

The Prince and the Toad



Blitzø was *Fucked* with a capital F.

It was one of those rare days where no hits had been scheduled and Moxxie wasn't being a complete ass about how they should open the office. So Blitzø had gone down to Greed to sniff out any trace of that cowpatty-sniffing, shark-fucking bastard.

Striker. He meant Striker.

Well, Crimson also if Blitzø was being honest. That homophobic friend-fucker was doubly on Blitzø's shitlist after the second kidnapping.

After stopping by that craptastic coffee shop—which was still gross, Blitzø moved meticulously through the places they'd been and even went all the way down to that cesspool warehouse that was still burning embers more than ash. He hated this part of Greed and not just because of the radioactive waste that smelled like sewage.

He hated how the Bubbling Cauldrons at the edge of town touted spa-like results but only because it literally burned the first few layers of skin off. He hated how every half-assed assassin gathered at whatever watering hole seemed edgiest, each waiting for some low-tier runner to come in with a hit. He hated how there was always some kind of trash fire, burning low and acrid, suffocating him in the worst memories of his life.

Day had dragged into night and into day again. Blitzø had followed one lead after another, running his hooves ragged, chugging his piss coffee with frustration. So he wasn't really paying attention to whatever fucking story he overheard and whatever shit bar he'd been in.

Something about a spell turning you into an all-powerful demon if you jump into one of the ponds just past the Bubbling Cauldrons. Someone had seen a cowboy go in it.

Possibly.

And Blitzø definitely wasn't paying full attention to his steps, half-because he was exhausted and half-because he was trying not to think about what was burning nearby and how the flames had felt so familiarly hot on his skin when he reached out to Fizz a few days ago.

Blitzø walked the banks of the ponds past the Bubble Cauldrons, weaving on

thin pathways of mud and silt between them, searching for any trace of Striker. A bootprint, that stupid hat, maybe the whole spade of his tail if Blitzø was lucky. Despite the slickness beneath his own boots, there was no trace of the cowboy.

The whole place had his spines standing on edge, stretching out in eerie silence. Not even the water moved. No lapping at the banks. No sound of his boots squelching. No hiss of acid that was almost definitely in the water. He clenched his jaw, waiting for that rattlesnake tail or a hiss. Only his mirror image moved in still green water, floating along beside him.

“RIBBIT!”

Blitzø whirled toward the sound, trying to pull his gun at the same time. His tail flailed to control his balance, but his heel tilted too far backward, sucked into mud, and there was no overcorrection that could save him.

He plunged into the icy cold water, finding the consistency more like sludge. The shock of it seemed to shut down his nervous system and he sank toward the bottom all too quickly. Blitzø jerked himself into action, but his limbs struggled as if he were some kind of uncoordinated brain-injured animal. Seconds turned into a minute and then two. His lungs weren't burning yet even though he knew they would soon.

Motherfuck, he was gonna drown.

And FUCK it was cold!

After thrashing himself to the surface (not questioning why he was able to hold his breath that long), he managed to get his limbs to work in time and he propelled himself upward like a shot until he was pulling himself from the goo that was so bright green that it completely blotted out his skin. He flopped onto the bank, sucking in breath after breath of polluted Greed air, but at least it wasn't water.

He lay on his back, panting, staring at the forest green sky and just fucking spiraling. About how he'd fucked up Fizz's life and then almost did it again. About how Fizz wouldn't have been in either situation if it weren't for him. About fucking Stolas who was fresh out of the hospital and Blitzø had been too chickenshit to visit. About M&M and how it was only a matter of time...

Shit. M&M. Blitzø may be letting them down in the future, but it wouldn't be tomorrow.

He needed to get back to Pride so he could open the office in the morning. Rolling over, Blitzø went to get up and found he couldn't.

His legs kept buckling under him and his spine wouldn't straighten out. The fuck? Had that toxic pond done some permanent shit to him?

Pushing himself up as high as he could go—which wasn't more than a weird push-up—Blitzø bent this way and that, trying to get a good look. His tail was still there, but stumpier, and he could feel the weight of his horns on top of his head. Eventually, to his absolute horror and frustration, he realized that he'd somehow been turned into a lizard.

Fuck! he started to shout, but no words came out. Only a loud croaking noise.

Even worse. He was a toad.

What kind of racist shit was this?

If he'd come out with three horns or wings or even no eyes, Blitzø would've chalked it up to the radioactive sewage Greed was known for. But becoming a lizard-toad thing? That was some specific bullshit.

He shook with anger and tried to stomp his hooves, only his legs no longer had hooves at the end and his thighs were oddly strong. Awkwardly, he shot into the air, up and forward, getting a good view of his reflection in the green pond he'd fallen in. Flailing, he hit the ground with a splat.

It took literal hours to get the hang of his new body and Blitzø had settled on a slow, sloppy crawl that made his stomach drag on the concrete as he made his way back to IMP. M&M would help. Millie was his ride or die and Moxxie was too smart for his own good. They'd figure it out.

Night had fallen before he arrived back at the office building, exhausted. Too many close calls between crossing the road and nearly being squashed 14 times by cars and one semi. It was like that fucking sinner game, Hopper, no, Toader? Something stupid.

Then some crow had tried to grab him up for dinner. He'd had to hop himself into a trash can to hide until the shadow had flown away.



