

Star Rail Remaid (Various Inanimate TFs, Honkai: Star Rail)

The deck of the starliner creaked under Himeko's feet as she crept through its empty hallways. Thick beams of starlight poured through the ship's ports, revealing the clouds of dust choking the air and making the golden filigree of the rich red carpet shimmer. The passenger deck looked as lifeless as the rest of the derelict, but if they were likely to find survivors anywhere, it was here.

Approaching the next cabin, she opened the door and poked her head through, but the room was as empty as all the others she'd checked. There was no sign of the passengers whatsoever, living or otherwise, but in the center of the room, between the bed and the wardrobe, sat a plump cushion. Picking it up, Himeko turned it around in her hands, wondering why it would have been left out in the open. It wasn't the first such object she'd found out of place either: every cabin she'd checked had something similar lying out of place on the floor: lamps, paintings, records and toys. Had the passengers left them in their haste during the evacuation, or were they some sort of strange offering? She didn't care to speculate.

With a sigh, Himeko closed the door and stepped back, already considering the next cabin. She kept her footsteps quiet as she approached it: the ship seemed exactly as lifeless as the scans had suggested, but that didn't mean it was without danger – for all they knew, it was crammed to bursting with killer robots... So they had to be careful. Sleathy. Quiet.

Click! "Wow! Himeko! Himeko, come look at this photo I just took!"

With a scowl, Himeko turned and March 7th snapping away like a Xianzhou tourist.

"Wow! Look at all this dust!" said everyone's favorite day of the year, spinning in circles in search of her next shot. "I bet this ship's been abandoned for ceeeeeeeecenturies!"

With a sigh, Himeko turned back. "I rather doubt that," she said. "Given the state of the furnishings and the quality of the air, combined with the radiation levels being emitted by the reactor, I'd estimate it's been derelict for a matter of days at most."

"Oh," said March, lowering her camera.

"Which, of course, raises the probability that whatever resulted in the ship's current state is still present and dangerous. So it would be for the best if we could continue in a slightly more *subtle* posture, if you understand."

March 7th zipped her lips with a nod.

There, thought Himeko. *That's better.*

With a tremendous crash, the wall in front of her exploded, and through the jagged hole flew Caelus the Trailblazer, his hand around the throat of a robot.

A bolt from the wall panel flew from the chaos and landed with a tink-tink... tink at Himeko's feet. She studied it intently.

"Found a robot," said Caelus.

March took a picture of it. *Click!*

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After a quick check of the rest of the ship, which proved to be as utterly bereft of answers as the passenger deck, they returned to the Astral Express, where the three of them stood in the parlor car and looked down on the one thing they *had* found.

"What kind of robot is it?" asked March 7th. "I've never seen one like this before."

"Looks like a maid," said Caelus.

He wasn't lying: the robot looked like a young woman in a maid outfit, cut to show off her rather generous chest. She had an apron and a frilly white headband with little black ribbons and cracked, seamed skin like a porcelain doll. Her strangest feature by far, however, was the large vacuum head and tube sticking out of her backside – they looked like a tail.

"What made you attack it?" asked Himeko, raising an eyebrow.

"Startled me," said Caelus with a shrug.

"Remind me not to give you any more surprise hugs..." said March, with a gulp.

Bending down, Himeko gave the machine a curious poke. Perhaps, if they could repair it, it would shed some light on the mysterious shipwreck... "Let's see... How can I...? Oh."

"What is it?" asked March.

Himeko turned the robot around, revealing the gigantic on/off switch sticking out of its back. "It must have hit it when it struck the wall."

"Makes sense," said Caelus.

With a clunk, Himeko flicked the switch. From inside the machine came a rising whirr, and its limbs twitched and its eyes flashed, and finally–

They all took a step back, just in case it exploded.

–it leapt to its feet. "Greetings, humanoids! I am the Maidmotron 9001, the latest in state-of-the-art cleaning (and sexual relief) technology! How may I serve you?" She adjusted her headband and curtsied, just like the maid she resembled.

For several seconds, the three of them simply stood there staring at her. When they finally spoke, it was in tones of utter befuddlement.

“Maid...?” said Himeko.

“Mo...?” said March.

