, the father, Gorg surmised, used a stepstool to reach the very top of the tree. On it, he placed a star. The children and mother cheered.

When the mother flipped a switch on the wall, it cast the room into near darkness. The father plugged a cord into a receptacle on the wall and the tree exploded with color and light.

Bulbs of all colors blinked and danced on the tree. It was a spectacle Gorg knew he'd never forget.

The children seemed likely not to forget it either. They jumped up and down and clapped their hands in sheer jubilation, including one familiar brown-haired, blue-eyed boy.

“There! Another wonderful memory. Look how happy you were!” Gorg cried. He felt as happy as the children and had to restrain himself from clapping his hands and waving his tentacles.

Ebenezer smiled, but it was a weak, sad smile. “Yes, this was a great year. We got lots of presents, even though my family didn't have much money. I don't know how my parents did it — they must have saved all year to give us a good Christmas.”

“Then why do you look sad? This is a memory you must cherish.”

“This was the last tree we ever decorated. The next year was the one when we lost my mother, and our family was never the same after.” Tears shone in Ebenezer’s eyes. “No more holidays, no more joy. My dad never got over losing her. Every year after, Dad would spend the holiday just sitting at the table drinking and being morose. It’s one of the reasons I stopped going home. Haven’t in years, and now, of course, I’m not welcome.”

Gorg gently wiped the tears away. “Then this is the memory you must keep in your heart. The one when she was here, and you were so happy.”

“It’s too damned hard,” Ebenezer said. “The holidays remind me of nothing but sadness.”

“Which is why you need to remember the good times. And you did have good times, Ebbie. You had fun, you had joy, and most of all, you had love. It may not have lasted, but you must remember how lucky you were to have had it at all.”

Ebenezer turned and leaned against Gorg, and Gorg immediately wrapped his arms and tentacles around him in a warm embrace.

“Take me home, Gorg. I want to go home now. Please.” Ebenezer’s voice sounded so small, so frail, almost like a boy’s, even to himself, and he was embarrassed by it, but Gorg acquiesced.

“All right. Home, it is.” Gorg thumbed the home button on the device, and the world spun away.

It took Ebenezer a while to pull himself together after they got home. The last thing he'd expected when he got up that morning was a trip down memory lane. Yes, he'd forgotten how happy the holidays could have made him, but he felt the pain, too.

"What do you eat?" Ebenezer asked. It was getting late and he was hungry. "You do eat, right?"

"Of course I eat! I enjoy cabolfiledgy, and especially monotupealkadfy. Do you know how to make either of those?"

"Um, no. I'm pretty sure I couldn't even spell them. I know how to call for delivery."

"I do not know what delivery is...although I am not overly fond of liver in any form."

Ebenezer laughed in spite of his depression. "No, it's not liver, it's...do you like pizza? Everybody likes pizza, right?"

"Pizza?"

"It's this round dough covered with tomato sauce and cheese. It's gooey and delicious. Do you eat meat?"

"At times. What sort of meat were you thinking of hunting?"

Ebenezer's eyes popped open. "I don't hunt."

"Then how do you catch your meals?"

"I, uh, have people who do that for me. That's what the delivery is for...to bring me food."

Gorg clapped his hands, and his tentacles shivered with glee. “How fascinating! What a fabulous idea...hiring people to hunt for you. Are you very rich? I would think it would take a great number of interstellar credits to hire someone.”

“No, I’m not rich. I mean, I’m really well off, thanks to all the movies I’ve made. That’s how I could afford to buy this house, and...well, never mind. Delivery doesn’t cost that much. I mean, sure, going to the store and buying the ingredients then making it yourself is cheaper, sometimes, but in this case,” he said, eyeing Gorg’s tentacles, “I think ordering in is called for.”

“Then I should like to try this pizzo of which you speak so highly. It sounds tasty.”

“Piz za , and it is. I’ll order some soda with it, too.”

“Hmm...” Gorg mused. “Pizza and soda. It sounds so exotic! I can’t wait to try it.”

Ebenezer returned his smile, then got out his phone and placed the order.

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“Pizza is now officially my favorite food,” Gorg said. He wiped his mouth with a small square of paper that Ebbie called a napkin and belched. “I do not know where your FU machine is, or I would have used it.”

“FU...? I beg your pardon? Do I want to know what that is?” Ebenezer said.

“Flatulence Unit, silly. What else do you use to collect gas?”

“We, um, don’t have those. We don’t collect flatulence here. Why the hell would you?”

“It’s a renewable source of energy! The flatulence units collect the gas, process it, and distribute it as clean energy. It’s what powers everything on Jizm — our lights, our vehicles...”

“You mean your ship out there runs on...farts and burps?” It was incredulous as far as Ebenezer was concerned. Like a bad joke. He had to be kidding. Some sort of interplanetary version of pull my finger.

“Gas is produced by the body. It’s not much different than fossil fuels except it’s free and renews itself.” Gorg sipped the last of his soda, then piled the discarded cup and paper plate together for disposal.

“Okay...that makes sense in a twisted, weird sort of way.” Ebenezer collected the trash and threw it away. He stopped and eyed Gorg, deciding to ask the question that had been bouncing around in his mind since they first met. “Why do you have tentacles?”

“Why do you not have them?” Gorg countered.

“I mean, is there a lot of water on your planet? Do you live in the water?”

Gorg laughed. “There is the Great Purple Inland Sea where it is said we had our beginnings, but we are land creatures. We like to swim, of course, especially in the third tri-season when it is warm.”

“I find it strange that you refer to your measure of time as a tri-season. Pregnancy on this planet is measured in three trimesters, but our year has four seasons. Winter, spring, summer, and autumn.”

Gorg looked surprised. “A pregnancy spans all three tri-seasons on our planet as well. We have only three seasons — Little Death, Birth, and Renewal. Little Death is cold, and the flowers and trees die. We can die as well if we do not take care to stay warm. Birth is the harbinger of new life when most pregnancies come to term. The weather is warm and sunny. Renewal is mating season, when those of us who wish mates find them, and many of us procreate. The weather begins to cool then and warns us that the leaves will soon turn red because Little Death is coming.”

“What season is it now on your planet?”

Gorg’s cheeks pinked with an adorable blush. “Renewal season. Everyone is rushing around trying to find mates.”

“Do you have a mate and children?” Ebenezer asked.

“Oh, no. I have not been lucky in love. Nor have I impregnated anyone.” Gorg looked dejected.

“I’m sure you’ll find somebody soon and have a passel of little Gorgs running

around,” Ebenezer said. He patted Gorg’s arm.

“You are kind to say that,” Gorg said. He offered up a small smile that trembled on his lips. “I fear that may not happen for me. Our planet has a shortage of possible mates. The demand outweighs the supply.”

“Do you have to mate on your planet and have kids?”

“Oh, no. Many of us do not, either through circumstance or by choice. My egg brother, Hivery, mated Listeria, who is from another planet. They have since had a child. I wish to...I just don’t know if I ever will have the opportunity.” Gorg looked sad again, and that made Ebenezer uncomfortable.

“Listen, we don’t need to stay in the house. We can go outside. I mean there’s lots for you to see if you really want to, but you can’t go out looking the way you do. If anybody sees those tentacles, they’ll call the cops and you’ll either end up in a zoo or Area 51.”

“I take it from your tone of voice that neither a zoo nor Area 51 is a place I’d want to be,” Gorg said. “I know what zoos are. When I was entering your atmosphere, I thought I might want to see a zoo. I thought the octopi might have built one, but I do not wish to become a specimen in one.”

Ebenezer laughed. “You keep mentioning octopi. What is it with you and octopi? Is it a tentacle thing?”

“Are they not the most intelligent beings on your planet?”

“No!” Ebenezer laughed. “I mean, I hear they’re smart — they can learn how to escape their tanks and stuff, but humans are the dominant species here.”

“Huh. I wouldn’t have thought so from the lack of tentacles.”

Ebenezer shook his head. “Look, I have this big old overcoat. If you wear it, it’ll cover your tentacles, and we can go out. There’s an aquarium near here and I’m sure they have an octopus or two.”

Gorg clapped his hands. “I’d love to meet them!”

Ebenezer refrained from rolling his eyes and went to fetch the overcoat. It was an oversized costume from a movie he made called “Frosty’s Snowman,” in which he played, of course, Frosty, a man who builds a snowman that comes to life and fucks his brains out. In any case, he’d somehow come into possession of the snowman’s overcoat. It hung in one of his downstairs closets and when he brought it to Gorg, it fit perfectly, roomy enough to hide all eight tentacles. Gorg just looked like an extra plump, rather lumpy guy.

Except when the tentacles wriggled. Then he looked like he should be in a Nightmare on Elm Street movie.

“Try not to move them, okay? Keep ‘em still,” Ebenezer implored. “I don’t want to have to tell people that we’re going to make a horror movie.”

He paused for a moment. “By the way, how are we supposed to hide your ship? Won’t the Air Force people be looking for you already? Wouldn’t they have seen you come into the atmosphere?”

“I doubt it. I keep my ship in camouflage mode. Nobody would’ve seen it,” Gorg said. “It’s so much easier to avoid detection when you’re entering a planet’s atmosphere without a direct invitation.”

Nodding as if to himself, not even recognizing that the whole situation was so bizarre

that he accepted a spaceship as being in “camouflage mode” without question, Ebenezer led Gorg outside, locked the door behind them, and brought Gorg to the garage. He pressed his remote and the door swung up, revealing three vehicles inside. A Camaro, a Jeep, and a Jag. He chose the Jeep since the doors were already off, and he knew Gorg would fit more comfortably in it.

“Climb in,” he instructed. Then helped Gorg fasten his safety belt.

“Why am I being restrained?” Gorg asked. He touched the seatbelt. “Have I done something wrong?”

“No. It’s a safety thing. There’s even a song for it. Buckle up for safety, buckle up, show the world you care by the belt you wear ...or some shit like that.”

“Really? How positively primitive!” Gorg sounded thrilled and repulsed at the same time. “We have antigravity beams for that.”

“Well, goody for you,” Ebenezer grumbled. He slid behind the wheel. “I guess we do things the old-fashioned way here.”

“I didn’t mean to insult you! I’ve never been to a planet where they have to tie you to your conveyance.”

“It’s the law. And try to keep those tentacles still, will you? They look like squirming larvae under there.”

Gorg immediately stilled. “I’m sorry. When I get excited about something, they move. I tend to talk with my tentacles.”

“Well, try to keep mum, huh? And you see that handle? I had it installed. It’s called an ‘oh shit’ handle. If we hit a bump or take a corner and you feel yourself falling out

of the Jeep, you yell ‘oh, shit!’ and grab it.”

Gorg grabbed the handle. “Oh, shit. Yes, I understand.”

Ebenezer wasn’t sure Gorg did understand but started the Jeep anyway and pulled out of the garage. He drove at the limit, trying not to fling Gorg too hard against the seatbelt that it would lock. The last thing he wanted was for Gorg to think he was being held prisoner.

He realized that somewhere over the course of the past couple of hours, he’d stopped thinking of Gorg as a delusion. Gorg was real, as real as he was, and wasn’t that just his fucking luck? An alien decides to crash land on Earth and it picks Ebenezer’s back-fucking-yard to do it in. A holiday - loving alien, besides, who seems to have some sort of weird fixation with octopi.

He negotiated the hills and valleys, driving more carefully and slowly than usual. He didn’t want to be pulled over for something as stupid as speeding or running a stop sign and have to explain to a cop what his seat buddy was smuggling under that overcoat.

He drove them to the Aquarium of the Pacific, a beautiful aquarium in nearby Long Beach. He knew it had several varieties of octopuses, so it should be able to satisfy Gorg’s curiosity.

He hoped.

Providing Gorg didn’t strip off his coat and do some sort of tentacle mating dance, that is.

And why in the blue fuck should the thought of those tentacles waving sinuously around, sliding softly against his skin make him hard? Why was he even thinking

about it?

It can't be right.

Could it?

No, it was wrong in a thousand ways.

He pushed the thought away and mentally pictured women's squishy parts until his hard-on dissipated.

After parking and walking to the entrance, Ebenezer noticed how much Gorg was sweating. It was warm in Long Beach, far too warm to be in that overcoat, but it couldn't be helped.

"I'm sorry you have to be so hot," Ebenezer said. "I mean, I'm not sorry you're hot because I like the way you look except for, you know, the tentacle thing. But because you're warm in the coat."

"It is fine," Gorg replied, giving Ebenezer a smile that tickled all the way down to the pit of Ebenezer's stomach.

Dimples. Had he noticed Gorg had deep dimples in his cheeks? How could he have not noticed that? They were adorable. And hot.

Stop. Think about squishy, pink lady parts. Ugh. Ebenezer tried to discreetly adjust himself, but all he did was draw Gorg's attention to his groin.

"Why are you playing with your penis? Would you like me to do that for you? What did you call it? A rub-around?"

“Reach-around, and no thank you. I just need to...erm...fix it.”

Gorg gasped. “Is it broken?”

“No! I just...it’s fine. I’m fine. Come on, let’s get inside.” He took Gorg’s elbow and led him toward the ticket windows.

He bought the tickets, charged them to his Amex card, and then walked with Gorg inside the building.

Once inside, Ebenezer asked for directions and brought Gorg to the Northern Pacific Gallery.

“Well, here we are,” Ebenezer said as they stood in front of a glass-walled aquarium.

“We are...where?”

“This is the exhibit for the Giant Pacific Octopus,” Ebenezer said. “Your soulmate.”

“Oh,” Gorg said with a laugh, “I wouldn’t say soulmate! I just admired their intelligence, that’s all. You see, rumor had spread on my planet that the highest form of intelligence on this planet was the octopi. You have since corrected me. But I would still very much like to meet one. Where is it?” He peered into the exhibit.

“Near those rocks. See him? There he is.” Ebenezer pointed.

“Oh, it’s a she, not a he.”

“And how, exactly do you know that?”