Now the office building was dark and Blitzø, in his current shitty form, had to wait outside until one of the succubitches from another office opened the front door so he could slip inside. Once there, Blitzø hopped his way down the hallway, took a huge jump and headbutted the buttons for the elevator up to IMP.

Praise Satan. Light shone from under the door. It was the first good news all day. He jumped for the door handle, but slipped off the metal surface, unable to make it turn before he'd splatted again. He tried some more until he was good and pissed off. He even stuck his webbed hand under the doorframe and tried to pull the thing open.

Suddenly, the door flew open, knocking him backward into the wall.

"Is someone here?" Moxxie's voice asked as Blitzø tried to get his bearings and clear the stars in his vision. "Hellooooo?"

Blinking them away, Blitzø got to his four feet and made his way around the door.

"Blitzø," Moxxie said, sounding pissy now. "If this is you playing a prank, it's not funny."

Blitzø rounded the door, able to see Moxxie with his hand resting on the pistol at his hip. He rubbed his forehead in irritation and his lips were pinched tight. Blitzø opened his mouth, ready to say that it was him and it wasn't a prank, but that same croaky noise came out.

Moxxie's eyes flew open, zeroing in on him immediately, and the (formerly smaller) imp froze. Blitzø straightened himself up as much as he could go and cut a glare at Moxxie.

When Moxxie didn't move, Blitzø began to crawl forward into the office except then there was screaming; Moxxie shrieking at the top of his lungs like Blitzø was mauling him. He hopped backwards, landing on his back, barely flipping over in time to miss the first shot Moxxie made at him.

What the fuck?!

Millie appeared, rushing to Moxxie's side, who fired another two shots. Mother-fucker, Blitzø would be dead if Moxxie wasn't shaking so hard that it threw his aim off.

"What? What? What is it?" Millie asked. Her eyes scanned the hallway and her fist clenched around her knife.

Thank Satan, the voice of reason was here. Blitzø relaxed a bit when Moxxie shrunk behind her. Millie spotted him quickly enough and he raised a hand as if to say hi except her mouth twisted into a snarl.

"Get outta here, ya varmint!" she shouted at him and her knife went whizzing toward him.

Fuck this plan.

Blitzø dodged it and made a run hop for it toward the elevator, but he changed course at the last minute. He went for the stairwell, squeezing under the door, and started to hop down each stair. He was almost down the first flight when the door banged open—and Christ on a Cracker Millie was bound and determined.

She threw another knife, which barely missed his horns and it embedded into the cement floor beside him. So Blitzø threw himself through the rungs of the banister and took his chances on the seven-story freefall.

Twisting in midair, he saw Millie release one more knife as she shouted, "And stay out!"



Blitzø awoke some time later flattened on the ground at the bottom of the stairwell with a headache. New plan.

Ask Stolas to fix this shit and, in return, give the birdie two...no three extra dicking downs this month.

That was probably worth it.

(Even if Stolas hadn't contacted Blitzø at all since getting out of the hospital. Things were totally fine.)

Navigating at night was a bit easier. The streets were less crowded. There were no crows. Yeah, he had to fight off a pack of rats but after he tore the spine out of one, the rest scattered. He made it to Stolas's palace in time for sunrise, slipped in through the front gate, and was ready for this whole thing to be over when he felt something grab him by the tail.

Chapter Two

A commotion in Stolas's front garden drew his attention and he staggered out of his bedroom at nearly noon, tying the sash to his red robe. He yawned widely, squinting in the red light of the Pentagram until he spotted the commotion near the front wall. One of his beautiful Bladderwart's—his brain supplied the name Tentacles, thank you Blitzø—had caught something in its roots and the victim thrashed in the marshy soil.

For a long moment, Stolas debated letting Tentacles eat whatever had been caught. The last few weeks had been...relentless, deep dredges of incessant despair wasted in absinthe with bursts of mind-numbing apathy that not even his soon-to-be ex-wife could pierce.

At times, his blessed injuries still ached and all he wanted to do was crawl back to bed. But, no. Just because Stolas gave little care to his own wellbeing didn't mean he could let Tentacles eat whatever trash it had caught. Stolas would never forgive himself if one of his precious plants fell sick when it was so preventable.

Begrudgingly, he trudged out to his garden and peeled the vine away from Tentacles's bulbous mouth. As he unravels the grasping greenery, Stolas was surprised to find a large red and white toad. It was like no other amphibian he's seen before. Atop its head sat protruding spikes similar to that of horns, and it had such a long tail for a toad-like creature. Perhaps it was some kind of hellish crossbreed between a lizard and an amphibian.

After Stolas managed to get it loose, the toad rolled onto its back in the palm of his hand, breathing heavily. Its rotund belly rose and fell with deep breaths and Stolas could feel the creature's quick heartbeat against his skin. The poor thing...

Its long pink tongue rolled out of its mouth and, for a moment, Stolas worried it was too late—that it was dying from fright or stress or exhaustion. Then, it cracked one golden eye open, blinked in an asynchronous manner, and huffed in a disgruntled manner, closing its eyes again.

The toad was being dramatic.

How fun!

Stolas moved further off into his garden to a place where his less omnivorous plants thrived and stopped, crouching low to the ground. He turned the toad over in his hands—it so reminded him of Blitzø!

Oh dear... Was that racist?

With a sigh, Stolas opened his arms and set the toad on the soft dirt. "There you are," he said. He stood, brushing off the feathers on his knees and turned to head inside, wondering if his staff had restocked the absinthe.

