

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Felicia's perspective~

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Felicia gazes at the young man standing there in front of her dummy safe and can't help but smile a little bit. Of course, even her nicest smiles have quite the edge to them and this one is no different, prompting him to tremble a bit more as he stands there staring at her in horror.

Heh, honestly she couldn't quite say what had made her play with him like this. In most cases, catching a thief in her place would have prompted swift and exacting retribution. But to be fair, in most cases... no thief worth their salt would ever dare try to rob her. And the thieves who weren't worth their salt shouldn't have been able to get in in the first place.

Perhaps that's why he had caught her attention so fast. He clearly wasn't much of a fighter... hell, he wasn't even much of a runner. In terms of getting away when a job went south, he didn't have a clue what to do and it showed. But then... two months. That explained his inexperience... in fact...

"Was this the first time you were ever caught?"

The young thief jolts, blinking at the sudden question. Almost like he'd expected her to be done toying with him and go for the kill instead. Hah, hadn't anyone told him? Cats *loved* playing with their food~

"I... yes..."

He lowers his gaze in frustration and shame at that, prompting a little giggle from Felicia. He was cute. That was probably the other reason she'd stopped and decided to mess around a bit. Not only was he clearly no threat to her, not only was he never going to escape her clutches without her permission... but he was just cute. Like a newborn fawn trying to learn to walk for the first time.

She wonders, briefly, what he looks like under his ski mask... before focusing on more important things.

“What other jobs have you done in the past two months? Anything I might recognize?”

Even as he hesitates, clearly uncertain, Felicia is already thinking about some of the thefts she’s heard about in the last couple of months. Call it professional curiosity, call it perverse voyeurism, but she did so love to keep up with what others in her ‘line of work’ were up to. Hm, there were a few moderately impressive burglaries that she realized nobody among her peers had taken credit for within their circles...

Finally, the young man rattles off a few of his jobs. And while some are definitely too small time for Felicia to have heard about, a couple *do* line up with those mystery thefts that she’d just been thinking of. And if he’s telling the truth (which she’s pretty sure he is at this point), then Felicia has to admit... she’s impressed.

No, she should probably be fully honest with herself even if she never is with anyone else. She’s been impressed for a while now. That he’d managed to uncover her dummy safe before she arrived was fine enough, but that he’d broken into it while trembling under her watchful gaze... that was impressive. Because despite what the name might imply, the dummy safe was not intended to be easy to break into. In fact, it was quite difficult to crack.

He’d done it anyways and in less time than it would have taken most. Not less time than her admittedly, but... well, it was like shooting for the moon and still landing among the stars, wasn’t it?

“Ma’am... if I can... if there’s anyway I can make things up to you without it costing me my life, I’m willing. Just... say the word.”

Oh? Felicia blinks as he suddenly speaks in a quiet, solemn tone. No voice crack, no stammering, just some hesitation. Which is fair given he’s discussing

her killing him. He's watching her with such forlorn eyes, like he thinks his death is a foregone conclusion and there's nothing he can do about it.

Felicia almost scoffs. Since when did she have a reputation for murder? Sure, she'd killed before... but she wasn't a murderer. Then again, she supposed looking at it from his point of view, it must have felt quite... damning. After all, he'd found her place of residence. And it wasn't like she could just turn him over to the police when he knew what he knew.

Hm, so he expected some form of retribution from her. Death would certainly silence him... but here he was, all but begging for her to find another way. Once again, Felicia is struck by just how cute he is. She wants him. Right then and there, she decides she wants him.

... As a protégé specifically. Get your mind out of the gutter, proverbial onlooker!

"I'm not going to kill you."

He blinks at her from under the ski mask, caught off guard as Felicia grins.

"You're much too interesting for me to kill. Let's have a seat, shall we?"

Swallowing hard, the young man slowly nods and moves over to the couch... though not before throwing one last glance back at her empty dummy safe. As they sit down together, her in a chair and him on the couch, he can't seem to help his curiosity.

"... That's not your real safe, is it?"

Felicia smirks, pleased that he put two and two together. After all, now that he knows that this is her place, the safe being empty can only mean so many things.

"Well done. You're right... and that's the last freebie you're getting from me."

She winks at him, prompting him to stiffen as he realizes he's effectively probing her security with questions like that.

"R-Right... sorry."

Ah, the stammer was back. Poor guy...

"What should I call you, exactly? I can't just keep thinking of you as 'that guy' in my head."

Felicia tilts her head to the side, even as the young thief pauses for a moment. And then, much to her amused shock, he pulls the ski mask right over his head, revealing his boyish features. Oh no. He's *physically cute* as well.

"My name is Cameron."

Probably the steadiest thing he's said all night. Also the stupidest. Sighing, Felicia shakes her head.

"I didn't ask for your name, I asked what I should call you. You should have made up a fake name, darling."

Cameron blinks... before flushing and looking down at the ski mask in his hands.

"Oh."

Then, he looks back up, frowning at her.

"Was there really any way this interaction ended without you demanding my identity from me though?"

Hah, a fair point. Felicia just grins and leaves it at that, keeping an air of mystery about the whole thing while moving the conversation along.

"Now then, Cameron... tell me, why do you steal?"

It's a question with a right answer and a wrong answer, in Felicia's expert opinion. So while he's collecting himself and deciding what to tell her, she has to admit... she's waiting with bated breath, curious to find out if she's found a truly kindred spirit or not.

In the end, his shoulders slump and he stares down at his hands.