Gorg rolled his eyes. “Her third arm, silly. Everyone knows girls have suction cups

all the way down their third arm, but boys don't. We learn that in elementary school. It's part of sex ed."

"What makes you sure it's true of Earth octopi?"

"I just...well, I don't know. It seems logical." Gorg rapped on the glass. "Pardon me, but are you a male or a female?"

"She's not going to answer you," Ebenezer hissed. "And don't bang on the glass." He turned toward a young woman who wore a pin that said, Ask Me About Our GPO . "Pardon me, but is that a boy octopus or a girl octopus?"

"It's a female. Her name is Gumball."

Ebenezer frowned. "What sort of name is that?"

"All of our GPOs are given names that begin with the letter 'G.' It's tradition," the girl said, then turned to answer someone else's question.

"Well, I stand corrected. You were right. It's a girl. Can we go, now?"

"I am sad that I cannot have a discussion with her. I'm sure she is a brilliant conversationalist."

"She doesn't have lips, Gorg. She can't talk."

Gorg cocked his head and considered the large creature in the tank. "You are right. She has a beak, but would not be able to pronounce very many words. Perhaps she speaks octopi, a different language than American English. Or perhaps she is telepathic."

“Maybe. Or maybe she’s just a fish.”

The guide interrupted them. “Pardon me, sir, but Gumball isn’t a fish. She’s a cephalopod, and very intelligent. She can change her color depending on her mood or surroundings. She plays with toys and can regrow arms that have been lost, and if we didn’t coat her tank with a special solution that prevents it, she would find a way to escape it.”

Gorg gasped. “She is a prisoner?”

“No,” Ebenezer said. He shot a smile at the girl and then dragged Gorg away before things could get ugly. “She’s an exhibit. She’s here so humans can study her, watch her, appreciate her...um, beauty.”

“I don’t like the idea that she’s held here against her will.”

“I am sure she’s very happy here. She’s well-fed, so she doesn’t have to hunt for food, and she doesn’t have to worry about predators. Doctors take care of her if she gets sick. She can live a full and happy life here.”

“Maybe. I am not convinced.” Gorg didn’t look happy.

“Come on. You wanted to meet an octopus. I brought you to meet one. Now, let’s go get some supper.”

Gorg nodded, although he seemed down, which Ebenezer found disturbed him more than he normally would admit.

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“This is the guest room,” Ebenezer said. He’d shown Gorg to a room in the house with a rectangular bed and some storage units. “It has a bathroom adjacent.”

“A what?” Gorg wasn’t familiar with the term.

“A bathroom. A toilet? The head? You know...where you, um, go. Do your business. Pee. Poop. Deposit whatever waste products your body might produce.”

“Oh! Goodness, you have an entire room for that? We take a pill. It turns all bodily waste into flatulence.”

“You must come from some really gassy people.” Ebenezer wrinkled his nose. “That’s sort of gross. Anyway, we don’t have any of those fart units on earth, so you’d better start using the bathroom for whatever it is you do with your waste.”

Gorg shook his head in amazement. “In some ways Earthlings are so advanced, having invented things like soda and pizza, and yet in other ways, you are an incredibly primitive people.”

“Well, while you’re here, keep your advanced bodily functions to the bathroom, okay?” Ebenezer said. “And I’m sorry, but I don’t have any pajamas that would fit you with your tentacles.”

“Pajamas? This is another term I am not familiar with.”

“They’re clothing you sleep in.”

“You have clothing especially made for sleeping? Why?” Gorg was so confused. “Isn’t that what skin is for?”

Ebenezer just nodded. “I suppose it might be. I sleep in the nude, too. It’s just that not everyone does.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know. Because they’re more comfortable in pajamas? Because of societal norms? Because they’re a little more inhibited than others? Who the hell knows? Who the hell cares?”

“I am sorry, Ebbie. I am asking too many questions,” Gorg said. He knew he had a habit of posing an infinite number of inquiries about any subject that intrigued him, and he found humans to be very, very interesting beings. More so even than octopi. Especially Ebenezer.

“No, that’s okay. I’m just tired. Have a good night, Gorg. See you in the morning.” Ebenezer left, closing the door behind him.

Gorg stood there staring at the closed door long after Ebenezer left. He hadn’t wanted Ebenezer to leave. He’d wanted Ebenezer to take off his clothes, lay down on that big, soft-looking bed with Gorg, and teach him how Earthlings had sex. His cock had been hard all day under that heavy overcoat, and all because of how close he was to Ebenezer. There was just something about Ebbie that made Gorg rock-hard — the way Ebbie moved, or smelled, or smiled, or laughed. Something. Everything.

He suddenly realized what was going on. It was Renewal Season on Jizm, and Gorg was in full rut. He burned to mate with Ebenezer. Why had Ebenezer not seen how much Gorg wanted him? Could he not smell Gorg’s need?

Maybe that was it! Perhaps Ebbie was simply unaware of how much Gorg needed him. He would go and tell Ebenezer right now.

But what if Ebenezer didn't want Gorg? Many on Jizm hadn't wanted him. Most, in fact. What made Gorg think Earth and Ebbie would be any different?

He hemmed and hawed and paced back and forth for a long while. "Well, I will never know if I don't ask. If Ebbie doesn't want me, then I'll go to the ship and call the parental units to fetch me back home. If he does want me...oh, if he does then..." Gorg smiled, thinking how wonderful it would be if Ebbie wanted him.

Sporting a full hard-on so there would be no doubt how Gorg felt about Ebenezer, he went in search of Ebbie's room.

There were several doors in a long hallway, and he tried each of them to no avail. Each of them contained a bed of some variety, but all of them were empty.

Finally, he came to a pair of double doors at the end of the hallway. He turned the handles and opened the door, silently slipping inside.

There, sprawled in the middle of a huge, round bed, was Ebenezer. He was nude, just as he'd said he would be. Gloriously nude, Gorg thought, as he feasted his eyes.

Thank the stars Gorg had excellent night vision because he could see every detail of Ebenezer's body even though it was pitch dark in the room. He was pleasantly pleased and excited by what he saw, too.

Ebenezer's body was slimmer than Gorg's — tentacles notwithstanding — but well-developed and muscular. In the dark, seen with Gorg's night vision, he seemed carved from silver marble, every line incised by a superior artist. From his toes to his sculpted legs, flat stomach, and broad chest, to his handsome face, Ebenezer was a

master class in human masculine beauty.

His longish dark hair, free from binders, was splayed against the white of the pillow. Gorg wanted to gather it up in his hands, feel the texture, bury his nose in it.

And his cock! Oh, Gorg's hands well-remembered the feel of the soft, warm skin against his palm, the hardness of the shaft, the weight of Ebenezer's sac.

He also remembered rubbing his own cock against Ebenezer's rear end when he'd given Ebenezer the reach-around, and how close he'd come to ejaculating. So close. So very close. Painfully close.

His cock remembered too, and was now at full mast, insistent that it be granted what had been withheld from it earlier. It ached with need, and the tip was wet with pre-come.

"Ebbie? Ebbie? It's me, Gorg." He whispered, half afraid he would wake Ebenezer, and half afraid he wouldn't. What if Ebenezer turned him away? If Ebenezer didn't want him? The unknowing gave him sharp pain in his chest. He could barely breathe.

"Gorg? What are you doing in here?" Ebenezer's voice sounded sleepy and confused.

"Looking."

"At what? It's pitch black in here."

"At you. My night vision is excellent."

"Oh." There was a rustling of fabric as Ebenezer pulled a comforter over himself.

"Oh, please don't do that! I like looking at you so much. You are the most beautiful

male I have ever seen!” Gorg exclaimed. “I came here because I... I have a desperate need for you. My body yearns for your touch. It is an ache, a fire burning inside...” He took a hesitant step toward the bed.

“Gorg, are you saying you’re horny? Why didn’t you just say so? Come here.”

“But my tentacles...I didn’t think you found me attractive because of them.”

Ebenezer sat up, throwing off the comforter, once again gloriously naked. He reached over to a nightstand and clicked on a small bedside light.

Gorg blinked. It was as if Ebenezer had turned on the sun. The brilliance of the light stunned him and blinded him for a moment. It took a while for his eyesight to adjust.

“I will admit I found the tentacles, er, distracting at first. But they are sexy in their own way. They’re soft and warm, and the suckers tickle. And you are a handsome, um, male. Your body is exquisite. Perfectly stunning.” Ebenezer patted the bed next to him. “Come sit by me. If I tell you the truth, I’ve wanted to touch you since you gave me the reach-around.”

Gorg suddenly felt shy, and wrapped his tentacles around himself, as if to shield his innermost desires from Ebenezer. He, too, had wanted Ebenezer from the time he’d given Ebenezer release. If he tried, he thought he could still smell Ebenezer’s come, feel its warmth spill over his hand.

“Come here, Gorg,” Ebenezer said again. This time there was a touch of hunger in his voice that Gorg could not, would not ignore.

Gorg sat on the edge of the bed. He was trembling a little, but it was from the incredible force of his desire, not any hesitancy or fear. “I am afraid that I will hurt you, take you too fast, be too intense for your comfort,” he whispered.

Ebenezer uttered a soft laugh. "I'm a professional porn star, Gorg. This body has fucked in every way imaginable. I've topped, I've bottomed, and I've been the middle man in a train. There is nothing you could do to me that would hurt me. Especially since I want you so bad it aches."

Gorg heaved a great sigh and gave into the overpowering urge to take Ebenezer, to claim him, to mate him. He stretched out on the bed and rolled to his side, reaching for Ebenezer.

That Ebbie came to him willingly added fuel to the intense fire already burning within Gorg. He reached for Ebbie's mouth, kissing him hard, his tongue sweeping into Ebbie's mouth, demanding, needing, and Ebbie met his tongue in a duel that was fought with saliva and desire.

He braced himself over Ebbie's body, one hand on each side holding him up, while his tentacles explored every inch, every crevice of Ebbie's body. One curled gently around Ebbie's erection, pulsing delicately. Another slipped between Ebbie's legs and probed for the small hole he knew lay there.

He would not take Ebbie raw, unprepared. That was not his purpose. Gorg wanted to make love to Ebbie, to mate with him, and he was going to make sure it was the best sex Ebbie had ever experienced when he did it.

His tentacle produced moisture that slicked the little hole, and then adapted its size to fit, and pushed in.

"Fuck!" Ebenezer whispered. "You're fucking inside me."

"Do you want me to stop? I am preparing you for my cock."

"No, don't stop! It feels good. So fucking good!"

Gorg kissed him again, just as deeply and fiercely as the first time, and curled his tentacle to reach Ebbie's prostate.

Ebbie's pelvis pushed upward, rubbing his cock against Gorg's, grunting his pleasure.

Yes, yes, that was the sound of a well-satisfied man. That was the sound he wanted Ebbie to make. Gorg thought. "Moan for me. Tell me what you want."

"I want your fucking cock inside me!" Ebenezer moaned. "The tentacle is fucking fabulous, but I want to feel your hard dick in my ass."

"Lift your legs." Gorg pulled his tentacle out and used two others to help Ebenezer position his legs up and bent at the knee, spread wide to expose his hole.

Then Gorg pushed his cock into Ebenezer's body, forcing himself to take it easy, to go slow, pushing past the ring of muscle already loosened and slicked by the tentacle. Gorg's cock was not small, and he made sure Ebenezer felt every inch of it as he drove it inside.

Once he was fully seated in Ebenezer, he began to move, thrusting in and out, crying out his own pleasure as it built within him.

Then it came, his climax, a force so powerful that it rocked him to his very soul. It was Renewal, it was mating, and his cock swelled within Ebenezer, knotting him. The shock was almost too much — he'd never expected it.

Ebenezer worked his own cock, gasping and grunting until at last he cried out, his hot come painting streaks against Gorg's stomach.

Gorg's arms trembled from the force of his orgasm, his entire body aching with sweet release. He knew that within Ebenezer's body, his cock had knotted and would not

allow them to part for several minutes.

“What is that? It feels amazing,” Ebenezer whispered. His voice was hoarse, and yet somehow still needy despite his recent orgasm.

“We are knotted,” Gorg said. “Do your people not knot when they mate?”

“I have no idea what that is, but please don’t stop! I think I’m going to come again.” Ebenezer’s hand reached for his cock, working it again, stroking it.

“Come for me. Come again and again. The smell of your orgasm is sweet, and the taste of your come is salty.” Gorg said. He dipped the tip of one of his tentacles in a puddle of come on Ebenezer’s stomach then licked it.

“Oh, God! I’m coming!” Ebenezer cried out again, back arching as he came.

Gorg waited until Ebbie’s climax ebbed, then kissed him again, tenderly this time, with all the sweetness and gentleness he could muster. “Be still now. Just be still.”

He could see the moment Ebbie grew boneless, lying there enveloped in a post-coital ecstasy hangover.

After another few moments, he felt his cock begin to relax, the knot releasing its hold on Ebbie. He slid out of Ebbie’s body, flaccid, and about as well-satisfied as a male could be.

Soon, the changes would begin. He knew it, could feel it in his bones. It happened on his planet every Renewal — males would sometimes bond with other males or females with females, and nature demanded changes in the physicality of one of them be made, and always after knotting. Knotting only happened when true mates were found.

He knew Renewal mating rituals would hold true with a lover who was not a Jizmite but had been too overcome with lust to think about the ramifications of knotting. Plus, he'd become so convinced it would never happen for him that he hadn't given it a thought.

He would need to explain all of this to Ebbie. He just wondered how well his beautiful human lover would take the news. He couldn't wait too long — the changes would begin almost immediately, and the secret would be out.

His Ebbie, Ebenezer Splooge, was pregnant.

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Ebenezer woke up feeling a bit groggier than he usually did. His body ached, but in a sweet way, the best way. The kind of way that reminded him he'd been well-fucked the night before.

Well-fucked didn't even begin to describe it. Didn't come close! What Gorg did to him, what Gorg made him feel...there were no words.