From behind him, a very loud ribbit croaked out and Stolas turned with a smile that felt as tired as he was. "Goodbye, little friend. Good luck on your journey."

A few hours later, Stolas was lounging in his bedroom, attempting to drunkenly read his favorite story, when something rattled his balcony doors. His heart lurched in his chest. Could it be Blitzø? Had he arrived on his own accord and not on a Full Moon night no less?

Stolas squinted at the mosaic of stained glass that were his double doors. There was no imp-sized shadow. No loud booming voice, demanding Stolas let him in. But there was a toad-shaped splat sticking to the glass.

With uncertain steps, Stolas approached his door and turned the lock, waiting to see if perhaps this was some sort of ruse. Holding his breath, Stolas prepared himself just in case that Striker fellow appeared. He wouldn't be caught unawares this time. The toad-like shadow swelled and bellowed a large 'croak' causing its body to slide down and Stolas finally opened the door.

There, stuck to a blue pane of glass, was the toad from the garden. "Oh, hello again," Stolas said.

As if it would speak back to him.

For its part, the toad seemed to glare at him. Of course even the fauna seemed to take issue with him.

Stolas took a few more steps out onto the balcony and looked around, observing his pristine garden below and no sign of trouble that could have caused the small creature to flee so high. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

The toad said nothing, but did manage to unstick itself from the window and splat onto the ground.

“Careful!” Stolas said, rushing to its side, but the toad was up and hopping into Stolas’s bedchambers before Stolas could stop him.

“You shouldn’t be in here,” Stolas called out. “There is nothing for you here. You would be much more comfortable in the garden, I’m sure!”

The long tail of the toad slapped against the floor as it bound away and headed directly into the bathroom. Exhaling, Stolas continued to follow it. The toad stopped in front of the cabinets under his sink. Half-impressed, Stolas watched the small thing climb those cabinets slap by slap of its froggish hands and landed itself in the porcelain sink.

Well...

The toad rolled over in the basin and made eye contact with him. It flicked its tongue at the handles, getting it stuck several times before one flick finally lands properly and wraps around the handle. It’s pulled, turning on the tap and the toad sits underneath the stream, croaking as if it was luxuriating at a spa.

So very strange.

Stolas let him be. The toad seemed harmless enough and Stolas could certainly understand the need for a good bath. He went back to perusing his literature with the tune of very vocal ribbiting and throaty noises in the background.

Almost scandalous.

A clatter of glass against the tile had his feathers shooting up. Images of the toad cut by glass and bleeding out on his bathroom floor zipped through his mind. He hurried to the bathroom only to find no broken glass but a very sheepish-looking toad, struggling with one of his bath oils which had been tipped on its side and was pouring rapidly into the basin that was overflowing with bubbles.

The toad paused, both red hands on the crystal, and slapping its tail around, clearing the bubbles. It trilled at him as if demanding help.

Stolas came forward and righted the bottle, pulling it away from the toad. “What a strange creature you are. You know, if you wanted bubbles, you could have asked.” The toad narrowed its eyes and slipped back into the water, letting only its snout peek out at the surface. That settled, Stolas headed back toward the archway that led into his bedroom and paused.

“I will leave the doors open so that you may leave when you wish,” he said to the toad. It would soon be time for dinner and Stolas had yet to have a proper meal or respond to any correspondence. He also needed to straighten himself up to be presentable for Via.

After pulling on a regal yet understated outfit, Stolas took to his study to work. An hour or so later, one of his butlers announced that dinner was to be served. Stolas returned momentarily to his quarters...just to check.

The toad was no longer in the sink nor was it in the bathroom. To be thorough, he checked under the bed and upon his bookshelf. He searched through his walk-in closet and the cushions on the corner chaise.

Nothing.

Well, Stolas wished the little thing luck.

Imagine his surprise when he entered the dining room and found Octavia with several doll-like outfits spread out upon the surface of the table and one very exhausted toad bedecked in a wig and dress.

“Via, what is this?” he asked, coming closer.

The toad lifted its head to look at him and made a small grumbling noise in its throat.

“Dad! Look!” Via exclaimed, her eyes sparkling. “Isn’t it cute?!”

It was very cute. “Via,” he said again, trying to sound authoritative but failing completely.

His Starfire swept up the toad under the arms and propped it up. “Arms out,” she said.

“*Please*,” Stolas reminded her.

“Please,” she repeated.

The toad held his arms out at his sides and did a little curtsy. Via squealed and even Stolas could not help himself, hooting happily. What an intelligent toad.



CROAK!

I DON'T THINK HE'S ENJOYING THAT MUCH SWEETIE.

AWW. BUT HE LOOKS SO CUTE!

CHILLIN

I NAMED HIM TØAD, WITH A SILENT "O"

HAHAHA, I THINK HE DOESN'T LIKE IT.

OH, MY! IT'S THE FIRST TIME I HEAR A TOAD PURRING!

purr purr purr

TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP

YOU'LL CATCH IT NEXT TIME, DARLING.

RISE!

Octavia was already snapping photos with her phone. When she saw he was looking, she turned the phone toward him and began to swipe through the photos, showing him the different outfits. As she went back in the past, Stolas could see how the toad was at first amicable to the photos and then became more and more tired.

A butler entered the large dining room with a serving tray and Stolas took that moment to save the toad from its torment. “Why don’t we let our guest have a moment of reprieve while we eat?”