Caelus folded his arms and said nothing.

“...tron?” added March, after a moment.

“That is correct!” said the Maidmotron.

“You’re a maidbot?” said March, one eyebrow raised quizzically.

“That is *a*so correct!” said the robot. “Would you like me to demonstrate my cleaning capabilities, mistress?”

They shared a look. “Be our guest...?” said Himeko, after a moment.

“Excellent!” The robot beamed. “Firstly, do you have any trash, garbage, or otherwise useless material on hand?”

They shared another look, which quickly transformed into scanning the room around them – unfortunately, it was as clean as Pom-Pom’s whistle.

“Well, I do have this sandwich,” said March, rummaging in her skirt. “I haven’t opened it yet, but you could always use the wrap–”

“Excellent!” said the Maidmotron. Grabbing her tail by the handle, just like a normal vacuum, she aimed it at March’s sandwich – with a sucking and a schlup, it vanished up the pipe.

“H-hey!” said March. “I was going to eat th–”

“Excellent! Now...” continued the Maidmotron. “Is there anything of which you are in dire need?”

March was about to say ‘a sandwich’, but Himeko shushed her before she could speak.

“How about a new watch?” said the navigator.

“Of course, madam!”

With this, the Maidmotron’s mouth slammed shut, and from inside her came all sorts of strange sounds: grindings and squeakings and hammerings and clangings, until at last–

The robot aimed its vacuum at Himenko’s hands, and with a blast of air and a little pop, out flew a brand new wristwatch, bright and brassy.

“E-eh?! It made a watch?!” said March.

“That is correct, madam! In addition to my cleaning (and sexual relief) functions, I am also equipped with state-of-the-art recycling functions, allowing me to transform the trash I collect into anything my owner needs!”

“Interesting,” said Himeko, studying the watch closely. “It looks just like a real watch.”

“I can assure you,” said the Maidmotron, smoothing down her skirt, “that everything I produce is 100% real. With my atomic transmutation engine, almost anything can be broken down and reconfigured into the object of your desires.”

“Is that even possible?” asked March, raising an eyebrow.

“Sounds too good to be true,” said Caelus.

Himeko scratched her chin, looking concerned. “Mmn.” Bending down, she inspected the robot curiously.

The Maidmotron cocked her head with a tiny whirr of motors. “How may I assist you, madam?”

“Perhaps,” she said, tenting her fingers, “you could start by offering some insight into what went wrong with that starliner.”

The maidbot cocked her head in the other direction. “Ah, je suis désolé, but I’m afraid I cannot help you there, madam. As far as I’m aware, nothing went wrong whatsoever.”

“Whaaat?!” cried March. “How can *that* be true? It was like the space *Mary Celeste*. Where were all the people?”

The maidbot cocked her head backward. “Oh, that’s easy to answer! They were in their cabins, of course.”

“Wh-what do you mean?” said March, hugging herself. “Are you talking about, like, like *ghosts*?”

The maidbot cocked her head forward. “No, madam. I assure you their presence was quite physical.”

Himeko massaged her brow. “This is getting us nowhere.”

“What do we do now then?” asked March. “It’s not like we have any other clues to go on!”

Himeko turned to them with a smile. “Well, who do you *think* we should turn to when we have a mystery on our hands?”

March’s eyes lit up, sparkling like a pair of little stars. “Sherlock Holmes!”

Himeko's smile dropped. "...Herta. We should visit *Herta*. ...What's with this Sherlock Holmes obsession you've had recently, March? I feel like you keep bringing him up."

"I'm sorry, he's just so cool!"

Himeko stood with a crack from her knees. "Let's set a course for Herta Space Station. I'm sure *she'll* be able to figure out this mess."

Caelus, meanwhile, turned back to the robot, his eyes tightening in suspicion.

Giggling, she curtsied.

"Well, I'm stumped," said Herta, poking the Maidmotron with her giant key. "I've never seen anything like this."

"E-eh? R-really?" cried March, eyes boggling in their sockets. "N-nothing like it at all?! *Really?*"

Herta folded her arms. "Well, I've seen hundreds of cleaning and servant robots, of course. But never one quite so..." Her eyes slid to the Maidmotron's chest. "...Well-built..."