He smiled as he rolled over, fully expecting to see Gorg asleep next to him, but the side of the bed was empty. He got up, pulled on a pair of boxer briefs, and went in search of Gorg.

Gorg was in the kitchen, his head stuck in the refrigerator.

Literally stuck. He'd somehow managed to wedge his head between two shelves and couldn't pull it out again.

"Gorg! What did you do, dude?" Ebenezer tried not to laugh but failed.

"I was searching for something that looked even vaguely familiar that I could use to make you breakfast," Gorg said. "I thought I saw something but when I pushed my head in to see, it got stuck."

"Why didn't you just reach in with your hand to grab it?"

"I thought it was a faffenugaer. They bite. I didn't want to grab it with my bare hand and I don't know where you keep your faffenugaer tongs."

Ebenezer shook his head. He reached in and started unloading the top shelf of the fridge so he could remove it and free Gorg. “I don’t know what a faffenugaer is, nor do I have tongs made specifically for it. For future reference, none of the food in my fridge bites.”

“Good to know.”

He wiggled the shelf free, and Gorg pulled his head out, rubbing his ears.

“I thought your refrigerator was trying to eat me.” Gorg shot the fridge a dirty look.

“It wasn’t. It’s a machine.”

“I was making a funny.”

“You mean a joke? You were joking.”

Gorg nodded, and Ebenezer laughed. “Okay, you got me. Instead of cooking, how about we go out for breakfast? I have the strongest hankering for blueberry pancakes.”

Gorg gave him an odd look. “Yes, pancakes. They are good?”

“You’ll love ‘em. Let’s get dressed. You’ll have to wear the overcoat again, though.”

“I don’t mind.”

“Hey,” Ebenezer said. He put his hand on Gorg’s arm and leaned in for a gentle kiss. “Thanks for last night. It was fucking amazing.”

Gorg smiled then, his dimples deepening. “I am glad you enjoyed it. I worried that

you wouldn't because we are different species."

"It was fantastic, and if you're a good boy and eat all your pancakes, maybe we'll do it again later."

Gorg sighed. "We can, but there will be no knotting. That only happens the first time."

"Oh. You mean that weirdly wonderful feeling when you were inside me? How come?"

"It's the way our species is built."

Ebenezer nodded. That was kind of sucky, because he'd really enjoyed being so connected to another living being, but hey...que sera, sera. He'd still take sex with Gorg and those tentacles any day of the week and twice on Sunday.

Breakfast was at the local IHOP, blueberry pancakes topped with lots of powdered sugar, fresh blueberries, and blueberry syrup. It was weird — usually, Ebenezer didn't have much of a sweet tooth, and carbs were almost always off the menu, but this morning he couldn't get enough of the stuff. He was tempted to drink the blueberry syrup straight out of the little pitcher.

After breakfast, they were on their way to the car when someone called out his name.

"Ebenezer! Hey! Ebenezer Splooge! Don't you fucking walk away from me."

Ebenezer turned and glanced in the direction the angry voice was coming from. "Allen? What do you want?"

Allen, the director from the last film he'd been making, stalked up to them. "What do I want ? You walked off the set and I had to replace you with the fucking fluffer! You have a contract, my friend, and you're in breach of it."

"I had a damn good reason for walking off the set. You hired another no-talent straight boy because of some gay-for-you fantasy you have."

"Gerald is bi. He told me so."

"Tell that to Gerald's dick. It seems to have missed the memo. I saw that you replaced him with the cameraman."

"I didn't have a choice. We were on a tight shooting schedule, man! It was hard enough getting anybody to work with you anymore. You knew that, but somebody chose to have a hissy fit and walk off anyway. Who was that again? Oh, yeah. You."

"I did not throw a hissy fit. And everybody loves me. I am a consummate professional. Look, I'm done with your company, Allen. You constantly cut corners to save money and expect me to pick up the slack."

"And you never think about what happens to those around you! The movie shut down because the star — you — walked off. Melanie lost her job, and without a paycheck, she's going to have a helluva time feeding her kids. Pete started drinking again, and I don't have to remind you that he was three years on the wagon. Harry—"

"Stop with the sob stories. I'll have my attorney call you."

"Good fucking luck with that! Like I said, you're in breach of contract. I'll be suing you, my friend."

"Is this person upsetting you?" Gorg asked. He stepped in between Ebenezer and

Allen. "I do not wish you to be upset. It is not good for you."

"What is he, a china doll? Afraid he's gonna shatter? He's a big boy. He can take care of himself," Allen said.

Gorg turned on Allen, and for a minute Ebenezer was afraid Gorg would shrug off the overcoat and beat Allen senseless with both arms and all eight tentacles. Instead, Gorg got up in Allen's business and growled at him.

"Go away. Now. Or you will be very, very sorry."

"Oh, great. Now your boyfriend's going to make threats to me? I'll sue his ass, too!" Allen spat. But he backed up.

"Come on, Gorg. Let's go." He led Gorg back to the Jeep, got in, and started the engine.

When they pulled out into the street, Ebenezer didn't give Allen a backward glance.

As far as he was concerned, that part of his life was over. He couldn't imagine himself fucking other men on camera anymore. He had more important things to worry about now.

For the life of him, though, he couldn't figure out what those things were.

"Did you really do all those things Allen said you did?" Gorg asked.

"Pull a hissy fit? No. I just... Well, I walked off the set. It was his fault. And he's a liar. Everyone loved working with me."

Gorg gave him an odd look. “I think perhaps you are misremembering things. Allen seemed very upset with you. I don’t like to think you aren’t concerned with the lives of your fellow human beings.”

“It happened just the way I said it did. Maybe. I mean, it could be I was a little angry. With good reason, mind you! I am a professional, but he just pushed me too hard.”

“Is it because you hate the holidays? Besides the memories you have from your childhood. The movies you made – you said they were all holiday movies. Is that what made you so angry?”

“No! Maybe...come on. I just lost my temper that one time...”

Gorg took out the handheld time-shift processor and extended the antennae.

“Oh, hell no! We’re not going back into my past again!”

“Not the past this time, Ebbie. I think you need to see how your actions affect others. It will make you a better parent.”

“Parent? What are you talking about?”

But before Gorg answered, the gray mist covered them, and the world spun away.

When the mist cleared, they were in a bar. It was a seedy place, smelling of strong spirits and mold, and body odor. Only one man sat at the bar, hunched over, a half-full glass of beer in front of him.

Ebenezer turned pale and walked up to the man. “Pete? Oh, man, no. Pete, you were doing so good! Three years sober... What happened?”

“Ebbie? What are you doin’ here?” The man looked up at Ebenezer with bleary eyes. “You fucker. You think you’re all high and mighty because you’re the star and all I did was hold the fuckin’ camera, but without me, you would be nothin’! Nothin’!”

“I-I’m sorry I walked off the set, Pete. Stop it now. Come on. Let me buy you a cup of coffee. We can call your sponsor and—”

“Oh, fuck off! I don’t have a job because of you. They tried to swap me in for that asshole, Gerald, and use the fluffer but it wasn’t the same. The producers wanted you , Ebbie, and you were gone. They shut us down. No job, no money for rent. Just...just leave me alone. Go on! Get out!”

He’d never heard Pete sound so venomous, so full of hate. Maybe he deserved it, too. He frowned and backed up to where Gorg stood. “Get me out of here, Gorg. I...oh, God, what have I done? Who else did I hurt? I can’t even make amends because he won’t let me help him!” Tears threatened. “I’ve been such a dick!”

“I can help him if you wish,” Gorg said. He cupped Ebenezer’s face with his hand. “Do not weep. We all do things we regret. What is important is that you learn from your mistakes.”

“You can help Pete? How?”

“Addiction is a universal problem. We have ways to circumvent it. To correct the part of us that craves that to which we are addicted.”

Gorg walked over and placed his hand on the back of Pete’s neck. Pete tried to shake him off, but then Pete froze. The expression on his face was one of pure ecstasy. Then it was gone.

Pete looked at the half-finished glass in front of him and disgust colored his face. He

pushed it away and got up.

He tossed Gorg a half-smile then hurried out of the bar, brushing past Ebenezer as if he didn't recognize him.

“What did you do?”

“Got rid of his addiction. He will be okay now.”

“That's amazing!” Ebenezer gave him a broad smile.

“He still was in here because of you, Ebbie. What have you learned?” Gorg asked.

“Seriously? Who are you? My mother?”

“I am serious. It is important, Ebbie. Very important.”

The expression on Gorg's face was grave, and it frightened Ebbie a little. He didn't want to lose Gorg, not that he wanted to examine the reason why too closely. It's not like he was in love with a guy from another planet. It was just the sex, that's all. Right? And yet...

“I learned that my actions have consequences for other people, not just myself. I have a responsibility to the people I work with and have to think about others not just myself.”

Gorg nodded, and a smile once again graced his handsome face. “Excellent. Now, let's go home. I think you have to talk to someone called your attorney.”

Ebenezer huffed and nodded. “Allan was right. I am in breach of contract. I'm going to have to buy my way out of it, and it's not going to be cheap. I'll need to call Roger

Atkins. He's my attorney. But you know what? I don't want to do adult films anymore. Something in me has changed."

"Yes, we'll have to have a talk about that, too," Gorg said, then pulled out the handheld time-shift processor and pressed the button.

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“What is going on that you keep saying we’ll have to talk? Talk about what?” Ebenezer asked. They’d just returned to his place, and the car ride home had been quite uncomfortable. Mostly, because he tried to keep a conversation going, but Gorg remained silent, given only to a nod or shrug. “Are you leaving? Is that it? You’re going home and don’t know how to tell me?”

Ebenezer hoped that wasn’t the case. He didn’t want Gorg to leave, but he could understand how Gorg wouldn’t want to live his life literally undercover, always having to wear some sort of oversized coat. “Look, there has to be a way you can stay here... Someplace super cold where everyone wears bulky coats all the time. Then I could wear one too, and we’d fit right in, and nobody would notice you.”

“That’s not it. I don’t want to leave you. I can’t leave you, not now.” Gorg sighed. “Especially not now.”

“Why? What’s going on now?”

“Maybe you’d better sit down, Ebbie,” Gorg said. He pulled out a kitchen chair and urged Ebenezer into it. “Remember last night?”

“Oh, boy, do I! I can’t wait to do it again. Is that what this is about? You think I don’t want to have sex again?”

“No, that’s not it. Please, listen and let me finish. It’s important.”

Ebenezer frowned but nodded. “Okay. Shoot.”

“Remember the time when my penis swelled inside you? Yes?”

Ebenezer nodded and couldn't resist a smile. It'd been his favorite part.

“That's what our people call knotting. It only happens during Renewal, and...”

“And what?”

“And it only happens between life mates.”

“Life mates? What does that mean? Like, we're married or something?” Ebenezer's smile slipped sideways. “Dude, we just met!”

“If that is what they call lifetime mates in your world. I know we have only just met, but we have mated and joined life forces. We are now connected. If you close your eyes, you will be able to feel me, even if I am far away, and me, likewise. I can send you a thought telepathically, you can do the same. And I do not wish to have sex with anyone else now. I cannot. My body would reject them.”

Ebenezer felt the blood rush from his head. “You mean, we're stuck with each other?”

Gorg's beautiful eyes filled with tears. “That hurt me. I thought you wanted me.”

“I do! I just...this is all a little bit sudden. You mean I can't have sex with anyone else, ever?”

“If you were a Jizmite, the answer would be clear. But you are not. You are human. There is a chance you can have sex with others of your species if you so desire. But Ebbie, it would break my heart. That is why I was so happy to hear you say you did not wish to perform in adult films anymore.”

“Gorg, I don’t know what to say. I’m not prepared for any of this. I thought we were just having a good time last night, not committing to a lifelong relationship.”

Gorg staggered a little and leaned against the kitchen counter. “I...I understand. There is something else you should know. It is the reason I cannot leave you or this planet, at least not yet. The knotting serves another purpose. It is our way of impregnating our mates. You are pregnant, Ebenezer. You’re carrying my child.”

Ebenezer burst into laughter. “Oh, man! You had me going there for a while! Life mates, and all that. Pregnant? That’s just hysterical!”

Gorg didn’t smile or laugh. His expression remained grim. “It is true. As we speak, your body is changing to accommodate the new life.”

“Listen, I hate to break it to you, but I’m a boy, Gorg. Only girls get pregnant on this planet.”

“I am not from this planet. Males frequently give birth on Jizm. The knotting provides the necessary means for the body to change to accommodate the new life. When the time comes for birthing, a pocket will appear on your abdomen, and I will be able to assist in the birth.”

Ebenezer jumped up from the chair. “Are you being serious right now? You mean I’m supposed to believe I’m going to have a baby like a fucking kangaroo?”

“I do not know what that is.”

“It’s a marsupial, and they keep their babies in pouches!” He gestured toward his stomach.

“Do not be ridiculous. Our child will not be kept in a pouch. The pocket is only for

birthing; it disappears soon after the afterbirth is delivered.” Gorg trembled, and his eyes refilled with tears. “If it is what you want, I will take our child back to Jizm alone. You can go on with your life here as it was.”

“Except we don’t know if I can have sex with anyone else ever again!” Ebenezer cried out. “Oh, God, what kind of shitshow circus did I land in here?”

“I am sorry. Please do not be upset. It is not good for the baby.”

“Stop saying that! Baby? I can’t have a baby! I’m not built that way!” Ebenezer wailed.

“You will be. Even now, your body is changing inside. You craved blueberry pancakes this morning. That is a sign.”

That stopped Ebenezer in his tracks. He had wanted blueberry pancakes, wanted the sugary goodness so much he’d been tempted to lick his plate clean and drink the syrup from the pitcher.

That wasn’t like him. He never ate blueberry pancakes for breakfast, or any pancakes for that matter. The carbs were a no-no on his diet. He had to keep trim for the movies he starred in. Nobody wanted to watch a guy have sex with a pudgy Santa. Or maybe they did, but that wasn’t on-brand for him.

He sat down again and covered his face with his hands. “I’m sorry, but I can’t believe any of this.”