His wonderful, lovely, gothic daughter rolled her eyes and took her phone back, placing it face down next to her plate. The clothes upon the table were cleared and dinner was set out. They ate in companionable silence at a leisurely pace. Via had a single earbud in and bobbed her head to a beat that he could not hear. Every few bites of their fire koi, Stolas noticed Via discreetly slipping a few table scraps to the toad, who snapped every morsel in its maw immediately.

Leaning forward, resting his hand on his chin, Stolas pointed with his fork. “Do you plan to keep him as a pet?” he asked with a grin.

Octavia perked up and blinked, turning her head to look at the toad fully. She patted it atop its strange horns. “Oh, no! No, I want to practice my taxidermy with him.”

The toad, who had been relaxing upon the table, flailed its long limbs suddenly and knocked over the candelabra in the center before it crashed headlong into Stolas. He scooped it up immediately before it could fall upon his plate and spoil his food.

“You certainly will not,” Stolas stated to Octavia despite her pout. “It is a living breathing creature.”

“Daaad,” she whined and, though Stolas usually gave into her whims, this time he had to draw the line. Even if he did draw it simply because the toad reminded him too much of the imp whom he was fond of.

She huffed. “Fine. I’ll wait until it dies.”
Stolas raised a brow as he cradled the fast-breathing toad—who seemed to understand language—in his arms. “Octavia.”

She rolled her pink eyes, looking so very much like her mother for a moment. “Of natural causes. Ugh. Promise you’ll save its corpse for me?”

Awkwardly, Stolas stroked one long talon on the back of its head down its spine. Would that be so bad? To have a stuffed toad that resembled Blitzø in the Palace? He’d known others who stuffed their pets after death.

“I promise, Starfire,” he said finally. That said, he asked again, “Would you like to keep it as a pet until then?”

“Sure,” she responded, going back to her phone, and Stolas remembered the fighterfish, the pint-sized hamhog, the feathered boa, and the killer worm farm that all ended up buried in the backyard or given away. His darling Starfire, for all her talents, did not seem to have inherited his green thumb. Certainly, while all were accidents, her pets managed to have such dreadful accidents; a broken jaw from too heavy a hand, overeagerness that led to an overstuffed belly that needed induced vomiting, and an unfortunate accident with a sharpie. The majority of the pet care of this toad would most certainly fall upon her maids. Still, Stolas should research and order the proper materials for housing such a creature.

But, first, he needed to determine what sort of creature this was. It seemed so tame already. Had it been some sort of pet that was lost? Should he post fliers?

After dinner was finished and dessert was cleared, Stolas excused himself from the table and asked Octavia if she would like to watch a movie with him, but she gently turned him down saying it was time to wash her feathers. Stolas hummed, knowing that it would take her the better part of the evening to complete her routine.

So he scooped up the toad, depositing it in his shirt pocket, and let Octavia know he would be by later to say goodnight. He returned to his rooms, using his phone along the way to search for this breed of helltoad.

And he could not quite find what he searched for.

There did not seem to be a toad that matched these attributes. Perhaps it was not an amphibian after all. Stolas flipped through more pages, searching among the categories of lizards. He even posted a picture of the toad to a forum of experts, one he’d frequently used for the other creatures in his garden.

If all avenues in Hell came up empty, it could be that it was an Earthen animal (though that would be nearly impossible with the difference in atmosphere and humidity alone).

The toad, for its part, rode silently in his pocket. As Stolas fatigued and readied for bed, he almost disrobed completely, forgetting the toad completely. The creature had been so quiet and still that Stolas wondered if perhaps it had fallen out. But a search of his breast pockets found it merely asleep, the rise and fall of its deep breaths moving its belly.

Unsure of what to do with it and unwilling to leave a sleeping creature in the garden at night, Stolas set a pillow on the floor of his chambers and placed the toad on top. He left the door of his balcony open, reasoning that the toad had gotten up there and so he should be able to get down as well when it saw fit. Then, he went to bed.

As the days followed, Stolas ended up no closer to finding the toad's species although he did settle on a name to call it himself. Tøad. With the silent o.

It had no obvious sex, although it did seem very masculine in the way that it croaked and postured.

Tøad followed him relentlessly throughout the day, hopping when Stolas did not carry him in his breast pocket—they both seemed to prefer Tøad be carried. They conversed or, moreso, Stolas spoke his thoughts aloud to another living being, much like he did with his plants. Tøad didn't speak back much, a ribbit here or there. Sometimes a loud exhale as if he were just so over it. But, when Stolas would go to place Tøad in the garden, the creature would hop quickly after him. Even Via came around more frequently, checking in on her pet and measuring its inseam for a new outfit she was designing. Tøad gave his own input, sticking his tongue to the sketch of a suit and peeing on the sketch of an orange blouse. So they concluded it was deliberate, and Stolas was delighted to know Tøad was sentient.

At least, this way, if Stolas paid close attention to his behavior, he would perhaps be able to decipher what it was Tøad needed if his library held no answers. In the evenings, Tøad would ribbit at a withering decibel until Stolas bent over and let it sleep upon a pillow on the bed, although it was not uncommon for Stolas to wake with the creature tucked into his head feathers.

It was a Friday about an hour before Via was due to be picked up with her mother for the weekend. His Starfire was upstairs, choosing a few belongings to bring with her, while Stolas and Tøad pulled weeds in the garden. Or, more accurately, Stolas pulled weeds in the garden and Tøad slept on his back under the shade of a broad elephant ear.

