

More Than You Can't Chew

[A Constant Chatter Bubbles From A Massive Terrarium]

[A Determined Set Of Footsteps]

-And I think you'll find I'm the one signing the checks around here, Doctor. If I want to see what I'm paying for, none of you are stopping me.

(Scoff)

So you keep telling me, but I'm getting tired of your excuses. I want to see him.

[An Abrupt Halt To The Footsteps]

{Yelling}

Say that again! Say that again, and I'll throw you in there to tell him how much of an ~it~ you think he is!

(Clear Throat)

That was uncalled for of me. Regardless, I think you'd agree I'm quite within my rights to be impolite, considering how generous your salaries here are. Not to mention the ~benefits~.

Then please, show me your team's progress so I can get out of your hair.

Thank you.

[A Short Patter Of Footsteps]

This is it?

Charming little fishbowl, isn't it? Is the flora prehistoric too?

Glad to see you're sparing no expense. Where is he?

You don't keep exact tabs on him?

Yes, I suppose I did. And I still stand by that. But I thought the reports said he was growing well. Just past 600 centimeters tall, last I remember?

And what, am I just, missing, the forty-foot-long half-theropod?

I'm afraid I don't understand your meaning, Doctor.

No, I heard you, but I don't quite understand how that could be the case. You purpose-built this terrarium for him. I assumed you'd have countless sensors, observation decks, and every sort of camera my money can buy, yes?

So then how, pray tell, is he ~hiding~ from you?

Oh?

All the digital sensors?

And he simply, figured out where you were observing from? How?

Are his senses really ~that~ advanced?

And I assume that is reflected in the cognitive development tests?

He refuses the tests, does he? I hadn't heard that in any of the reports.

No, that's actually quite, reassuring. I'm not paying for a brainless reptile, after all.
(Deep Breath)

That being said, I assume you still have some way of drawing him out of these blind spots? Surely you haven't just been fabricating all your data, yes?

Then feed him now, Doctor.

Well, maybe if you had simply invited me to see him before my patience ran out, you'd be able to keep your precious schedule. Dinner time. Now.

Now there's a mad scientist who knows how to follow orders. See to it they get a raise, Doctor.

(Scoff)

I assure you, Doctor, mad scientist is quite the apt descriptor. Or do you think whatever God you fear ~isn't~ chuffed about what's going on in that fishbowl?

Save your ethics for someone who cares. Now, what ~is~ for dinner?

Oh? I wasn't aware you'd revived any other dinosaurs.

Ah, I see. I hope that was properly safety-checked before it was first used, yes?

Wonderful. So, you just release your drone-dino and then, he appears from thin air?

I suppose I will see.

And here's our bait. Does it have much in the way of prey drive, or is this more of a-
[A Loud, Metallic Crunch]
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. He's...

Magnificent. And so fast, I hardly saw him before he struck.

Why is he chewing at the drone?

You put fruit in that thing?

(Dazed Laugh)
He loves it... Of course he still loves it...

And just like that he's gone. How do you retrieve the drone?

And he doesn't attack whatever intern you task with recovery?

How many days since the last accident, exactly?

Then it's decided. I'll do it.

Why don't you just save us both the trouble and stop talking, Doctor? In fact, you, and everyone else here can just take the night off! I'd like to do this alone.

Need I remind you that, in the event of my death, my funding of this project will not cease? In fact, you'd get all the same benefits, but no longer have to worry about the temperamental billionaire breathing down your neck?

That's a good mad scientist. Now leave. Between my clearance and the automation, I'll be able to do everything I want just fine.

(Chuckle)
I think you know ~exactly~ what I want, Doctor. Now, before I'm in the firing mood, leave.

Splendid.

[An Elevator Platform Whirrs]

[A Digital Chime Rings]

[A Door Unlocks]

(Deep Inhale And Exhale)

Freshest air this side of the meteorite.

Glad to see those think tank isn't cheaping out on making this perfect.

And where is... ah. Hello, mangled metal husk. Any chance you can call your murderer back for a chat?

Thought not. But, truth be told, I don't think you'd need to. He's watching us already, isn't he?

That's right, Big, Tall, and Toothy. I might not be able to hear you, see you, or really find you at all, but I know you're too smart not to keep track of everything going in your little kingdom. And I think that massive brain of yours probably understands more English than you've been letting on.