“You need to believe it. In three tri-seasons, you will go into labor and give birth to our baby.”

“This is insane! Look, as much as I like you, maybe...maybe you should go. Call

your parents, like you said you needed to get a ride back to your planet.”

“I cannot, will not leave you here to have my child alone!” Gorg seemed aghast at the thought.

“You’re wrong. Come on, admit that you could be wrong. On our planet people have false alarms all the time. I’m a man. I cannot have a baby!”

“With knotting there is no false alarms, and I have already explained the physiological changes the knotting brings. You will be having a baby. My baby.”

Ebenezer jumped up again, shaking his head, and began to pace the length of the kitchen. “I’ll go to a doctor and prove it to you! Even though any doctor I go to will think I’m fucking insane!”

Gorg stood in front of Ebenezer, blocking his path. “Listen to me, Ebbie. You are having my baby. If your doctor takes a scan of your abdomen, and there is a baby inside, what do you think will happen to you? To our child?” He wiggled his tentacles, waving them in front of Ebenezer’s face.

Ebenezer felt weak and grabbed onto Gorg so he wouldn’t fall to the ground. “Tentacles? I’m carrying a baby with tentacles?”

“Truthfully, there’s no telling how our genetics will mix, but the probability of our child having at least a couple of tentacles is high.”

Ebenezer groaned and sat down again. “They’d think the baby was some sort of freak. Then, if they did further testing, they’d find out it was part extraterrestrial. They’d lock us both up in a lab somewhere.” He shook his head again. “No, no, no! I refuse to believe any of it!”

“You need to believe, Ebbie. You’ll be feeling movement soon. It’s a miracle, not a curse. You’ll see.”

“I cannot believe what you’re telling me. How can I? It’s impossible!”

“Any more impossible than an alien landing in your backyard and knotting you during sex?”

Ebenezer didn’t have a response for that, other than his original thought that Gorg was a delusion, but too much had happened between then and now for him to still put faith in that explanation. Too many people had seen him, including Allan. And look what he’d done for Pete! No, Gorg was real, and what he was telling Ebenezer, as crazy as it sounded, might just be real, too.

“What happens next?” Ebenezer asked in a small voice.

“If we were on my planet, we would have a celebration of life,” Gorg said. He smiled in a dreamy way and sighed. “Everyone would come and bring gifts for the newborn-to-be, there would be food and laughter, and our entire family would dance the Great Pregnancy Dance together.”

“The Great Pregnancy Dance?”

“Yes. Would you like me to describe it to you? It involves us joining hands, stamping our feet in time to the chanting of our parental units, and dancing naked around the Sacred Penis Statue.”

Ebenezer moaned. “Sacred Penis Statue?”

“Oh, yes. Every home has one.”

“Of course they do. Why wouldn’t they?”

“Next to Bloober Day, it’s the closest thing we have to a holiday.”

“Great. Another reason to hate the holidays.”

“How could you say that? Our child is growing inside you as we speak, and you talk of hate?” Gorg’s expression was stony.

Ebenezer had never seen him so angry, not even when Allan yelled at Ebenezer. “I...I just...”

“You really are the most selfish person in the universe!”

“No, I’m not! Please, you have to understand — I just need to adjust to all of this. I mean, Gorg, I really like you. I think there’s room here for something deeper between us, but it’s not something that’s going to happen overnight. I need time. Can’t you give me that?”

Gorg sighed again, deep and heavy. “I suppose that is reasonable since you didn’t know about any of this before it happened. But please know I didn’t know we would knot, either. It comes as much of a surprise to me as it does to you.”

“Then, we’ll take it step by step, day by day, okay?”

“Yes. Can we get a Christmas tree?”

Ebenezer blinked. “What?” Where did that come from?”

“On our planet it is traditional for the Papa — that’s me — to make trinkets for the baby during the pregnancy, and for the PawPaw — that’s you — to hang them

somewhere in the house. I thought that it would be nice for us to hang them on a tree.”

“Even knowing how I feel about the holidays?”

“I’m not asking you to dress up in that red suit and shout ‘ho, ho, hoes’ like you did in your movies,” Gorg said. “I just want a tree.”

“Wait a minute. How did you know I shouted ‘ho, ho, hoes,’ in my movies? It’s my trademark line!”

“Because you shout it in every movie. I watched some of your movie discs on the player in the living room. You would strip out of the red suit and yell ‘ho, ho, hoes,’ and then you’d—”

“I get it!” Ebenezer was flabbergasted. “And how did you learn to use a DVD player?”

“Seriously? Ebbie, I can operate a spaceship that flew across the universe from a different galaxy. I think I can manage a few Earth electronics.” Gorg lifted his nose up in the air and sniffed.

Ebenezer grinned despite the situation he’d found himself in. “I guess that makes sense. So...what did you think? Pretty hot, huh?”

“I do not like watching you have sex with another man,” Gorg said. “The only one I want you to have sex with is me.” He took a step toward Ebenezer.

“Um, Gorg, as much fun as last night was, I think I need some time to process everything before we give it a go again, okay?”

Gorg slumped but nodded. “Agreed.”

“So, what should I expect next? Providing any of this is true, of course. I suppose I’ll have cravings. Like the blueberry pancakes this morning. Maybe some egg salad and peanut butter. What’s next?”

Gorg wrinkled his nose. “Ew. Well, you might experience—”

Ebenezer suddenly felt his stomach turn. He jumped up and made a mad dash for the bathroom.

Gorg followed him and stood in the doorway watching as Ebenezer upchucked last week’s dinner. “They say you might feel a little nauseated.”

Ebbie threw him a hateful glare in between bouts of vomiting. “I think I hate you.”

“No, you don’t. That’s the hormones talking,” Gorg said in a rather chipper voice. “You’ll feel better soon. The Sickness usually only lasts for the first tri-season.”

He ducked just in time to miss being bonked on the head by a toilet brush.

“They say you may get easily irritated, too,” Gorg said, trying to be helpful.

This time he didn’t duck fast enough and got hit in the head with a bar of soap.

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The next morning, Gorg and Ebenezer went to a Christmas tree lot and bought a tree. Gorg couldn't stand the idea of a dead tree bearing his gifts for his upcoming child, so they went to a lot that sold live trees that could be transplanted after the holidays. The young man who worked there used a length of rope to secure the tree to the top of the Jeep.

When they got home, Gorg insisted on carrying it into the house by himself. "No, you are not carrying this! It's too heavy. You need to take it easy, Ebbie."

Gorg decided the tree should go up in the living room corner between the fireplace and the picture window. He set it up, stood back, and reached for Ebenezer's hand, smiling. "It's perfect," Gorg said. "Or it will be once we add a few things."

Ebenezer turned to stare at him. "Add a few what?"

"I want our child to have the most beautiful birth tree on the planet. I want lights and garland and tinsel, like you had on your tree when you were little."

"This was supposed to be a birth tree, not a Christmas tree!" Ebenezer argued. "You know how I feel about the holidays!"

"I'm not asking you to celebrate your holidays. I'm asking you to celebrate the upcoming birth of our child."

Try as he might, Ebenezer couldn't fault Gorg's logic. Again, it all depended on if what Gorg said was true, which Ebenezer still found difficult to believe. "But does it have to look so much like a Christmas tree?" he whined.

“Don’t you want our child to be born healthy and happy?” Gorg eyed Ebenezer. “That’s the traditional meaning of the birth tree. All our hopes and wishes for the health and happiness of the baby are hung from the branches.”

“Fine. We’ll go to Walmart tomorrow and grab some lights, garland, and tinsel.” Ebbe put up a finger. “For the birth tree, not the Christmas tree.”

“Of course, my love. I know how you feel about the holidays.” Gorg grinned at him, making Ebenezer feel like he’d somehow lost an argument.

The store was crowded when they got there, and parking was a nightmare. It took them twenty minutes to score a space a football field’s length from the store.

Okay, that was probably an exaggeration. It wasn’t that far to walk, but Ebenezer was not in a good mood, and it felt that way to him.

He didn’t want to be at Walmart shopping at this time of year, and especially not shopping in the holiday department, but he’d promised Gorg they would go.

Gorg was bundled up in his overcoat, but considering how the majority of people dressed to go to the store these days, it hardly mattered. People showed up in costumes, bathing suits, and pajamas...an overcoat was hardly worth noticing.

Ebenezer grabbed a shopping cart and led Gorg through the store to where the decorations were kept.

The holiday department was located at the back of the store where the gardening supplies were usually shelved. The large room was filled with everything Christmas, and Gorg’s eyes grew as wide as saucers at the display.

With a bit of difficulty, Ebenezer steered Gorg away from the illuminated, blow-up lawn displays — Santa in an outhouse seemed to fascinate Gorg — to the rack full of boxes of garland and tinsel. “What color garland do you want? Silver? Gold? Red? Green? Blue?”

“All of them!” Gorg replied, sounding positively giddy. “I want a rainbow on our birth tree!”

Ebenezer nodded. “Okay, one of each.” He pulled boxes of each color from the shelf and placed them in their shopping cart. He reached for the tinsel, taking two boxes.

“Oh, no. We’ll need more than just two!” Gorg cried.

“A little of this stuff goes a long way,” Ebenezer replied. He was thinking of finding tinsel tucked away behind the sofa or under the chairs next year, long after the “birth” tree had been stripped of its decorations and planted in the yard.

He had been unaware that aliens knew how to use “puppy eyes,” but Gorg looked at him with the most wishful and hopeful expression full of love and longing that before he even knew it, Ebenezer had slipped five more boxes of tinsel into the cart.

The next stop was for lights. Gorg was immediately drawn to lights shaped like small flowers, each in a different color. “Oh, I like these!”

“Of course you do. You wouldn’t like plain ol’ white lights. These are multi-color, flashing, and chasing lights. They do everything but sing to you.”

Gorg gasped. “Do they have lights that sing? I should very much like lights that sing.”

“Goddamn it, me and my big, fat mouth,” Ebenezer grumbled. He led Gorg to

another display of colored lights that flashed, chased, and played twenty-five different holiday tunes.

Gorg clapped his hands and did a little jump. “Oh, these are perfect!”

“Shh, calm down. Your tentacles are squirming like crazy. The store is going to think we’re shoplifting puppies or something.”

“Do they sell puppies here? I would like a puppy.”

Ebenezer frowned. “No, they don’t. I was being facetious, and we don’t need a puppy.”

“Puppies are fun. I read about them and saw them on your television.”

“If, according to you, we’re going to have a baby, we’ll have enough to do without worrying about a dog.”

Gorg huffed. “I will attribute your grumpiness to your pregnancy,” he said. “But please reconsider the puppy. I saw on television that they are very good with children.”

“This is not the time or place to have this discussion!” Ebenezer said. “Now, while we’re at the store, is there anything else we need for this birth tree?”

Gorg tapped his chin with one finger. “I should like one more thing, Ebbie. I want a star for the top of the tree.”

“Oh, hell no! You only want a star because you saw my dad put one on top of the last tree my family decorated,” Ebenezer growled.

“Ebbie, shame on you. I want a star to show our baby where his or her Papa came from. I came from the stars, from another galaxy. The star represents his or her roots.”

Ebenezer felt doubtful that was the entire reason Gorg wanted the star, but under the circumstances, in a crowded store with lots of other shoppers who might overhear their conversation, he let it go. “Okay. They’re over here.”

Gorg found a crystal star that caught the light in a prism. “This one! This is it! Oh, Ebenezer, can you picture how beautiful it will be on top of the birth tree?”

Ebenezer nodded because it was true; the star was gorgeous. He placed it in the cart along with the rest of the merchandise.

“You mentioned you were going to make things for the tree. What do you need to do that?” Ebenezer asked.

“Oh, lots of things. Bits of cloth, ribbon, wood, metal...”

“Craft section, here we come,” Ebenezer said, very glad to be getting out of the holiday section. It made him nervous because he found himself reexamining why he still detested the holidays so much and was beginning to think that maybe, just maybe, they might not be so bad if he shared them with Gorg.

From the craft section of the store, Gorg selected squares of colorful cloth meant for quilting, needles and thread, scissors, wooden plaques shaped like stars and hearts, paint, brushes, beads, and a myriad of other craft materials. He filled up the cart, so much so that Ebenezer had a hard time keeping stuff from spilling out as he pushed it.

“Is that it now? Do we have everything?” he asked Gorg.

“Oh, yes. I think we have plenty of things. Is there anything you want, my love? You mentioned egg salad and peanut butter earlier...”

“Ugh. No. I don’t want anything — well, actually, that’s a lie. I want a big jar of dill pickles, and a couple of cans of Spam.”

“What is Spam? I am unfamiliar with this substance.”

“It’s a canned meat. Very popular in Hawaii.” Ebenezer noticed a woman in the aisle glance at him. “Don’t judge me. I like Spam.”

“And so you shall have it,” Gorg said. He led Ebbie up and down the aisles, scanning the shelves until he found the small, oval cans of meat product. “Which one? There are many.”

Ebenezer considered his choices. “Oh! I want a teriyaki, a maple, and a hot and spicy.” He plucked the cans from the shelf and placed them on top of the craft materials in the cart. “Now we need pickles. And milk. We’re out of milk.”

They picked up the supplies and waited in a long line for checkout. To Ebenezer’s consternation, it took almost as long to check out as it had to pick up the merchandise.

He paid with his Amex again, then Gorg pushed the cart across the parking lot to the car. They loaded the trunk, and got in.

That’s when Ebenezer’s phone rang. “Hello?”

“Ebenezer? It’s Roger Atkins. I have some bad news for you.”

“Why am I not surprised, Roger? When have you ever called me with good news?”

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“Never, to my knowledge,” Roger said after a short pause. “I’m calling this time because Allen and his company, Humpalot Films, is suing you for breach of contract.”

“What? Why? They replaced me with the fluffer!”