Still, Stolas spoke to him about the latest story on his mind. In his search for the kind of animal Tøad was, Stolas had come across a story called The Princess and the Frog in which a Prince has a spell placed on him to live in the body of a frog until he is kissed by a princess.

He was in the midst of this story when an unfortunately familiar voice cackled and there were the sounds of sharp high heels crushing his flowering myrrder. The lightheartedness in him fell into apathy as she neared.

“Talking to yourself again, Stol-ass?! How pathetic!”

“Stella. You're early.” He remained crouched, using his top set of eyes to check on Tøad, who had awoken at the sound of her approach. Disoriented, the creature blinked awake asynchronously, rolling to its webbed feet. As long as it remained out-of-sight, it was likely Stella would overlook it.

His soon-to-be ex-wife bent over with her fists on her hips. “I knew I would find you out here in the dirt like some commoner.” She spat the final word in that spittle literally flew from her mouth, landing by his thighs.

Stolas unfolded himself, removing his gloves, and brushed off the dirt from his gardening clothes. He smirked, leaning into one hip. “Better a dirty commoner than a fetid gossipmonger.”

Stella sputtered at his comeback and Stolas lifted a brow.

“Oh, and here I thought you could read,” he said.

The confusion on Stella's face was almost worth the frustrated rage that she took out on his two-lips. She screamed obscenities at him and it must've been too loud for Tøad because the little thing had climbed one of the stakes in his garden for the creeper vines and launched himself at Stella's face.

With a shriek, Stella stumbled backward, tripped over a sentient vine, and fell on her ass in the dirt. She cursed and flailed in the freshly manured flowerbeds, digging claws deep in the mud as she tried to find purchase. Stolas found himself cackling, full on belly laughing.

Until Stella grasped Tøad around his abdomen and dug her claws in. The creature squeaked in pain, blood began to drip down its body. Stolas was on his feet in a flash. “Unhand him!”

“This?” Stella scoffed. “This hideous thing?! First that ugly imp and now this slimy toad?”

Tøad’s eyes swelled as if he were a stress toy as Stella squeezed him.

“Stella,” Stolas warned. He wanted to move forward, yank Tøad from her grasp, but Stella could snap its neck so easily.

As she got to her feet, Stella turned Tøad over in her hand. “You always had freakish preferences, Stolas. Are you fucking this toad too?”

A trickle of something wet dripped down Stella’s hand and it took them both a moment to realize it wasn’t more blood, but urine.

“Ew! It peed on me!” Stella flung Tøad away across the garden and the little thing hit the packed earth with a heartbreaking noise.

Stolas was beside him in a flash, scooping Tøad up in his palms and bringing him inside. The poor thing was breathing heavily, eyes screwed shut. Stella could go fuck herself.

“I’ve got you, darling,” he said, stroking over the gouges in Tøad’s soft stomach. He moved to the closest bathroom and washed the blood from his belly. Tøad never opened his eyes. Perhaps unconscious.

Lords, Stolas hoped he was only unconscious.

“You’re okay. You’ll be okay,” he cooed.

The good news was the gouges were not too deep and Stolas was able to use a combination of magic and ointment to bandage Tøad. If he could give Tøad painkillers, if he knew the correct species and dosage, Stolas wouldn’t have hesitated. At present, the best he could do was press the flat of his beak to Tøad’s belly in a whisper of a kiss.



TALKING TO
YOURSELF
AGAIN,
STOL-ASS?!
HOW PATHETIC!

HE'S SO CUTE.
THANKS FOR
URINATING
ON HER,
LITTLE FRIEND.
SHE ACTUALLY
DESERVED IT.

STELLA!
RELEASE HIM
AT ONCE!
YOU'RE
HURTING
HIM!

EW! IT
PEED
ON ME!

PAF!!

Chapter Three

Blitzø woke up, disoriented, and watched twinkling lights pass overhead. Warmth held him on all sides, rocking slowly. It took a moment to realize those drips of light were chandeliers on the ceiling and that he was riding in the familiar fabric of Stolas's pocket again.

"I'll see you in a few days, Starfire," Stolas said.

"Bye, Dad."

There was the sound of that feathery cunt-nozzle screeching for Stolas to hurry up. Blitzø rolled over in the pocket, ready to startle her at least. But the door closed soundly. Stolas let out a loud exhale, hanging his head a bit, and just looking so pathetic that Blitzø had to do something.

Poking his head out of the pocket, Blitzø planted it right on Stolas's neck, rubbing into his feathers. Fuck, he'd gladly suffocate in those silky feathers.

"Ah!" Stolas's hand settled on his head. "You're awake!"

Then he was being cradled in both Stolas's hands and lifted up by his underarms. A talon smoothed over his belly.

"Thank Lucifer, you seem to be healing well."

Blitzø opened his mouth to say he could take that bitch any day and all that came out was a throaty, "Ribbit."

Kay. That felt really fucking racist somehow. He clamped his mouth shut and glared at Stolas.

The prince just stroked his forehead and pouted, poking that bottom lip out. Blitzø was tempted to bite it.

Except he didn't have teeth anymore.

"Don't be that way, *Toad*."

Tad? Like tadpole?

"The o is silent," Stolas explained. "I hope you don't mind. I named you after one of my favorite people."

