

Lars sighed as he walked through the portal. Sangrar was a deity that he owed quite a lot to - he'd done a few favours for it a long time ago, and in return it had granted him one of the more useful tricks in his arsenal: a quick time rewind at the cost of a mark, though that mark could take many different forms. Nevertheless he had used it often enough that he now found himself in Sangrar's favour once more, and he'd learnt from experience that was somewhere you didn't want to be. He'd felt the familiar tug, as if someone was pulling at the threads of his soul, and knew that it was time to pay up. As usual Sangrar was waiting for him, this time taking the form of a silvery lynx with fur that shimmered a little too much in the light despite being hidden under a long coat. This wasn't its own dimension, but it was one of the few powerful entities that seemed to retain powers between dimensions, meaning it had been on Lars' radar for a while now.

"Ah, you've arrived." Sangrar grinned as it saw Lars walking up. The dragon had entered into some kind of bar, and as he took a seat next to the deity he signalled to the bartender for a drink.

"Whatever you've got that's good." he muttered, dropping a pile of coins on the bar before turning to his summoner. "Whatever this is, I hope it's enough to put us even."

"That and more." Sangrar pulled something out of its pocket, a rolled up piece of paper. "I chose this reality for a reason. How familiar are you with the Pit?"

Lars groaned. "Too familiar." he said, sighing as he understood why they were here. The Pit was a prison located in a sort of magical blackspot of sorts, an unusual timespace dip where magic was sucked out of the air. To put it simply no spells would work down there, something he had discovered the hard way after being captured and held there for months.

Sangrar unrolled the parchment, handing it to Lars. It was a note, little more than a set of coordinates and a number code. Sangrar let him read it before talking. "This note belongs to a friend of mine, a mortal I am quite fond of. I am assuming he wants me to find him, and to cut a long story short he's in the Pit. The coordinates lead to the prison, and the code is his cell number. I need you to get him out for me."

Lars sighed. "It's doable, but I'm gonna need something from you to do it."

"I am at your disposal, assuming you're taking the job?"

"Yep." Lars turned as the bartender slid a glass of something amber towards him, picking it up and taking a sip. It burned on the way down, and he pulled a face as he knocked it back. "Last time I was there I figured out that while you can't cast spells, you can imbue objects with magic. The higher the charge the more unstable it is though, so efficiency is key. I need something I can inject, a syringe of liquid."

Sangrar just held out its hand and a syringe seemed to appear out of thin air, already loaded with liquid. "It's just water in there, what do you plan on charging it with?"

"A very simple spell. It's going to convert kinetic energy into strength, that way I don't need to use much energy to make it work. Hopefully it's enough to break your friend out of his cell."

As for getting in, well I'm just gonna have to be sneaky I guess." Lars grabbed the syringe, holding his hand over it and muttering under his breath for a couple of seconds before nodding in satisfaction. You could barely notice the difference, but now the water sparkled a little more, like there was more light passing through it.

"I'll leave you to it then. Oh, and before I go." Sangrar waved his hand, and Lars felt the scales on his forearm *squirm* uncomfortably. He pulled up his sleeve to see the scars lining his forearm fading into nothing, each mark wiped away like coffee rings from a table.

"Gesture of good faith. If you fail then...well, you won't fail."

"Not if I can help it." Lars pocketed the syringe, opened yet another portal to the amazement of the patrons around him, and with one last swish of his coat walked through it and out the bar.

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Lars could feel the difference the moment he stepped out of the portal. The air was heavy in a strange sort of way, oppressive almost - it reminded him of how snow absorbed sound, the resulting absence of echoes feeling like it's pressing in on your ears. This was the same but for magic, as if some invisible fist was squeezing his soul down. He tried to ignite a fireball just as an experiment, but it flickered out of existence the second he lit it up. The Pit was not much to look at from the outside, merely a grey, squat building in the middle of a frozen wasteland. That was the point though, it wasn't supposed to attract attention. Most of the main building was underground, and there was only one heavily guarded entrance. There would be no sneaking around here, no he would be forced to go in guns blazing. Again, without magic he'd been forced to go old school, which meant besides an array of knives strapped to his body he had two pistols on his waist, plenty of spare mags dangling from his belt. He loaded them up as he drew his coat against the cold, walking towards the entrance. The first guard had only just noticed him when Lars shot him in the forehead, the wolf instantly collapsing as his colleague dived for cover. He almost made it, but Lars caught him with a shot before he could hide behind a nearby rock, and his yells of pain were silenced as the dragon walked up, planted his foot on the guard to hold him still and fired a shot through his skull.

He kicked the door in and was immediately assaulted by noise and flashing lights, alarms going off everywhere. He'd hoped to have a bit more time before the alarm was triggered, but either way it didn't matter. He was committed now, which meant he had to hope his exit plan was going to be enough. Two more guards rounded the corner, firing the moment they saw Lars in the hallway, and he was forced to dive to the side to avoid getting hit, using a nearby desk for cover. After a couple of seconds there was a gap in the gunfire, enough for him to dive out and empty his pistols into his assailants. Both went down, but not before bullets nicked Lars' body in various places, one particularly nasty one slicing through the side of his shoulder. He grimaced as he reloaded, reminded once again that this was far from his forte - there was no magic cushion to heal him here, if he got shot then it would be a slow and painful death. He pulled the note out of his pocket, double checked the location, then hurried deeper into the prison.