“That’s not the point. You walked off set. You didn’t come back. You forced them to replace you. You’re in breach.” Roger cleared his throat. “The fact of the matter is that the company CEO is worried a film starring a nobody fluffer won’t rake in the bucks like an Ebenezer Splooge film would. Their terms to settle are simple. Return and finish the film.”

“Or what?” Ebenezer asked.

“Or go to court.”

“Roger, I’ve retired from the business. The truth is,” Ebbie said, patting Gorg on the arm, “I’ve found someone.”

“Well, turn him in to the nearest lost and found counter and come back to work.”

“I don’t mean ‘found’ like he was wandering down the freeway looking for a ride, you dolt. I mean ‘found’ as in my life’s partner. I’m done with the porn industry.”

“Look, I don’t care if you quit the business, but you have to finish the film you were under contract to complete.” Roger sounded just slightly robotic, and Ebbie wasn’t entirely sure Roger wasn’t some sort of AI construct. He’d never met the man in

person.

“Ebbie you can’t!” Gorg’s voice was tight with anxiety. “It would kill me to see you with another man. And just think of the baby!”

“Baby? What baby? Who is that?” Roger demanded.

“That is someone called Ain’t None of Your Business, Roger. And he was calling me baby. It’s a term of endearment, something I’m sure is alien to you.” Ebbie drew heavily on his acting skills.

Unfortunately, most of his talent must have been in his dick, because Roger didn’t seem to believe any of it. “Are you adopting? Is that why you left? Do you know what will happen if the adoption agency finds out you’re a porn star?” Roger had the balls to laugh. “Oh, brother. You absolutely have no choice but to come back, if for nothing else to keep Allen and the company from blackmailing you.”

“How would they even find out unless you told them?” Ebenezer sputtered, forgetting for a moment that he wasn’t adopting. “You’re my lawyer! Isn’t there something called attorney-client privilege or something?”

“That would be true if you actually paid me, which you haven’t in months. In fact, if you’d read the last email I sent you, you would know I quit and threatened to sue for back wages. However, I very quickly found a highly lucrative position that pays ten times what you paid — or didn’t pay — me, so I dropped the lawsuit.”

Ebenezer sighed. “Good news for me, I guess. Who do you work for now?”

He could hear the oily grin in Roger’s voice. “I’m chief in-house counsel for Humpalot Films.”

“You fucker!”

“Sorry, dude. Go back to work or risk losing your chance at adoption. Not that I, personally, would reach out to the adoption agency, but you know how vindictive Allen can be...”

It was at that point, just as Ebenezer was swelling with indignation and fury, that he remembered he wasn't trying to adopt. Not that it made the threat any shittier, but at least now he could let them chase their tails trying to stop an adoption that wasn't happening to begin with.

“You fucking suck, Roger. And tell that scumbag, Allen, that I'll see him in Hell before I go back to that piss-poor excuse for a film!” Ebenezer thumbed the off button, ending the call. He smiled, imagining Roger, Allen, and the CEO of Humpalot Films swearing and grumbling and pledging to get even with him by screwing up his adoption plans. He almost wished he could tell them that the baby in question was growing inside him. What would they do then? Try to stick a lien on the baby until he pays his debt?

“Ebbie?” Gorg's voice sounded small and scared.

“Don't worry, Gorg. I'm not going back to the porn industry. Not even to finish the last film. Those days are over for me.”

He was rewarded with a beatific smile from Gorg that gave him the warm fuzzies and made him grin back.

“It is just as well. Your body will be swelling soon, and you will find some positions difficult.”

Ebenezer's smile slid away. “You mean sex is going to be awkward? I don't know if

I'm going to like that. In fact, I know I'm not. Oh, God...am I going to get too fat to have sex?"

"Don't worry. I will be able to support your weight. That's what my tentacles are for."

"That's not relieving my anxiety a single iota."

Gorg seemed to realize he may have made a faux pas. "No, no. You will never be fat to me. You will only look more stunning than you already do."

"Just fat to everyone else?"

"On Jizm, pregnant people are the most attractive of us all."

"People on earth will think I've got the potbelly from Hell. They'll think I swallowed a beachball."

"Ebenezer, stop! You are my life mate. You are handsome, soon to be even more so. Does that not matter to you?"

Ebenezer sighed. "Yes. Yes, it does matter. We've only known each other for a few days, but I really do think it matters. It must — I've upended my entire life and career for you." He summoned up a smile. "I have an idea of what might make me feel better."

Gorg looked relieved. "What is it? Name it, and it is yours."

Ebbie's smile felt both lazy and lecherous on his lips. It was the best kind of smile, he thought— the kind that held the promise of soon getting laid. He took Gorg's hand and led him to the bedroom.

Through the bedroom, actually, to the large master bath attached. “Strip.”

Gorg cocked his head. “Strip what? The wallpaper?”

“No, your clothes off. Like this.” He was quick to demonstrate, standing bare-ass naked in a matter of moments, his clothes in a puddle on the floor.

“Oh, that kind of strip!” Gorg grinned and tossed off his overcoat, exposing his iridescent tentacles and body. He shimmied out of his boots and the sweatpants Ebbie had loaned him. His cock began to fill as Ebbie watched, enthralled.

“That is one mighty fine dick,” Ebbie said. He was tempted to drop to his knees and suck it, but the promise of wet, soapy sex in the shower was too tempting to ignore. He reached into the shower and turned on the faucet, adjusting the water temperature flowing from the rain shower head.

Taking Gorg’s hand, he led Gorg into the shower, letting the warm water sluice over them. He turned his face up to the spray, then smiled at Gorg. “Hand me that blue bottle, please. And that fluffy puff.”

Ebbie quickly used the liquid soap to saturate the puff. Then putting the bottle back on the shelf, he began to rub the puff over Gorg’s rock hard body and warm, sinuous tentacles.

“Oh, my! That feels wonderful!” Gorg whispered. His head was thrown back, and his cock was standing ramrod straight. Ebbie could tell that the fact he was enjoying the experience went without saying.

Ebbie slid his free hand over Gorg’s back, to Gorg’s plump rear end. He let one finger slip between Gorg’s cheeks and tickle at the tiny ring of muscle surrounding Gorg’s hole.

Gorg began to hum, a throaty sound that was both hungry and horny at the same time. He tried to back on to Ebbie's finger, to ride it perhaps, but Ebbie was having none of it. Instead, Ebbie spun Gorg around to face the shower wall. "Brace yourself against the wall," he ordered.

Gorg did as he was told, leaning forward and bracing his forearms against the wet, slick tiles.

Ebbie knelt behind Gorg, and pried his ass cheeks apart, exposing his hole. Dipping his head closer, he began to flick his tongue over it, sucking at it with his lips, and dipping the tip of his tongue inside.

Gorg was no longer humming — he was moaning, low and loud. "What is that you're doing? I like it!"

Ebbie took a breath. "Rimming. I knew you'd like it. Now, hush. I'm going to jerk you off while eating your ass."

He returned his licking and flicking tongue to Gorg's asshole, while reaching around Gorg's narrow waist and wrapping his fingers around Gorg's cock.

He stroked it, squeezing, playing with the head while tongue fucking Gorg's hole. It didn't take long before Gorg roared and came, painting the shower wall with white drips.

Gorg's climax left him shaking, trembling with the power of it. He turned and took Ebbie into his arms. "Now you."

"No. This was just for you, Gorg. My gift, mine to give."

"That's not fair! I want you to come, too!"

“Oh, man, you beg so pretty,” Ebbie said, then kissed Gorg hard, tongue pushing in deep and wrestling with Gorg’s. “But to tell you the truth, my stomach is a little upset. If you want to make me happy, let’s dry off, get me into bed, and you can bring me a nice cup of tea.”

Tea? When had Ebenezer Splooge ever asked anyone for a cup of fucking tea? Bourbon, sure. Whiskey, maybe. Fireball, when all else failed, but tea?

Yet, that’s what he wanted. A nice herbal blend that would relax him, and settle his stomach, and help him take the nap he suddenly yearned to indulge in.

Gorg gave him a gentle smile. “Tummy troubles are normal for pregnancy, Ebbie. Let’s get you dried off and into bed, then I’ll get you some tea and toast.”

“Ah,” Ebbie breathed, suddenly feeling exhausted. “That sounds good.”

Gorg helped Ebbie dry off, then picked him up and carried him to the bed, depositing him gently on it. He pulled a folded comforter up over Ebbie.

“Be right back, little love.” He laid a gentle hand on Ebbie’s stomach, and Ebbie wasn’t sure who Gorg was speaking to — him or the baby.

If there was a baby.

He still wasn’t convinced.

But, before he could think about it any further, he slipped into sleep and dreamed of plump, beautiful, tentacled babies with his eyes and Gorg’s iridescent skin.

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“Ebenezer, we need you! Damn it! When are you coming back? What will it take to get you back on set?” Allen’s voice sounded smarmy, almost oily, but Ebbie knew he had it under tight control when all he probably wanted to do was scream at Ebbie.

“Never and nothing. I’m not coming back.”

“If you want that adoption to go through you will!” Allen’s voice now dripped with venom, as if he were the world’s most evil supervillain.

“Try it,” was all Ebbie had to say. He worked to keep the smile from his voice. “Try it and see what happens.” He hung up on Allen and let his smile burst free. “God, that felt good.”

“Is he still bothering you?” Gorg asked. He didn’t look happy at all. Allen had been calling every couple of days for weeks now, getting more and more intense and angry with every phone call. “I think perhaps it is time.”

“Time for what?”

“Time for me to call my parental units and have them send a ship for us. We can go home to Jizm, where we will be celebrated and our infant loved by all.”

“Whoa, take a step back, there, partner. I never said anything about going to Jizm. I don’t even know if I can survive there!” Ebbie’s eyes widened.

“Of course you can. Our atmosphere is practically identical to this one. Plus, in emergencies, our doctors are well-practiced in delivering tentacled babies. Can you

say the same about human doctors?”

“Look, Gorg...”

Gorg smiled and rubbed his hand over Ebbie’s rounding belly. “You will be feeling life any day now. We have already heard the heartbeat. Do you still deny you are pregnant with my child?”

Ebbie shook his head. “No, I can’t deny it anymore. I don’t understand it, can’t wrap my head around the how of it, but...yeah. I’m preggers with your baby. Our baby.”

Gorg nodded. “Our baby. And human doctors will think our newborn is a freak, you said so yourself.”

“That’s true...but what if your family doesn’t accept me? I’m not a Jizmite. How do they feel about mixed marriages?”

Gorg wagged his finger. “Marriage does not exist on Jizm. We have life mates, remember? And life mates cannot be denied. It’s the law.”

“I don’t know, Gorg. Maybe it would be alright if we stayed here. Had a home birth. Homeschool the kid...”

“Is that the sort of life you’d want for our child? Never to go outside without an overcoat or some other sort of disguise? Never to celebrate his Jizmite heritage? Besides, it wouldn’t be alright. I took a peek at the future and it wasn’t pleasant.” He took the time shift processor out. “I think it’s time we took another trip, this time to the near future.”

“No, I don’t want to see it,” Ebbie said, fear making his heart pound. As long as he didn’t know, he could pretend everything would be fine. But to see it would ruin his

thinly woven fantasy.

“Come, love. It’s time,” Gorg said. He touched the antenna to Ebbie’s hand and the world dipped away.

“Where are we?” Ebbie looked around, confused. He held his arms wrapped protectively around his stomach. “This looks like a courthouse.”

“It is.”

“But who’s on trial?”

Gorg sighed heavily. “We are. We were found out. You, me, and the baby. The state says the baby and I are alien life forms and have no protection under the law of this country or planet. They fear I am on a scouting mission for an invasion force. They do not believe me when I tell them I am merely a tourist. Nor do they recognize us as life mates. There are no protections for us here. They wish to charge you with treason for harboring an alien. Two aliens, actually.”

Ebbie’s arms tightened around his belly. “No! They can’t just take my baby away!”

“Your baby is my baby, too, Ebbie. It has already been born in this future and has tentacles and iridescent skin. It is as alien as I am in the eyes of the court. I don’t know what they’ll do with us — send us to a lab is my guess. Right now we are in a holding cell somewhere. It is not nice.”

“And I’ll go to jail. Oh, Gorg, I don’t want this! Not for you, not for the baby, and not for me!”

“On Jizm you will be celebrated as all pregnancies and newborns are. We will welcome you. Yes, it is a dull planet, but perhaps, so that the baby doesn’t forget his Earthling heritage, we can celebrate some of the holidays there.”

“I am never going to get away from the freaking holidays, am I?”

“Shh. It’s starting.” Gorg motioned toward the head of the courtroom, where a judge sat at his bench, and a jury filled the jury box.

“Madam chairperson, have you come to a verdict?” The judge asked.

“Yes, sir.” A buxom, older woman replied, standing up and nodding her head.

“I see me,” Ebenezer said, gesturing toward the defense table where he recognized himself sitting. “But where are you and the baby?”

“I told you. I do not have any rights on this planet. I am being held elsewhere. Where, I do not know. A laboratory, perhaps? A jail? The baby is probably in the same facility as me.”

“No!”

“Come. You don’t need to see this anymore. I am sorry I had to show you at all.” Gorg took Ebbie’s hand and used the time shift processor to whisk them back to their own time.

Ebenezer stood in the familiar kitchen but felt his heart race with fear. “Call your parents, Gorg. We need to get out before...before...” His voice trailed off and his fear was replaced by a sense of wonder. “What’s happening? I felt... something.”

“The baby?” Gorg’s face split with a delight filled grin.

“Like butterfly wings tickling me on the inside.”

“That’s the baby!” Gorg’s excitement fueled Ebbie’s and they grinned widely at one another. “Your people don’t conceive in eggs as mine does. You can feel the baby moving!”

Gorg put his hand over Ebbie’s belly even though they both knew it was too early for the baby to be felt moving from the outside. Even so, Gorg beamed as if he could feel the child.

“I’m going to the ship, Ebbie, and call the parental units. Either they’ll come for us or send someone to pick us up.” Gorg didn’t look as if he would ever stop smiling, and despite his fears, Ebbie felt the same way.