Blitzø rolled his eyes. Yeah, right.

And what did that make the name? Tadø?

It better not be Tøad.

Stolas lifted him up higher so they were almost eye to eye. "It's only you and me today. What would you like to do?"

Break this curse. Binge eat all the cheese in that fancy fridge. Murder a few fuckers.

"What do you say to playing hooky, hm?" Stolas asked with a little birdie head tilt. "Ooh! There is this wonderful marathon of Love at First Blight." He tittered happily to himself and dumped Blitzø back into his pocket.

"You'll love it," Stolas said. "Single demons in search of love work together to grow these young saplings despite the inevitability of a blight which..." He continued to drone on and Blitzø went along for the ride.

Surprisingly, the show wasn't half bad. The singles were a bunch of lovedrunk idiots, but Blitzø got to sit in a vat of nacho cheese and eat to his heart's content while they watched. And, afterward when he was covered in sticky bright orange goodness, Stolas put him in the bath with a fuck ton of bubbles.

As an imp, the tub had already been large for him, almost like a jacuzzi. Now, it was a pool. He leisurely from end to end, tail sluicing through the water. Stolas got in with him, of course—that bird could never resist a good bubble bath. He turned over on his back, floating in the water, and let Stolas rub his belly.

Afterward, he was set in front of the blow dryer and he basked in the warm air blowing across his body. Stolas seemed to get a kick out of it too. Blitzø would roll from side-to-side and let his long tongue loll out so it stuck onto the countertop. Giggling, Stolas lifted each of Blitzø's limbs and blew the warm air under his arm-pits until he croaked in pleasure.

The whole thing would've been embarrassing as fuck if Stolas knew it were him.

Once dry, Stolas redressed in another red robe that looked exactly the same as the first, but cleaner. Back in Stolas's bedroom, Blitzø was left to his devices for a bit as Stolas read. He hopped around the room, taking in everything from an even shorter point-of-view. Using the sticky pads of his feet, he climbed the bookshelf which stretched up above him like a skyscraper.

Even if the Grimoire was back at IMP, Stolas had 1000 other books on magic and maybe being close to a magic book would trigger something or give Stolas some ideas. Blitzø was nearly to the top when Stolas abruptly exclaimed, "That's an interesting fact!" as if they were in the middle of a fucking conversation.

For a moment, Blitzø flailed, losing his sticky handhold and readying himself to go splat on the floor again. Luckily, he caught himself and climbed onto a shelf where he turned and croaked at Stolas moodily.

"Oh, yes! How rude of me," Stolas replied. He turned the page back on his book and pointed with a talon. "It says here that in the original story of the Princess and the Frog the young lady makes a pact with the frog, but she becomes so frustrated with his demands that she throws him at the wall and that is what releases the frog from the spell."

What the fuck...

"Of course," Stolas said, placing a hand over his heart like he was swearing a vow. "I would never do that to you."

Uh huh. Whatever would get him released from this spell. If being thrown at the wall would help... Well, Blitzø could handle it. He turned back around and examined the graying book beside him. It was slightly hairy, almost mossy.

The visible words didn't make any sense, Archaic Epistemology of Liminal Modality so he wiggled himself behind it and began to push it forward with his horns. The book behind had a bright orange cover with flecks of silver embedded in a swirling pattern.

Behind him, Stolas turned the page so Blitzø kept pushing and pushing until the gross gray book toppled off the shelf. But there was no noise of it hitting the tile floor. Moving forward carefully, Blitzø peered over the edge and saw the book was floating in purple magic.

From across the room, Stolas had a hand raised. "No, thank you."

The book floated back up and slid into place, nudging Blitzø until he moved out of the way. So Blitzø waited until Stolas went back to reading and then pushed it off again. Again, Stolas caught it with magic and placed it back on the shelf. This time Blitzø didn't move when the book nudged him.

Stolas scoffed and got to his feet. He strode across the room. "Move, please."

Blitzø started to shove the book again.

Stolas placed the flat of his hand against the book so that it stopped moving. "I said, 'no, thank you.'"

So Blitzø headbutted the book, ramming his horns into it.

"No. No," Stolas chastised firmly like he was some sort of pet. He reached out to grab Blitzø off the shelf.

Blitzø made the most racist ribbiting sound in protest, but Stolas either didn't notice or didn't care because he scooped him up and placed him in the breast pocket of his robe.

"What do you say we have cereal for dinner?" Stolas asked and began to walk away from the shelf.

But that meant Blitzø still needed to somehow convey to Stolas that there was magic involved. So he leapt from the pocket and went hurtling to the floor. The prince shrieked and attempted to catch him, but only succeeded in batting him away, sending him cartwheeling through the air.

He hit the floor; his skin making high-pitched squeaking noises as he skidded. Dazed, Blitzø barely felt himself getting scooped up and held close.



Hours later, Stolas leaned on the balcony, long arms crossed, and looked out over toward the city skyline. It had been a long but pleasantly slow day. The red of the pentagram was fading, setting like the earthen sun, as the day came to a close. Tøad sat quietly on the railing beside him with a bandaid on his head.

Stolas really did feel bad about that, about letting Tøad fall. He was sure he seemed just as cruel as the young lady in the original version of the story by the Brothers Grimm. To calm his nerves, he lit a blunt and took a drag.

As he waited for the effects to hit him, he rolled the blunt between his index finger and thumb. Tøad croaked, breaking his thoughts and hopped toward him.