He only had a basic idea of where the cell was, which meant he was a little surprised when he realised it was in the higher security area. He had yet to run into more guards, choosing to hide away whenever they ran past, but it was getting harder and harder to dodge them. As he entered this section he was shot in the leg by a guard catching sight of him round the corner, and he swore loudly as he collapsed backwards. He still had enough presence of mind to aim and fire on the way down, hitting the guard in the stomach and then in the head as he emptied the magazine, but when he tried to stand his leg would barely take his weight. The bullet had gone right through his thigh, and the pain was already getting to him. He grimaced but pushed onwards, walking down a corridor lined with gigantic steel doors. These cells were like vaults, metre thick steel with enormous steel latches on the outside. He located the right one, twisted the latch around, and pulled the door open to reveal a wolf suspended in air, chained to all four walls by thick cables around his limbs.

"You took your sweet time." he said, his grin fading as he noticed Lars' condition. "Name's Harmon. Hope you've got a better plan than just running out."

"Yeah." Lars grunted as he pulled the syringe out of his pocket, immediately stabbing it into Harmon's chest and depressing the plunger. "Sorry by the way."

"For what?" His question was answered as Lars punched him in the gut as hard as he could, the wolf's breath rushing from his lungs as he coughed painfully. "What the fuck?" He managed to splutter out, but he realised quickly that it wasn't for no reason. He could feel his body churning in a strange way, as if his blood was rolling from side to side, and as it peaked he felt himself expand outwards just a little bit. The chains holding him creaked as he began to outgrow the shackles holding him in place, bulking out slightly as the extra size favoured his muscles slightly more than the rest of his body. Lars hit him again and this time he welcomed the hit, grunted in pleasure as he felt the shock reverberate through him and make him stronger as it did so.

SHINK

The manacles snapped apart, and a noticeably larger Harmon dropped to the floor. "The hell did you put in that syringe?" he said with a grin as he stood up, rolling his shoulders and enjoying the increased mass as he did so.

"You absorb kinetic energy." Lars fell to one knee as pain washed over him, his leg still bleeding profusely. "The more hits you take, the more you grow. Use it well, cause right now you're my exit strategy."

Harmon chuckled at that. "Oh I wouldn't worry about that." he said, cracking his knuckles as the sounds of more guards floated round the corridor. "I'm gonna enjoy this." He ushered Lars into the cell as he waited for the inevitable barrage, simply putting his hands in his orange jumpsuit pockets and standing there. When the guards rounded the corner they instantly took up positions and fired without hesitation. Harmon closed his eyes as a hail of bullets buzzed around him, slamming into all parts of his body but not penetrating through - instead they seemed to stop on impact as they were drained of all energy, dropping to the floor with a clatter.

“YESSSSS”

Harmon grunted as he felt himself swell with size and strength, newfound power working its way into his limbs and knotting them with fresh muscle and sinew. He could feel all that energy coursing through him, a heady rush of warm pleasure that was addictive, he realised all of a sudden. He wanted more, more muscle wrapping around his body and feeding it strength, more of his body stretching up until his head was bumping against the ceiling, his jumpsuit ripping apart as it failed to contain his growing bulk. The guards finally stopped shooting but it was far too late, Harmon had already gone from a measly, 6ft wolf into a hulking 10ft monster, thick with strength and with a sadistic look in his eyes.

“My turn.” He laughed maniacally as he tore into the guards, charging at them with zero regard for their panicked gunfire. After all, the more they shot him the more he grew, and he was already large enough to quite literally tear them limb from limb. Lars peeked round the corner and caught a dismembered arm in the face as Harmon went to work, reveling in the screams that each brutal blow produced, conducting the symphony of breaking bone like a world-class maestro. The last one he simply picked up by the head and squeezed, crushing the poor man’s skull like an overripe melon before dropping him to the floor in disdain. He was even bigger after all of that, now approaching 12ft tall and dripping with blood and gore. He wasn’t even out of breath either, looking perfectly calm as he walked over, ripping off the last vestiges of his torn jumpsuit.

“You know, I’m really glad I’m on your side right now.” Lars winced as Harmon helped him to his feet, wishing he’d been the one to take the serum instead. “We gotta go up to get out of here.”

“I have an idea for that actually. Is there a limit to how much energy this serum can absorb?”

“...No....” Lars said after a hesitant pause. He had a feeling he knew where this was going, and it wasn’t going to end well for the prison.

“I know how to get us out of here. Come on.” He scooped Lars up, throwing him over his broad shoulder before running down the corridor. Lars was expecting them both to be going upwards, but instead they seemed to be going deeper into the prison, right to the very heart of the null magic zone. A few guards did try to stop them, and almost without exception Harmon basically stepped on them and ground them into the floor on his way through, moaning at the little pulses of size as they fired a few more shots at him before their inevitable deaths. Their little trip finally ended when they came out into a massive room, a kind of generator room almost. Right in the middle was a strange patch of space, surrounded by metal gantries and wires as if being held in place. If you tried to look right through it your vision shifted in strange ways, like a heat haze crossed with a mirror.