“I’ll go pack my stuff.”

“You won’t need much. Whatever you need, we’ll get on Jizm.”

Ebbie cocked an eyebrow. “Oh? Do they have much call for two-armed shirts on Jizm?”

Gorg’s tentacles wiggled and he scratched his head, looking sheepish. “No, I expect you might be the only customer who might buy one. But we can have them made. We have wonderful tailors on Jizm.”

“That’s fine, but I think I need to bring a few with me — although they won’t fit me much longer. They’re already tight and my stomach looks like a beer belly.”

“You look beautiful, and I promise to get you whatever you need when we get home. And it will be your home, Ebbie. I swear it.”

Ebbie smiled and drew Gorg in for a hug and long, deep kiss. “I know it will be. I can’t wait to see the Great Purple Inland Sea.”

“And taste the sugar sand. Oh, there are many other things to see as well! The Great White City of Charvel, and the Ancient Crawls... The Rainbow Meadow is particularly beautiful during the time of Renewal, too.”

“I’m looking forward to seeing it all, as long as I’m with you.”

Gorg hugged Ebbie and kissed his forehead. “I’ll be right back. It won’t take long to phone home.”

He was half right. It didn’t take long for Gorg to phone home, but it took a bit longer to explain to his parental units why he was bringing home a pet.

“He’s not a pet, Papa! He’s my life mate!”

“Nonsense. Whoever heard of a two-armed, tentacle-less life mate? You are either mistaken or have gone mentally askew. Perhaps the atmosphere on Earth is too thin and has affected your gray matter.”

Gorg bellowed, angrier than he could ever recall being. “I am not addled, nor am I mistaken. What’s more, we knotted, Papa! And you know that only happens between life mates. And, best of all, I am going to be a father.”

The silence boomed from the other end of the line, and it was so deafening Gorg thought he’d either shocked his father into death or dropped the call. And he wasn’t entirely sure which was preferable at the moment.

“Papa? Are you there? Hello?”

“I’m here. Pregnant , you say? And you’re sure it’s yours?”

“Papa!” Gorg yelled. “Why are you being so obtuse? You weren’t like this when Hivery mated with Listeria, the one-eyed Bartusian.”

“That was different — at least she has tentacles. Besides, you’re the youngest, Gorg. You’re just out of University, barely beginning to explore the universe, and now you’re going to be tied down with a mate and a baby!”

Gorg heard his mother’s voice rise in the background. “Give me that telecommunicator this instant!” There was a moment of mumbling and fumbling, and then his mother spoke clearly to him. “Gorg? You’ve life mated?”

“Yes, Mama. His name is Ebenezer, but we call him Ebbie. And he’s perfect and wonderful and pregnant with my baby.”

“Oh, that’s lovely news, Gorg. Don’t you mind a word your Papa says. He’s always been overprotective of you, ever since you were in egg.” Then, in a more timid, almost frightened voice, asked, “You are coming home, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Mama. We want to make our home on Jizm.”

She shrieked with delight. “That’s wonderful! I’m so happy, Gorg! When can we expect you?”

“That’s really why I’m calling. We need a ride. My ship went through a meteor storm on the way into the atmosphere and was badly damaged. I had to make a crash landing. The ship is irreparable.”

In the background, he could hear his father say, “Told him to trade that rotten bucket of bolts in seasons ago!”

Gorg’s Mama hushed his Papa. “Oh, hon. That’s awful for you. I know how much you loved that ship. Of course we’ll come for you! We’ll send your brother, Hivery, to get you immediately!”

“Thank you, Mama! And please talk to Papa. I don’t want anything to upset Ebbie when we get home.”

“Of course, my darling. You take care of your life mate and egg, and I’ll take care of mine.” There was a smile in his mother’s voice that was unmistakable.

“Um, about that...The baby isn’t in an egg, mother. They do live births on Earth. Ebbie can already feel the baby moving!”

“Oh! Like Listeria’s people! How wonderful. We’ll be able to see the baby right after birth. I’m so excited!” His mother paused. He could hear his father talking in the background and imagined his mother’s tentacles batting his father away from the communicator. “Alright, dear! We’ll see you soon!”

“Love you, Mama! Thank you!”

He ended the transmission and was still smiling when he went back into the house. “They’re sending my egg brother, Hivery, to get us.”

“Is he going to be okay with me?” Ebbie put his hands over his belly. “With us?”

“Of course, he will be. He’s not the least agreeable egg brother I have, but he’s newly life mated himself, and his life mate, Listeria, just gave birth to a little female. She has the most beautiful blue eye.”

“Eye...as in one?”

“Listeria’s people all have one eye. They more than make up for it with the number of their tentacles. Eleven, I believe, if you count the one growing from the top of their head.”

“How...interesting. Okay, then. I’ll go pack. Is there anything from here in the house that you’d like to take with you?”

Gorg cocked his head thinking about it. “Oh, maybe just a glass of seawater. I think it would be hilarious to offer a taste to my egg brothers.”

Ebbie laughed. “You’re so mean!”

“No, just a prankster. Once, I reversed the polarity of one of my egg brother’s face shearers. He grew a three-meter beard before he realized what had happened!” Gorg roared with laughter, slapping his knee.

“Ice cream.”

Gorg blinked. “I beg your pardon?”

“Does Jizm have ice cream?”

“No. We have no cows, so no cream, iced or otherwise.”

“We need to bring a couple of cows, Gorg. The baby will need milk, and I don’t know if my body will change enough for me to make it.”

“Your body will change in whatever ways nature intends a body to be in order to sustain the life of your newborn. Do not fear.”

“But children, human children, need milk to grow, even when they’re older.”

Gorg smiled, and cupped Ebbie’s cheek with the palm of his hand. “We shall obtain cows later on. We shall get whatever our child needs, even if we need fly to the far ends of the Universe to get it.”

Ebbie looked relieved and nodded. “Of course we will. I’m being panicky for no reason. Must be the hormones.”

“Indeed. Now, you pack, and I’ll go wave down my egg brother.”

“Will he be here so soon?”

“Oh, I’m sure Mama is making him use the teleporter rather than mere space travel. He’s probably already here, looking over my crashed ship. I’ll be back in a few moments.”

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That they were brothers was immediately apparent. There was a strong family resemblance. Hivery looked very much like Gorg, with the normal slight differences in appearance all brothers seemed to have. Hivery's hair was a bit darker than Gorg's, and he was taller and heavier than Gorg. Also, Hivery's features didn't quite meet the "golden ratio" measure of beauty that Gorg's did — his nose was a bit too large, and his eyes were too wide-spaced — but he was a good-looking guy just the same, with lovely iridescent tentacles very similar to those his brother sported.

Gorg immediately made introductions. Ebbie could tell he was nervous, no matter that he'd assured Ebbie that Hivery would be accepting. "Ebenezer, this is my egg brother, Hivery. Hivery, this is my life mate, Ebenezer. We call him Ebbie for short."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Hivery," Ebbie said. He held out an outstretched hand.

"Am I supposed to give you something?" Hivery asked, a frown creasing his forehead as he stared at Ebbie's outstretched hand.

"No. It is an Earth custom to shake hands to show friendship. We are showing one another that our knife hands are empty," Ebbie tried to explain.

"Ah. I understand. Practical, I suppose, when one does not have tentacles." Hivery gripped Ebbie's hand and gave it several hard, exaggerated pumps.

"Good. Now that we're all acquainted, we have only these couple of trunks to add to the weight of the ship, Hivery. We'd like to leave as soon as possible," Gorg said.

Hivery held up a hand. "Mama said your life mate is with child. I am unfamiliar with

Earth's birth process. I do not wish to mess the inside of my ship up with birth fluids while en route to Jizm."

Gorg shook his head. "You have nothing to worry about. Earth has the same trimester pregnancy term that Jizm has. He was knotted during the beginning of Renewal. It is not yet the beginning of the Little Death season. He has plenty of time before he delivers during the Birth season. We will safely be on Jizm before that happens."

Hivery didn't look completely convinced, but he nodded. "Very well. We should leave as soon as possible. As you know, pregnant people should not use the transporter for safety reasons. We'll have to fly home. There was another meteor storm nearing the Milky Way near the Heliocentric Solar System. I do not wish my craft to suffer the same fate your hunk of space junk did."

Gorg seemed to take offense at that. "My ship was cherry. It was an antique, a fine piece of machinery that ran like clockwork until that meteor storm hit it."

"It was a dilapidated piece of space garbage, and I'm surprised it made it this far from Jizm." Hivery lifted his nose in the air.

"Ha! It was miles better than the hunk of nickel-based superalloy that rolled off the automated assembly line that you fly! My craft was hand made, piece by piece and bolt by bolt!"

Brothers, it seemed, were the same everywhere, especially when it came to their toys.

Ebbie stepped between them, holding his hands protectively over his belly. "Boys! Can we measure penises later? I'd like to get off this planet and on the way to my new home before Birth season, if you please."

Hivery huffed. "My penis is superior. Everyone knows this."

Gorg scoffed. “Your mate is telling you false tales, Hivery. Your penis is subpar. I have seen you in the hydro cleansing units.”

“Please, knock it off, the both of you!” Ebbie ordered. He picked up a suitcase and shoved it into Gorg’s tentacles, which wrapped around the piece of Samsonite. “Here. Take this, and let’s get going.”

“Knock what off what?” Hivery whispered to Gorg in a voice still loud enough for Ebbie to hear.

“I believe my life mate wishes us to cease bickering.”

“Then why didn’t he just say that?” Hivery picked up the other suitcase and led Gorg and Ebbie toward the gangplank into his vehicle.

“Earthlings rarely say exactly what they mean. I have learned this since my arrival. They are a quite verbose species.”

“Are you saying I talk a lot?” Ebbie asked, a bit vexed at the description.

“Not if it makes you feel badly, little love,” Gorg said. His overly patronizing tone only served to make Ebbie angrier.

“I am not verbose! I always say only what I mean, when I mean it, and how I mean it. How could you think I jabber on like a jay? I rarely speak.” He turned toward Hivery. “Sometimes, I don’t even offer information. I only answer a direct question. I can’t help it if my answers require lengthy explanations. I am not a chatterbox!”

He didn’t miss the look of understanding that passed between the brothers at his rather rambling, loquacious defense and clamped his jaw shut. He resolved not to say another word except in response to a direct question and then to keep his answer to

“yes,” “no,” or “maybe.”

This sworn oath lasted all of three minutes until he walked onto the ship, and an interrogation spewed forth from his mouth in an unstoppable deluge of questions.

“What’s in there?” “What’s that for?” “How does that work?” “What does that do?” “Where’s the bathroom?”

The last question turned out to be the most imperative, as reinforced by Ebbie’s I have to pee now dance.

“There is an elimination room just to your right. The anti-fecal matter pills are in the small silver canister. Keep in mind that once we launch, it cannot be used until we reach outer space and microgravity.”

“How long will that take?”

“Not long. We’ll be travelling at the speed of light, so roughly three Earth hours,” Gorg explained. “Until then, you will have an elimination vacuum in your suit.”

“I am not peeing in my pants!”

“Then you will need to hold it. I have seen you when you need to relieve yourself. You will be strapped into your chair — I do not think you will be able to do the pee dance very well then.”

Gorg helped him into his space suit, which wasn’t as bulky and futuristic as those he’d seen on astronauts, but not the lamé, formfitting suits of the 1960s space shows he’d watched in reruns, either. To his relief, the elimination vacuum wasn’t bothersome at all.

He took his seat in a chair behind Gorg's, who would sit next to Hivery at the controls in the cockpit.

The chair was actually quite comfy, and Ebbie settled in as Gorg fastened his three-point seatbelt.

“Are you okay? Do you need anything? A drink? Some snacks? We can't serve anything once we take off until we reach microgravity.” It was obvious Gorg was truly interested in Ebbie's comfort, and it warmed Ebbie's heart.

“Is the take off going to be rough? It always looks so rough on television,” Ebbie asked. “Will the baby be okay?”

Gorg smiled at him and kissed his forehead. “Our takeoffs and landings are — usually — as smooth as silk. Mine wasn't, but that was because of the damage I took from the meteor storm. This one should be, how do you say it? A piece of a walk in the cake park.”

Ebbie chuckled, albeit a bit nervously. “It's either a piece of cake or a walk in the park. One or the other.”

“Ah. A piece of cake, then. You like cake. This will be fine.” He leaned down and kissed Ebbie properly, then went to his own seat next to Hivery.

Hivery and Gorg spoke to one another in a blurbbery sort of language that seemed quite wet to Ebbie's untrained ear, then he felt the slightest of tremors beneath his feet.

There were no windows, other than the one in the cockpit, but Ebbie could see enough in the space between Hivery and Gorg to see that they'd taken off and were heading up.

As in straight up, into the clouds, even though to Ebbie it felt as if they were flying horizontally. It was the weirdest thing, but he guessed Jizmite technology was so far advanced that he wouldn't understand it even if it were explained to him. Science was never his forte anyway. He could barely program the clock on the microwave.

Within moments, or so it seemed to Ebbie, the skies darkened, and the stars winked on. He wished he had a better view, but knew he had to stay buckled in for his own safety and that of the baby.

"How long will it take us to reach Jizm?" He asked, once it seemed as if most of the busywork of liftoff was over for Hivery and Gorg.

"Just three of your Earth days," Hivery replied. "Of course, we're traveling at the speed of light, which means it's much, much longer, but that's science for you."

Suddenly, Ebbie was struck by a terrifying thought. "Am I going to age?"

"Yup. Three whole days worth," Gorg answered and chuckled. "Don't worry, love. It'll be fine. Soon we'll reach microgravity, and you can unbuckle and come sit on my lap to enjoy the view."

"I suddenly have about a million questions to ask you, most of which I probably should've asked before we left Earth." Ebbie felt those million questions bubbling around in his gut, making him feel slightly queasy.

Hivery spoke up. "Like what? Now is as good a time as any. It will help pass the time."