“You know, a dear friend introduced me to these and I indulged him. Before him, I’d been too reserved to try one—at least on my own. Now, I find that an evening smoke relaxes me. It allows me to release my thoughts.”

Tøad tilted his head and tapped his thick tail on the railing lazily.

Stolas inhaled another large lungful and held it until he felt lightheaded. These strands were the best that could be purchased from Sloth. Years had been spent cultivating them. “He has opened me up to so many new experiences,” said Stolas, leaning his chin on his palm.

In so many more ways than merely sex.

The city twinkled in the distance as lights in the offices shut off for the end of the day and headlights came on. Stolas flicked the ash from the end of the cigarette. Tøad hopped closer and opened his mouth as if he would like a turn.

“Not for you, my darling.” Stolas lifted the blunt away from him and brought it to his lips instead. He inhaled, holding it in. He felt the burn in his lungs as the potent drug worked into his system. He exhaled smoothly and a soft white cloud floated from his beak. “Perhaps I’ve been reticent with my feelings for him but...” Tøad continued to watch him with large yellow and red eyes. He tilted his head.

“You’ve truly been a great listener,” Stolas said. With a sigh, he stroked a single talon down Tøad’s back with his free hand.

Tøad pressed into the feeling, tilting his head and closing his eyes. The world softened. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Tøad was really his Prince Charming? Cursed by a witch to be in the body of a frog until true love’s kiss?

Stolas chuckled. It wasn’t that far a thought. Magic was known to do so much and Tøad did not seem to be any species he could find in his research. Even if Tøad were not a prince, it was completely possible he was some sort of demon trapped by a wayward spell.

It was only logical that Stolas should attempt to assist Tøad. Stolas hummed and snubbed out the blunt on an ornate marble ash tray he’d bought for such occasions. Its divot and decoration blended into the balcony seamlessly, as if it had always been there.

Lifting Tøad into his hands, he examined the specimen. Stolas thought of how strange it felt to be in a human disguise. He pursed his beak, wondering at how this demon—if it truly was a such—might feel. He imagined what it might be like, being trapped in another animal completely, without the use of language or hands.

Unable to utilize the language he so loved in any capacity.

“Would you be terribly opposed to a kiss?” Stolas asked.

Tøad blinked rapidly at him in a way that made Stolas feel as if he should explain.

“W-Well, if you have been transformed by magic—and yes, I understand how strange this sounds—but if you have, then a kiss is as good a place to start as any. It has been written of frequently in children’s stories as a way to break a spell. Perhaps, there is a reason behind it. A precedent, if you will.”

Tøad sat up a bit straighter, puffing his chest out.

“Yes,” Stolas said to Tøad. “I realize how foolish I must seem to be talking to you if you are not a demon trapped by a spell. And if you are...” Stolas felt himself blush. “P-Please do not tell anyone about the states of undress you’ve seen me in.”

Tøad croaked, almost impatiently, and closed both eyes.

Stolas’s heart thrummed in his chest at yet another indication that Tøad may understand him. He lifted Tøad higher and leaned in. As their mouths met, Stolas closed his primary set of eyes and focused on the feeling of cool lips on his beak.





Then, his secondary set of eyes caught a stirring of magic.

In a magical transformation that put Moon Sailor to shame, Tøad was surrounded by glittering light. Legs elongated and the weight of the being in his grasp increased. Mottled red and white skin stretched over the body that grew rapidly. The thick tail thinned out, swinging and whipping rapidly.

Flippers turned into hooves. Fingers grasped onto Stolas's forearms, claws digging into his feathers. And something wonderful, lovely, and intimately familiar grew between those two legs.

But, the eyes... The eyes stayed the same, locked onto Stolas.

Blitzø, nude and as beautiful as the day he was (probably) born, stared back at him, hanging from Stolas's hands where he gripped him under his arms. They both blinked at each other as if Blitzø were as surprised as Stolas was that this had worked.

As he was held there in Stolas's outstretched arms, Blitzø's tail swished leisurely and then that sly imp grinned so very sinfully. His fangs glinted in the low light. "Heya, Stols."

"Blitzø..."

Chapter Four

Blitzø had never been more grateful to be in his own messed up body than he was at that current moment. After spending several days as the most shitty thing an imp could be—a toad—he could finally grasp things with his tail again and flip people off. And, most importantly, he could speak.

He was still hanging from Stolas's arms like a naked cat in airjail but that was fine with him. He hadn't been this close to Stolas in months.

"All this time?" Stolas asked him.

Sheepishly, Blitzø scratched his head. "Yeah. I...uh...fell in some toxic sludge in Greed."

As he said that, Stolas slowly lowered him to the slate and settled in front of him, crouching down. "Greed? What were you doing down there?" He brushed his hands over Blitzø's shoulders.

Blitzø absolutely did not lean into it. His dick had just started to get excited about the feathers touching him when his eyes caught the bandages wrapping Stolas's upper arm. He'd seen them frequently these last few days but not what was underneath. Even still, any injury Stolas faced should've healed by now. He turned his head away and clenched his fists. "Nothing."

In the twilight, Stolas's white feathers were painted almost reddish like a blush. He exhaled airily and placed a hand over his own heart. "Oh, Blitzø."

At his name, Blitzø bared his teeth and his spines rose. "What?" he asked harder than he meant to.