"... I steal because I have to."

Ugh. That's not what she wants to hear... but Felicia tries not to sound too disappointed even as she scoffs.

"Because you have to? Darling, starving children steal loaves of bread because they have to. Anyone else who steals anything more than that isn't doing it because they have to... they're doing it because they *want* to."

This was the underpinning of Felicia's entire philosophy on life, really. Taking things from other people, especially rich and powerful and influential people... was fun. The thrill of the theft, of making theirs hers instead... was indescribable.

She hated thieves who treated the profession like it was something they were only in because 'they had no other options'. There were always other options... it was just that stealing was sometimes easier and always more fun.

But Cameron was still young. Maybe he was just in denial. Maybe she could still pull him around to her line of thinking.

"That... that might have been the case a hundred years ago, but not anymore! These days, there are things you can't get any other way!"

Felicia arches her brow as he tries to argue with her... but to his credit, even at her unimpressed look, he doesn't back down.

“I have someone relying on me. Someone who will die without my help. And the only way I *can* help them is... this.”

Ah. Sentiment. Felicia tries not to judge too harshly. She herself has been prone to sentiment from time to time in the past, after all. One of her first acts as the Black Cat had been to break her own father, a renowned cat burglar in his own right, out of prison so he and her mother could see each other one last time before he succumbed to illness.

Even now, Felicia kept... vague tabs on her mother, though they'd never been all that close. It was her father she'd idolized. But he was gone now and Felicia had long been the solitary sort of predator. She didn't need anyone... and she preferred it that nobody needed her right back.

Cameron, it would seem, was quite the obvious. Someone, likely a family member, was counting on him. Admittedly, her little bread parable did fall short in the modern day in some ways. Healthcare, for instance, was a truly insidious vehicle by which some people had no choice but to turn to unsavory means just to get access to the best care possible.

In some parts of the world, healthcare was free but wound up taking too long to save anyone. Here in America, healthcare was expensive as all hell... and it was still a roll of the dice whether you'd get taken care of fast enough to live through whatever malady you had.

Heh, and they called *her* a crook. Regardless... she supposed that while Cameron hadn't given her the answer she was looking for and didn't quite seem to be a kindred spirit... she was still impressed enough by him to know what she wanted. Although...

“Hm, you promise me restitution in exchange for your life while at the same time admitting to having a dependent that you're stealing for. How are you going to juggle those responsibilities, exactly?”

Flinching, Cameron doesn't seem to quite know what to say. Perhaps he hasn't thought about it very hard. Or perhaps he simply hadn't *wanted* to think about it very hard. Heh, still cute.

“Well... I've made my decision. I know how you're going to make things right with me.”

His head snaps up at that, his gaze fixing on her with equal amounts of both hope and trepidation in his eyes. Grinning wickedly, Felicia flicks out a claw.

“You're going to become my little gopher. You'll do what I say when I say it. If I tell you to jump, you'll ask how high. That sort of thing.”

Of course, what she really intends is to train him and nurture that talent of his into something... more. But Felicia isn't the type of woman to just admit to that sort of thing. Not when she can play games instead. Still, if Spider-Man could do it, why couldn't she? Ugh, though just thinking about that man puts a sour taste in her mouth. Better to focus on the present.

Meanwhile, Cameron looks hesitant.

“I... I mean, I'm not really in a position to refuse. But I need... I can't stop working. I have to keep earning.”

Felicia considers that for a moment... before shaking her head.

“No. No more thievery for you young man. Not until I say otherwise.”

His eyes were bigger than his stomach. He'd gotten extremely lucky in trying to steal from her, and the fact that she'd caught him in the act and been in a good mood at the time. If he went after increasingly harder marks out of pure desperation for the next big score in order to pay what she suspected were ever looming medical debts... then he would run into someone far less forgiving than her.

The thought of this potential young talent being snuffed out like a candle flame before he could reach his true potential... it irritated Felicia. Like a scratch she couldn't quite reach. So she simply wouldn't let it happen. And that meant he wasn't going to steal another damn thing until she'd trained him up properly.

"What? But I can't... I just told you, I have someone relying on me! You might as well kill me if you're going to give restrictions like that, because it'll have the same effect on them!"

Sheesh. So melodramatic. Felicia rolls her eyes and waves her claws airily.

"I'll take care of it, darling. No need to get yourself all twisted up."

He stares at her, baffled.

"You'll what? How?"

Smiling now, Felicia's eyes twinkle.

"How else? I'll give you some money. Enough to tide you and your... dependent over while I'm having my wicked way with you~"

That little innuendo gets the most adorable of blushes from Cameron. The young man looks like he doesn't know how to react to her flirting with him... so instead he focuses on the other part.

"Why? Why would you pay me when the entire point is for me to be repaying you for trespassing and trying to rob you?"

Felicia hums for a moment... before rising from her chair. Cameron tenses up but before he can rise too, she's already made her way in front of him and placed a hand on his shoulder, keeping him firmly in place as she looms over him with a grin.

"Cameron, sweetie?"

“A-Ah... yes?”

“You should stop asking questions and just take the offer.”

Felicia isn't sure whether its her overly fake sweet tone, the implicit threat of her claws digging lightly into his shoulder, or the view of her cleavage she's currently all but shoving in his face... but in the end, Cameron swallows hard and nods.

“I... alright then. I accept.”

Hook, line, and sinker~

Oh, this was going to be so much *fun!*

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!