"What kind of food do you have on Jizm? Will there be stuff I can eat? Gorg, you know what we eat on Earth? Is it the same or similar?"

“It is, just faster,” Gorg replied. “Sometimes it gets away, but we have frozen if you don’t want to bother chasing it down.”

“Oh, my God. I’m going to be sick,” Ebbie moaned. “I can’t hunt. I never even played violent video games because I hate the sight of blood.”

“Never fear, love. I will hunt for you. Always. And for the baby. Plus, we have farms that grow vegetable matter for us, and fisheries. You will be fine. The food on Jizm is quite tasty. I think you will like it.”

“What about doctors? I’m not a Jizmite. Will doctors know how to treat me when I give birth, or if I get sick?”

“Aside from our tentacles, we are quite similar on the inside. At least, that’s what we’ve always been taught in Extraterrestrial Anatomy at University,” Gorg explained. “I shall deliver our child. It is tradition. A doctor will be nearby in case of complications, of which, I am confident, there will be none. Also, my mother will be there, and she delivered all of her own plus several dozen of our friends’ and relatives’ babies.”

“But no human hybrids?”

“No, this will be our planet’s first human hybrid baby. Isn’t that exciting?” Hivery asked. “My own wife, Listeria, has had two successful births on Jizm. She has live births, too, as you will have, so you see? Everything will be fine.”

“Except she is a she, but I’m a he , and on Earth, boys don’t have babies!” Even Ebbie could hear the note of panic creeping into his voice.

“Ebbie, we spoke about this, remember? Your body will change to accommodate your birth needs.”

“I remember. I’ll grow a fucking pocket.”

“More like a pouch, but that’s the gist of it,” Hivery said. “It’ll go away after the birth. Listeria might be a girl, but on her planet, they cough up their babies like hairballs. It’s most unattractive. She had pouch-births as well.”

“Isn’t nature amazing?” Gorg asked. “Our knotting ensures pregnancy, and our semen contains the building blocks necessary to ensure a healthy, safe delivery.”

“It’s a miracle,” Ebbie said, not thoroughly convinced but feeling a bit better knowing that he, at least, would not need to upchuck their child into the world.

A short while later, after another half dozen questions were asked and answered and a rather tedious and longwinded if sprightly debate between Hivery and Gorg about the best way to change the oxygenator spring on a ‘356997 Venusian spacecraft ran its course, Ebbie felt a strange sensation. It was as though he weighed nothing, was as light as air, and his body pulled up at the restraints keeping him tethered to the seat.

“This is it! We’ve reached microgravity.” Gorg announced. He unlocked his safety harness and floated toward the ceiling. “Now, wait for me, Ebbie. The first time in microgravity can be disconcerting. I don’t want you to bump your head.”

He helped Ebbie out of his harness, and to Ebbie’s shock, they both floated toward the craft’s ceiling. Ebbie put up one hand — it felt as if he were moving in slow motion — to brace against the ceiling.

“You’ll get the hang of it very quickly. Just don’t make any powerful moves. For example, don’t push off from the wall because you’ll slingshot across the vehicle,” Gorg said. He kept a firm hand on Ebbie’s arm as Ebbie floated around the cabin.

“This is amazing!” Ebbie laughed with the joyous abandon of a child and did a slow

somersault in the air. His delight seemed to infect the others because they laughed, too.

“It’s never quite as magical as it is the first time, huh, Hivery?” Gorg asked.

“No. After a while, it’s just the same old anti-gravity feeling.” Hivery laughed again. “But your mate really seems to be enjoying himself!”

“Come, love. Let’s sit awhile. You’ll have three days to enjoy floating around the cabin. Right now, come say goodbye to Earth.”

That took the air right out of Ebbie’s balloon. He felt deflated as he allowed Gorg to float him to the cockpit. “Can we never come back again? I didn’t know that I’d never be able to go back! Not even for a visit?” He began to feel anxiety creep in again.

“Of course we can! I just need to get a new ship, but you certainly don’t want to return until after the baby is born! We just left it!” Gorg sounded upset and confused.

“Oh, I thought you meant I’d never see Earth again, and there things about it I want our child to experience. Like Disneyland, and sledding, and...and...”

“And the holidays?”

“You are fixated on the holidays! Holidays are for suckers. They’re just a plot to get people to spend more money than they should.” Ebbie huffed and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Eep. Touched a sore spot with your mate, huh?” Hivery asked. He turned to Ebbie. “He’s always been like this, even on Bloober Day. Always wanting more than a good fart.”

“Earth celebrates lots and lots of holidays, Hivery, not just one.”

“One is one too many,” Ebbie grumbled under his breath.

“Do I need to take out the time shift processor again?” Gorg asked Ebbie.

Ebbie’s eyes grew wide. “No. I learned my lesson. I swear. It’s just going to take me a while to adjust, that’s all. I mean, falling for an alien, getting pregnant, leaving my planet...it’s all a bit much. Throw in the true meaning of the holidays and I’m on overload.”

Gorg smiled. “That’s alright. We’ll have lots of time to adjust. Now look...there’s Earth. See it? Third planet from the sun.”

“I see it! Oh, it’s beautiful. I’m going to miss it.” Ebbie didn’t realize how much he’d miss it until that moment. Tears welled up and lifted off his cheeks, floating to the ceiling.

Gorg caught one on the tip of his finger and brought it to his lips. “Your tears taste like the sea, but far less salty. I think your people may have had their beginnings in the sea, as mine did.”

Ebbie nodded. “If you believe in evolution, we did. As single cells, floating in the deep darkness.”

He looked out the window, marveling at the unfathomable scope of space and the improbability of how one lone alien could’ve traversed it and found him on that little blue planet and changed his life in so many incredible ways.

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Jizm was a purple-and-brown planet that looked much like Earth from a distance aside from the color scheme.

“The Great Inland Sea of Jizm is purple,” Gorg explained, although not for the first time. “Although we don’t have as much ocean as Earth does. We have more land mass. But when it rains, the drops are prismatic.”

“That must be beautiful,” Ebbie said. He was feeling nervous. They would be landing shortly, and he’d be meeting Gorg’s family for the first time. Aside from Hivery, of course, who’d proven to be a nice enough guy.

“Our mountains do not have snow on them, though, unlike yours. We may need to manufacture some snow so our child can go sledding.” Gorg was babbling as if trying to keep Ebbie’s mind busy and not thinking about the upcoming landing. He knew Ebbie was nervous.

“What if they don’t like me?” Ebbie whispered. “Can we go back to Earth?”

“They don’t much like me on Earth, remember? Scientists, labs, etcetera? And they won’t like the baby there either, Ebbie,” Gorg said. His tone was gentle and reassuring. “But everyone here will love you because you are a wonderful person. You have nothing to worry about.”

But Ebbie did worry, right up until the moment the spacecraft landed, and the outside hatch opened.

Gorg stood up and helped Ebbie to his feet. Now that microgravity was gone and the

ship's interior gravitational device was deactivated, Ebbie felt as if he weighed a thousand pounds. His belly had grown rounder on the trip, even though it was technically only three days. Something about the speed of light accelerating everything.

Not enough to really affect his due date, but enough to make him feel clumsy and awkward.

Gorg slipped an arm around Ebbie's waist and helped him negotiate the gangplank.

Ebbie looked up from his feet where he'd been staring, trying hard not to trip over them and make a fool of himself, and froze.

At the end of the gangplank, a group of people gathered, and thousands more stood waiting beyond them.

And every one of them looked like Gorg.

At least they did until he got closer. Then, small differences began to emerge as individuals came into focus.

However, they all had eight tentacles, and they were all waving at him. Or at least, at Hivery and Gorg. He couldn't be sure.

Gorg led him down the gangplank to the first group of people. He kept an arm looped around Ebbie's waist, although Ebbie wasn't sure it was to steady Ebbie, or make his claim on Ebbie clear. Either way, Ebbie was fine with it.

"Mama, Papa. This is Ebenezer Splooge, my Earthling life mate. As you can see, we are expecting already!" Gorg grinned and introduced Ebbie to an older pair of Jizmites. He finally let his arm slip away from Ebbie's waist. It was none too soon.

“Call me Mama!” the older female cried and threw all eight of her tentacles and two arms around Ebbie, giving him a warm, tight, hug. “How far along are you? Oh, we must plan a baby shower! We’ll have food and cake, and gifts, and we’ll dance the Great Pregnancy Dance around the Sacred Penis Statue. I’ll get Listeria to help me plan it!”

“I didn’t know they had baby showers on Jizm,” Ebbie said. “I mean, Gorg told me about the, uh, Great Pregnancy Dance, but I’m very happy to meet you Mama, and have you plan one for me.”

“And I am Papa!” Gorg’s male parental unit joyfully exclaimed and gave Ebbie a hug identical to the one Mama had given him. “Another grandchild! How exciting!”

“He has no tentacles, Mama,” a small voice squeaked. “Not even two, like us.”

Ebbie looked down and saw a small red-haired girl with one large, golden eye clinging to the leg of a female Jizmite, who held a baby in her arms. All three of them had only two tentacles. “You must be Listeria,” he said to the female. “And this is your child...?”

“This is Fosterina, who needs to learn manners, I’m afraid. The baby is Posterino, and I am very glad to meet you. We didn’t think Gorg would ever find his life mate!” She smiled at him and hugged him with a free tentacle.

“I’ve heard a lot about you from Hivery on the trip over. I’ll be glad to get to know you personally now.” Ebbie returned her smile with one of his own.

He was then introduced to a long line of brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws, all of whom blurred into a single entity after a while and none of whose names Ebbie knew he could possibly remember.

“Gorg, I’m feeling really tired,” Ebbie whispered before Gorg could begin the next round of introductions.

“Oh, my! Of course! You must be exhausted. Papa? Can we stay with you until I can have our own abode built?” Gorg asked. His arm had returned to its place around Ebbie’s waist.

“Mama would give me the Great God Jizm’s own wrath if I didn’t invite you to stay with us!” Papa’s laugh was deep and infectious. “You are welcome to stay as long as you wish. Come, let’s get your life mate home where he can rest. And some food! He must be starved.”

“I don’t think I can catch anything right now,” Ebbie said, not wanting to offend his new in-laws.

“Oh, darling, no one expects you to hunt in your condition. I’ll bring you food. It’s my job as your life mate,” Gorg said. He said it with a wink, telling Ebbie that whatever Gorg brought him to eat would look sufficiently enough like Earth food that Ebbie would be able to eat it.

“Excellent!” Mama cried. “Let’s go home!”

“Home” was a large domed structure at the end of a pleasant cul-de-sac with other domed structures. Ebbie didn’t think he’d seen a single straight edge all through the ride through the city — everything was softly curved or domed. Jizmites seemed very fond of S-curves. Even the streets were looped and twisty.

Inside Gorg’s parental units’ home was a honeycomb of round rooms. Gorg led him to one near the rear of the house. He waved his hand in front of a sensor on the wall

and a panel slid away, revealing a lovely appointed bedroom.

There was a round bed — even the furniture on Jizm was curved — a dresser and a pair of nightstands. The lighting was recessed and controlled by another sensor. To one side of the room was a small enclave, which Gorg explained was the bathroom.

The first thing Ebbie noticed was the lack of a very important piece of porcelain — there was no toilet. Then he remembered Gorg talking about a pill that turned all bodily waste into flatulence. On a silver pedestal was a small, shell-shaped dish full of tiny blue pills. He shrugged. Either he was going to become a very gassy person, or he might have an erection that lasted for more than four hours. He dry-swallowed a pill.

The shower was small, but also like the one on the craft, which reminded Ebbie of a tropical rainforest. Plants grew along the walls, the leaves of which released a sweet-smelling lather when rubbed against the skin.

After Ebbie had showered, and dressed in one of Gorg's nightshirts — the eight tentacle sleeves hanging uselessly in front — he let Gorg tuck him into the big, round bed for a long overdue nap.

“Mama decided to make a big family dinner tonight to celebrate us coming home. Don't worry — nothing will be moving on the plates. I made it clear you weren't used to catching your own food. They were a little surprised to find out you bought everything you ate from a store, but they already think Earth is a little strange because of the lack of tentacles. I told them about the octopi, and they've convinced themselves you're related.”

“Of course they have.” Ebbie smiled and lay on his side, the most comfortable position with his swelling belly. “Now, a nap. Then, when I wake up, there's one thing I want more than food.”

“What’s that?” Name it, and if I can, I’ll get it for you.”

“I want to make love for the first time on your planet in our new, temporary home.”

“Oh, little love, I want that too!” Gorg grinned and slid into bed next to Ebbie.
“Quick, go to sleep before I decide sex before napping is a better plan!”

Even though Ebbie could’ve sworn he was dead-tired and ready to fall instantly asleep, his body responded to the sexy little growl he heard in Gorg’s voice. “Maybe napping later would be a better idea. Then we’ll be fresh for dinner.”

“What are you saying?”

“That I want you, right now. I can’t wait until later. I’ll never be able to fall asleep!”
Ebbie grinned, sat up on the bed, and stripped off his nightshirt.

Naked, he lay atop the covers, and gripped his cock, slowly stroking it to fullness.

“Oh, baby! You read my mind,” Gorg said.

“No, you actually said it out loud, but that’s beside the point. Take me, Gorg. Fuck me.”

“That is so pretty,” Gorg said, eyeing Ebbie’s dick. “I want a taste of it.” He leaned over Ebbie’s belly and took Ebbie’s penis in his mouth.

Ebbie cried out, then clamped a hand over his mouth. “I forgot we’re not alone anymore,” he whispered. “They’ll hear us!”

Gorg didn’t seem disturbed by Ebbie’s cry, and never stopped sucking. He took Ebbie in deep, then let his teeth scrape the delicate skin as he let Ebbie’s penis slide

out of his mouth again. “You taste so good,” he whispered. “I could live on this taste alone.”

“Okay, that sounded weirdly cannibalistic, Hannibal Lector, but I really need you to fuck me now. I’m close, and I want to come while I feel you inside me!”