They were both silent. Their history, the last several months of missed Full Moons and Blitzø's shitty text responses, stretched out between them. All of a sudden, the two paces of space between them was as impassable as a 20-foot wall. His dick shriveled up—not that Stolas had even looked at it once.

He was buck-fucking naked for fuck's sake!

Welp. Blitzø had scaled higher. With a growl, he gritted his teeth and forced himself to say, "I'm gonna kill him, just, like, so you know and shit."

"I appreciate the sentiment," Stolas said with a nod and rose to his feet. "But I would not want to see you harmed in the process. He is very dangerous."

"I'm very dangerous," Blitzø snapped, following Stolas he entered his bedroom. "Striker doesn't stand a chance against me. That cocky ass-eating, 12-gallon hat wearing, fucking shitty smarmy—"

"Sexy," Stolas supplied, pausing by the door to his closet.

"Sexy—Dammit, Stolas. Listen to me." Satan, he'd gotten sidetracked with his hatred. "I can handle him. I'm the better assassin."

"You are."

Pride puffed Blitzø's chest up a bit. "Duh. Honestly, you should've been dead long before M&M arrived. What was that asshole doing? Yanking his own dick? Killing one-Oh-one: you don't leave a target alive long after you get them to the second location."

Stolas had snapped his fingers and floated over several garments Blitzø had left, including an off-the-shoulder hoodie and a pair of boxers. Yeah, he'd been getting too comfortable here. With it in his hands though, he paused, running his thumbs over the fabric. The air suddenly felt colder out, blowing in from the balcony. The palace was always shit at insulation.

The prince had curled in on himself in a way Blitzø recognized from the few times an uncomfortable topic came up while they were in bed together. Like his bitch wife.

It would start slow, kinda like when Fizz dissociated, and all Stolas's limbs would draw up toward his body. Some PTSD, remembering shit. Unlike Fizz who'd have a very visual panic attack and struggle to breathe, Stolas would go super still and silent.

Except this time, he rallied and drew in a breath. "Blitzø," he said softly.

As if to remind him it was not Blitzø anymore...

"What?" He hadn't even mentioned Stella or any of Stolas's other triggers. Like, yeah, the incident with Striker was traumatizing but Stolas was the one calling him sexy. Blitzø had only added facts.

“Thank you for spending time with me.” He squeezed the clothes once before handing them over. “I appreciate that you came to me in your time of need.”

What the fuck. Was this some sort of dig at how Blitzø hadn’t come to save him, hadn’t gone to see him in the hospital? “Uh huh,” he responded skeptically. He took the clothes because, yeah, the mood was killed dead. “Bottom line: I’m gonna carve a new hole in that snake and split his tail in two so I can pull it outta both ends.”

Damn. That was a good idea.

Smiling to himself, he stepped into his shorts. Now all he had to do was find the horseless cowboy douchebag.

Stolas hummed. He usually loved Blitzø’s disemboweling jokes. “Well, I don’t want to keep you. I know you’re a very busy imp. You probably have pressing matters to attend to.”

Halfway to pulling the hoodie over his horns, Blitzø paused. Shit. Loona.

Hurrying the fuck up, he nearly split the seams, getting the hoodie the rest of the way on. Had she noticed he was missing? Had she eaten while he was gone? He hadn’t left any money for takeout.

Even though Blitzø didn’t have his phone, he knew that Moxxie had definitely texted him at least 15 times about his absence. Satan, this was going to be so annoying. “Yeah. Fuck. I gotta—”

“I understand,” Stolas said, clasping his hands daintily in front of him. “Will I be seeing you on Full Moon or must we reschedule again? I do not mind being flexible, although I have some rather important matters—”

Blitzø exhaled noisily and rubbed his snout. “Look, I know I’ve been busy. I’ve got a business and a family. But you bet your feathered ass I’m gonna uphold my end of the bargain.” He dropped his voice into that lower register that made Stolas cream usually. “Favors for favors, right?”

Instead of that wet-for-him, ready-to-fuck enthusiasm, Stolas’s face fell. His pretty reds dimmed. “Of course,” he responded sullenly.

Lucifer’s titties, the silence was awkward. What the fuck was this about? Stolas had texted him some wishy-washy messages on the last couple of Full Moons and Blitzø had purposefully not thought much about it, taking the excuse to skip, taking the space to get his head set on straight so he didn’t look like such a simp

And...he wasn’t gonna think any more about it.

Because things were totally fine.

Waving his claws toward the balcony, Blitzø asked, “Can you open a portal so I don’t have to walk my tight ass halfway across the ring?”

“Oh!” Stolas blinked, straightening up. “Yes. Where would you—”

“IMP is fine.” They had a phone there and his backup burners were on his desk.

With a brilliant purple glow, the portal opened to the reception area of IMP. “Here you are. Again, it was lovely to see you.”

“Yup,” Blitzø responded, a little distracted, because his office looked like more of a crime scene than usual. Had Moxxie been in here? Had Loona been searching for clues to where he’d gone? He hopped through the portal and then thought better of it, sticking his head back through.

Thankfully, Stolas hadn’t closed the portal and cut off his neck. “Hey.” He shot the bird fingerguns and his filthiest leer. “Thanks for the kiss, Prince Charming.”

Finally, Stolas shuddered and his feathers puffed out. “A-Always,” Stolas said and swallowed roughly. He lifted his hand in a raise. “See you soon.”

And, with that, Blitzø knew things were gonna be just fine.