“You know what that is?” Harmon said, gesturing to the strange space.

“Unfortunately. It’s a rip in spacetime, and from the looks of things they’re putting it to good use. This must be what stops magic being used here.” Lars tilted his head. “What are they doing to keep it contained like this?”

“Dunno, but I’ll bet we can get a pretty large explosion if we mess with it.” Harmon jumped down to a bank of computers, leaving a rather large dent in the concrete as he did so. Lars dropped from his shoulder, studied the numbers on the screens.

“This is a time bomb, they’re just firing particles at it to try and keep it stable. You jumping in there would probably set it off.” Lars paused as he realised what he’d just said. “Woah woah woah wait a second -”

“Too late.” There was an almighty crash as Harmon launched himself through the glass and right into the strange space. Lars covered his face expecting a colossal detonation, but instead there was just a strange warping sound as far too much energy was drained from the air and condensed into Harmon’s body. The spacetime rip rippled for a second as it exploded outwards, before the lack of energy caused it to collapse in on itself, leaving only Harmon standing where it had once been. Lars instantly felt his magic return, breathing a sigh of relief as his various bullet wounds healed themselves up, but that was just a distraction from the main event happening in front of him.

Harmon was growing at an almighty pace. The wolf was almost doubling in size with each breath, his body swelling with muscle as all that energy was repurposed into rock solid mass. His grunts of pleasure were deeper each time they rang out, parts of his body quickly beginning to shear into the walls as he grew well past 30ft tall. Even with magic access he didn’t need it anymore, now he was fuelled by raw strength and nothing else.

“**MMMNGHHHH, MOOOORE!**” He roared as his head bumped into the ceiling and went through it, his arms caged in by the walls for the time being but likely not for much longer, judging by the pace of his growth. He was assuming a strange position due to the size of the room constraining him, but more growth began to crack the metre thick concrete, and Lars was forced to shield his eyes as dust began to fly, elbows and knees driving through the walls with the help of several tons of muscle behind them. He yelped as a giant pair of fingers grabbed him and deposited him on the wolf’s shoulder. Even that was a huge boulder of herculean proportions, a titanic cannonball of muscle that gave him a brutish look almost, shredded enough that Lars could make out the muscle writhing underneath the fur even at this size.

By now pretty much every single guard in the facility had come to try and stop him, try being the operative word - they could do as much to halt his ascension as they could stop a tidal wave crashing over them. The lucky ones were pushed into crevices or stepped on, offering them quick deaths, but the unlucky ones found themselves pinned between hard concrete and even harder muscle, crying out as their bodies were flattened and crushed beyond recognition. Harmon had gone through one ceiling already, but now he was going through another, and another. He crouched down, containing himself as much as he could, as if preparing to unleash something. Lars watched his growth halt, stuttering a few times as it did so, and he could feel a rumbling underneath him. The remaining guards took the opportunity to run away as fast as they could, but they couldn’t escape what was coming next.

“**GRRRRAAAAAAAGGHHHHH!**”

With a burst of size Harmon exploded out of the prison, tripling in height almost instantly as he let all the growth out at once. The remains of the Pit just exploded into dust around him, bits and pieces going flying far out into the snowy tundra as the wolf roared in pleasure, the sound echoing for kilometres around them. Lars would have chastised him but he was too busy holding his hands over his ears to stop them exploding from the volume, something that Harmon noticed after a second once he'd finally calmed down.

"Hahhh, what a rush! Might have gotten a bit carried away there though."

"Yeah, just a bit." Lars grimaced, sparks playing around his ears as his eardrums unruptured themselves. "I'll be honest, while I could deal with this I can't be bothered, and besides I get the feeling you quite like being this size."

Harmon grinned, picking up a nearby rock and crushing it in one hand. It was twice the size of Lars and it just crumbled like it was made of chalk. "Ohhhh, you have no idea."

"Fine, you can work it out with Sangrar then." Lars waved his hands, opening a very large portal.

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Sangrar was still drinking in the same bar when Lars portaled in, looking a little worse for wear but triumphant. The deity smiled when it saw him.

"I assume you have succeeded?"

"Yep." Lars grabbed Sangrar's drink, knocking it back in one go. "Now we're even."

"Where is he?"

"Oh he's outside. Tavern's not big enough to fit him inside." The dragon ignored Sangrar's puzzled look as he opened another portal. "We're cool right? Yeah we're cool."

"Wait, what do you mean too big to -"

"Gotta go now bye!" Before Sangrar could even speak Lars had disappeared. The deity shrugged, turned to the door, and even before it left it could see a very, VERY large shadow outside the window. With a sigh it went out to go clean up the dragon's mess, and somehow persuade a macro that being small wasn't a bad thing. It didn't hold out much hope for that one.