“Get on your hands and knees,” Gorg urged.

Once Ebbie was in position, Gorg spread Ebbie’s cheeks and licked and sucked at the small hole. Then he used one of his tentacles to prime the way.

“Oh, fuck, that feels amazing! I love when you fuck me with your tentacles!” Ebbie cried, trying to muffle his voice by yelling into a pillow.

When Gorg was satisfied that his tentacle had sufficiently lubed the way in, he let it slide out and aligned his cock with the hole. He slowly began to push in.

Ebbie was growing entirely too impatient with Gorg’s tender, slow lovemaking. He backed up, impaling himself on Gorg’s cock. He threw his head back, the tendons in his neck straining. “Fuck! Fuck me now!”

Gorg seemed to need no further invitation. He began to pound himself deep into Ebbie’s body, retreating only halfway then pushing in again. “Ebbie, come for me! I’m close!”

Ebbie came, jerking his cock hard and fast, spilling his come for the first time on Jizm. He felt Gorg release into his body, filling him with hot come.

Together, they slumped onto the sticky bedsheets.

“I’m going to have to do a load of wash, I think,” Gorg said with a chuckle. “But

first, I think we both need another shower. Then I'll strip the bed, wash the sheets, and we can have a nap."

"How long does it take to do a load of wash on Jizm?"

"Less time than it will take to put the sheets back on the bed. It's all automated. You'll see. You go take the first shower. I'm only sorry that shower isn't big enough for both of us."

By the time Ebbie had showered, he walked into the bedroom and found the bed neatly made over with freshly laundered sheets and a comforter. He slipped under the bedding and curled up on his side, feeling completely content.

Considering how much he disliked doing laundry, he decided he was going to like living on Jizm, particularly if washing clothing was as easy and quick as washing the sheets was. Maybe they even had a way of automatically folding the clothes, too! That would be awesome.

Then he was asleep and dreaming of a home of his own where all the housework drudgery was done automatically, and there was a gigantic shower adjacent to the bedroom that was more than big enough for two.

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As the season of Renewal deepened, Gorg's Mama planned a traditional Pregnancy Dance for Ebbie. Similar to baby showers on Earth, the pregnant party is honored, and the baby-to-be is gifted with many presents.

Unlike most Earth baby showers, the participants are all naked and perform a communal stomping dance around a giant Sacred Penis statue in the yard of the home. Every home has one, and most are patinaed with age, having stood in that spot for as long as the house was in existence.

For Ebbie's Pregnancy Dance, he and Gorg stood side-by-side in front of the Sacred Penis while Gorg's family stomped and sang in a circle moving around them. It was a joyous occasion that Ebbie was sure would bring him years of nightmares and possibly therapy in the future.

The season of Renewal passed, and they entered into the Little Death season. On Jizm, the seasons were all relatively mild, although it did get cold enough during Little Death for the leaves to change colors.

All the vehicles on Jizm were hovercrafts, which stayed low to the ground but rode so smoothly it felt as if they were riding on air. Which, of course, they were.

Gorg took Ebbie on a tour of the Wildlands, which were similar to what might be National Parks on Earth, to see the colorful foliage.

Ebbie was beside himself. The colors were gorgeous, every color of the rainbow represented, and a few colors for which he had no names in English. Gorg told him the names in Jizmite, but he couldn't remember them, and frankly, it didn't matter.

All that did was how beautiful they were.

As Little Death drew to a close and the world readied itself to burst forth with new life in the season of Birth, so did Ebbie. His stomach swelled to the size of a beachball, so big he could balance his teacup and saucer on top of it.

That's when the baby was sleeping, of course. When the baby was awake — which was almost all the time — he or she would either roll over, kick, or do headstands, and trying to balance anything on top of his stomach would be hazardous.

Every so often, a little hand or foot would push against Ebbie's stomach, and he could clearly see the outline of tiny fingers and toes, with only a thin layer of skin separating his child from his hand. It was one of the most amazing experiences he'd ever had, and he knew he'd never forget it.

Ebbie got little sleep, though, because the baby was so active. He didn't mind, not really. It was amazing to feel that beautiful life within him grow and move, and it was certainly worth losing a few hours of sleep over.

Except when the baby began to use his kidneys as punching bags. That hurt, and he had to pee so often that he debated whether he should either start wearing a diaper or just be done with it and wear a bodily fluid eliminator until he gave birth.

Worse, it was beginning to show in his temper. He grew crankier by the day, sniping at Gorg for the smallest of things, then was immediately apologetic.

"It's alright, little love. It's the stress of carrying the baby, that's all. Who could blame you for being a little...irritable?" Gorg rubbed Ebbie's shoulders and the small of his back, which often ached from counterbalancing the growing weight he carried in front.

"When will I know it's time? I don't see any evidence of a pouch on my stomach.

What if I don't form one? How will we get the baby out?" Panic seeped into Ebbie's voice so sharply that even he could hear it. His voice went up an octave, too, until he sounded practically shrill.

"Mama! Mama! Come talk to Ebbie!" Gorg called. He was worried — it was written all over his face — and that worried Ebbie even more.

Gorg's Mama hurried into the room. "What is it, boys? Is it the baby? Is it time?"

"No, it isn't. Mama, what if I don't develop a pouch? How will we get the baby out?" Ebbie cried, practically begging for an answer that would ease his worst fears.

"In that unlikely event, we shall call for the doctor who will do surgery to get the baby out," Mama said matter-of-factly as if it was the simplest thing in the world to do.

"Mama! Don't scare him more than he is already!" Gorg seemed horrified that his mother might suggest such a thing.

"No, Gorg, it's alright. A C-section. Of course. They do them on Earth all the time. I should have thought of it myself. I'm sure it'll be okay now," Ebbie said. He was still terrified but knew he had to calm Gorg down. There was no use in both of them being scared shitless. One of them had to have his wits about him when the baby came.

And Ebbie seriously doubted it was going to be him.

As the Birth season progressed, Ebbie grew increasingly restless. He began nesting, upending all the drawers in the bedroom and repacking them neatly. He took out every stitch of clothing they'd bought for the baby and those given to them at the Great Pregnancy Dance and refolded them, refilling the chest of drawers they'd bought for the baby. He ordered Gorg to move the bedroom furniture around several times, finally settling on the exact order they'd started out with it in.

Finally, probably at wit's end, Gorg decided a small outing was in order and took Ebbie on a day trip to see the Great Purple Inland Sea.

Ebbie was far more impressed than he'd expected to be.

It was as if someone had built a giant purple mountain and then melted it. The vast sea — Ebbie stood on the shore and squinted but couldn't see to the other side — was indeed purple, but the water tasted sweet and clear. The sand was the finest sand he'd ever encountered, almost as fine as processed sugar, as white as snow, and tasted sweet with a hint of vanilla.

Although, after tasting a bit on the tip of his finger at Gorg's urging, Ebbie declined to eat more. People were walking over that sand in their bare feet and dragging their bare tentacles through it, and planting their hot, sweaty butts on it! He was not putting any more of it in his mouth. Yuck.

They ate a picnic lunch — caught and prepared by Mama, for which Ebbie was grateful — on the white sand, enjoying the cool breeze coming off the purple sea.

The day was a good one, but when he got home, there was another surprise waiting, one he didn't quite appreciate as much. Standing in one rounded corner of the living room was a tree. It wasn't an evergreen — they didn't grow on Jizm — but something similar. In a box next to it were all sorts of little doodads and trinkets.

“Since I didn't have time to make gifts for the baby, Mama brought out the ones Papa made for me when she was pregnant with me. I thought you and I could hang them on the baby tree,” Gorg said.

He looked so hopeful that Ebbie couldn't hurt his feelings. Gorg could call it a baby tree all he wanted — Ebbie knew what it was. They were going to have a Christmas tree whether Ebbie wanted one or not.

Actually, it was such a sweet thought, using trinkets and toys made for Gorg while he was still in the egg, that Ebbie didn't mind at all.

They decorated the tree, carefully hanging the antique trinkets and doodads on the branches. There were teeny tiny bassinets fashioned from splinters of wood and pieces of lace, balls of multi-colored blown glass, wee bottles of sugar sand, and others of purple water from the Great Purple Inland Sea. There were many things that, although Ebbie had no idea what they were, must've had sentimental value or meaning to Gorg and his family since he caught Mama wiping away a tear with a tentacle every now and then.

For the top of the tree, Gorg had another surprise for Ebbie. He'd brought the crystal star from the tree they'd decorated on Earth. He carefully placed it on the very top branch of the tree. "I'm sorry the tree doesn't light up," he said to Ebbie. "We don't have singing lights like the ones on Earth, and I didn't have time to try to have some made."

"Oh, Gorg. It doesn't need lights. This is the most beautiful Christmas tree I've ever seen. Thank you so much for it! You were right. I did need it, and I need the holidays, too. It's perfect." Ebbie burst into tears and then threw his arms around Gorg's neck, hugging him tight.

"Isn't that so sweet? Now, stop your crying, or we'll all be crying," Mama said, already weeping buckets of tears.

Even Papa's eyes were moist, and he never cried, or so Gorg said later.

Suddenly, Ebbie froze. There was a razor-sharp pain in his gut, slicing across where his belly button was located. It hurt, so much so that for a moment, it stole the breath from his lungs.

"Ebbie? Are you okay?" Gorg asked. "Ebbie? You've gone pale. Ebbie, say

something.”

“I need to sit down. No...I need to lay down. Now!” Ebbie cradled his stomach with both arms and, in a half-crouch, hurried to their bedroom, followed by Gorg, Mama, and Papa.

“Oh, I think it’s time!” Mama cried, her tentacles flailing in excitement. “Lie down on your back, Ebbie. Let me see.”

She lifted Ebbie’s shirt and exposed a fine red line traced across his stomach, transecting his belly button. “Oh, it’s begun! Quick, Papa, call all the egg brothers and sisters!”

“No! Mama, please! I don’t want all those people in here,” Ebbie cried. “Just Gorg, and you and Papa. Please? Everyone else can see the baby afterward.”

“Are you sure? That’s not usually the way it’s done here, but...if that’s what you want, Ebbie.” Mama nodded her agreement to Papa, and they both took a step back, letting Gorg get closer to Ebbie.

Gorg took Ebbie’s hand. “Just breathe, love. When the next pain hits, breathe through it.”

The subsequent pain was deeper and hurt worse, and breathing was the last thing Ebbie wanted to do. Instead, he yelled, cursing his life, his predicament, and most of all, Gorg for getting him into it in the first place.

He bellowed at Gorg. “This is all your fault! As soon as this baby is born, I’m going to beat you with the bassinette!”

“Said every Mama or PawPaw who ever gave birth,” Mama whispered to Papa, although Ebbie heard her.

The next pain had Ebbie howling. The cut across his stomach was growing deeper, and blood was beginning to flow. Mama handed Gorg absorbent baby blankets that had been put aside for the purpose of stemming the flow of blood.

Just when Ebbie thought he couldn't survive another wave of deepening pain, a miracle happened. A tiny hand pushed out of the slit in Ebbie's belly. It was followed by a plump little tentacle.

"This is it, Gorg!" Papa sang out. "Birth your child!"

Ebbie screamed when Gorg, whose hands had been sterilized with a special liquid, slipped his hands inside Ebbie's stomach and pulled out a red-covered, squirming baby.

"Oh! Oh, she's beautiful! We have a little girl, Ebbie. A beautiful little girl." Gorg used a soft blanket to wrap her in, then laid her on Ebbie's chest.

The pain he'd suffered was instantly a thing of the past when Ebbie laid eyes on his newborn baby girl. He realized he would gladly suffer it many times over to have such a sweet little miracle in his life.

Mama made herself busy delivering the afterbirth and disposing of it for Ebbie. Ebbie barely noticed — his attention was riveted on his daughter.

His daughter! He had a daughter. He and Gorg had made a living creature, a wonderful, spectacular, miraculous being whom Ebbie knew he would protect with his very life.

Amazingly, the cut across Ebbie's stomach began sealing itself. He would always carry the scar, of course, but the wound would be gone in minutes.

Not that he cared. All he cared about was the wriggling little girl on his chest. "Does

she have tentacles?”

“All eight present and accounted for,” beamed Gorg. “And two arms and two legs and ten fingers and ten toes. She’s perfect.”

“What should we call her?” Ebbie asked.

“On Jizm, it is the PawPaw’s right to name the child.” Gorg smiled at Ebbie. “What name do you think we should give her?”

“Well...considering how much you love the holidays... How about Holly? It’s a name associated with the holidays on Earth. It’s the red berries in the evergreen boughs we use to decorate. It also is associated with strength, resilience, and beauty.”

“I love that name! Little Holly.” He picked the baby up in his arms and turned toward his parental units. “Mama, Papa, may I present to you Holly, your newest grandbaby.”

“Now, may we bring in Gorg’s egg brothers and sisters?” Mama asked Ebbie.

Ebbie reached for his baby girl and cuddled her close. “Yes. I guess it’s time for Holly to meet the family.”

As he waited for the egg brothers and sisters to file into the room, he began to sing to his baby very softly, almost under his breath. “Have a holly jolly Christmas, it’s the best time of the year...”

Holidays, he decided, were not for suckers after all. They were for lovers, for family, and for sweet, newborn baby girls with blue eyes and iridescent tentacles. They were for egg brothers and sisters like Hivery and Listeria and the rest whose names he didn’t yet know.

They were for Mamas and Papas and PawPaws. They were for the dreamers, the hard cases, the ones who believed and the ones who didn't. The holidays were for everyone to celebrate in whatever way they saw fit.

He smiled as he watched Gorg beam at their baby. Gorg loved the holidays so much that Ebbie couldn't wait to see what Gorg would do with Easter and Thanksgiving. Maybe roll them all up into one jumbo holiday, where Santa wore rabbit ears, and they served some Jizmite version of turkey for dinner.

If they were fast enough to catch it, that is.

Then there was always Bloober Day to look forward to.