[A Few Thunderous Footsteps Approach]

Wow. You're even more impressive up close. Plus, I'm definitely a fan of this... hybrid physique you've got going on.

And, I'm not even dead yet. Is that the curiosity saving my life, or did you get a few memories from your human donor too?

I take it that you certainly didn't get human, vocal cords anywhere in the mix?.

[A Few More Thunderous Stomps]

Ah, but you've not lost any personality! Incredible that you managed to get anything from a little neural mapping. If I didn't know any better, I'd think you got-

[A Final, Firm Stomp]

{Choking}

Easy, there... don't you want to know... why... I'd do any of this? Before you crush me..?

(Deep Breaths)

Thank you. We'll work on... being gentle, next time.

(Chuckle)

Insane that I can still read your face with all the changes. Every little expression, still, all there.

But I'm speaking nonsense, aren't I? Not literally, of course, clearly you have English down to a science. But I'm sure all the apex predator parts of your brain are screaming to eat me if I don't make a really good case quick, huh?

God, you even have his smirk. I haven't seen that in...

Pardon me, I'm being sentimental. If you haven't gathered it yet, I'm the proprietor of this science experiment, you included. All of it holds a special place in my heart.

Does that huff mean why or how? I suppose it's the same answer, either way. Your... father, for lack of a better word.

Can you remember him? You weren't alive when he was, and you're not technically him, but, your brain is mostly his brain, by the numbers, at least.

Was that a glimmer of recognition? I always loved it when I saw that in his eyes, so I may just be filling it in, but...

You're... taking your claw off me? I take it this means truce?

[A Single, Moody Stomp]

Tentative truce then. I suppose you must have figured out most of this then?

Yes, I... you're...

(Sigh)

I was in love once. Madly so. But he was taken before his time. And I've never been the same since.

He left plenty of a mark on the world, I suppose. But nothing that would fill the hole in my heart without him. Nothing except, you, I hope.

(Chuckle)

My therapist says I should try harder to let go. Move on. But I... I don't want to move on. I want him back. I want you back. I want to act like this is just a new step in our relationship, and to learn to love the you he's become. And... I'm willing to pay whatever it takes to do that.

So there. That's my soul bared. I won't pretend for a second that I can force your hand or, claw, now, I suppose. I could never bring myself to cut this project, and I think you know it'll go on even if you kill me.

(Chuckle)

Still managing to surprise you, huh? I saw you glance at us when you finished eating. Practically locked eyes with us, so obviously you could hear us chattering. But I also saw that look in your eyes. The same one he had whenever he learned something he fully planned to exploit later. He, you, always had that ruthless edge.

Well, if you haven't clocked it yet, I'll say it clear now. I love you too much to allow anything to hurt you. And I've set up hundreds of systems and failsafes to ensure that remains true no matter what you do.

You can consider this my second proposal. Not quite as romantic as the first, but it still has a certain punch to it, I think. I've given you all the cards, after all. Quite literally put my life on the line, completely, one hundred percent at your whim. That's how much I love you, darling. Even now. Especially now, if I'm being honest, I loved how you looked but this?

(Chuckle)

So do what you want. Eat me, crush me, ignore me, string me along until you've decided I'm more trouble than I'm worth, I don't care. I said I'd pay any price to have you back and I meant it.

[A Few Thunderous Footsteps Retreat]

You're... where are you going? I didn't think ignoring me would be the most palatable option there, I assumed you'd at least take an extra snack, I mean, when you were human you always liked the idea of-

[A Stop To The Footsteps, As They Are Replaced With A Beckoning Slap Of A Tail]

Wait, do you...

Are you telling me to come with you?

Was that... an eye roll?

Okay, that definitely was. Excuse me for being a little confused about the body language of a one-of-a-kind dinosaur hybrid.

[A Set Of Thunderous Footsteps Resume]

Wait, don't go! At least, not too quickly, I'll gladly follow if you're offering. But... where are we going? It's not like any part of this fishbowl is any different to kill me in than the others! Unless you don't want the cameras to see us, but you didn't have a problem killing recovery crew on camera before so-

Oh my God. Are you taking me to a blind spot for... are you not going to kill me?

(Chuckle)

I wouldn't forget that look in a million years. The jury's still out then, huh? Unless I can...

Yes please. Lead the way.