The maid-bot curtsied. "I appreciate the compliment, madam."

"Isn't there anything you can tell us?" asked Himeko.

Herta frowned. "I suppose I could perform a..." She trailed to a stop, wincing, as a sequence of sharp little sounds stabbed her in the ears. Turning, she found Caelus tapping away at his phone as if texting a distant lover. "...What are you doing?"

"Playing a game," said the Trailblazer, with a shrug.

With a swing of her key, Herta sent the phone flying. "Well, do it somewhere else! Do you know how annoying it is, listening to you tapping away at that thing when I'm trying to speak?"

Caelus, glowering, slowly lowered his hands into pockets.

"Thank you." With a frown, Herta turned back to the machine. "Now..."

"So you're gonna tell us the answer now, right?" asked March, appearing over her shoulder. "You're gonna solve the mystery for us, right? Like Sherlock—"

"Perhaps," said Herta, a little testily, "if I were able to think in peace..."

“Of course,” said Himeko, planting her hands on March and Caelus’s shoulders. “We’ll give you some space.” And turning them around, she pushed them to the door with some speed.

As it swished shut behind them, Herta allowed herself a sigh of relief. How was she supposed to get *anything* done when people were making such a ruckus?

After taking a second to massage her brow, she turned her attention to the maidbot standing obediently before her. “I don’t suppose you could simply *tell* me where you came from, or what you were doing on that starliner?”

The robot bowed demurely. “I’m afraid not, madam. S’il vous plaît, pardonnez-moi, it is as though a great bird has plucked the knowledge from my mind, as a great eagle snatches a salmon from the waters.” She mimed a pair of talons.

“Mmn,” said Herta, unconvinced. “Well, in that case, perhaps the logical thing to do would simply be taking a look at your memory...”

The maid-bot stopped imitating a bird and started looking very sweaty for a machine. “Perhaps, beforehand, mademoiselle would care to see a demonstration of moi’s talents?” She visibly swallowed. “The data, it could go a long way towards formulating a hypothesis!”

Herta scratched her chin thoughtfully. “I suppose that’s not a *bad* idea...”

“Ah, très bien! Well, in that case, is there anything you are particularly in need of, madam?”

“I don’t believe so,” said Herta, with a shrug. “Just pick something at random.”

The Maidmotron’s eyes slid to the other end of the room, where Caelus’s phone lay with its screen cracked. “Very well, madam. Now, if you’d like to stand still and observe while I begin with the recycling...”

“Of course...” She stroked her chin, as thoughtful and observant as ever. And blinked. “Wait a second, you haven’t found anything to recycle ye—”

A vacuum whirred. Her hat shot off her head, and her hair flew up after it. Looking up, she had an instant to see the maidbot’s tail, its head open wide. And just like that, everything became very dark and very cramped. *Schlup!*

“H-hey! Hey! What are you doing?!” Trapped in a tight black tunnel, Herta grit her teeth and scrabbled at the walls, fighting to tear through. “What are you doing?” She knew the answer already, of course – she’d realized it the instant the machine sucked her up. Of *course* they’d found no-one on the starliner. They wouldn’t have, not if they’d all been—

The suction intensified, and with a gasp, Herta shot up off the ground and up, up, through the tube of the maidbot’s tail, screaming and scrabbling a little harder with every inch she passed through it. The thing was practically clamped to her skin, but with every second she nonetheless managed to slide a little farther through it. Soon she passed the arch, and all

the blood rushed to her head as she slid down again. Down, down towards the base of the machine's tail. And whatever awful fate awaited her at the other end.

In her flat little chest, her heart thudded like an engine. "No! No!" She thrashed even harder, tearing at the wall of the tube with her nails, but it made no difference – it was like it was made of iron. And finally, just as she thought she'd never escape...

With a *plop*, she passed from the tight black tunnel of the maidbot's tail and into the even tighter, blacker confines of its belly. *I'm in her stomach?* she thought, freezing as she worked through the implications. How was she supposed to escape *now?*!

She tried clambering backward, but the gate through which she'd come had sealed itself behind her, and the space in which she knelt, bent like she was taking cover, seemed to be made of something even tougher. No matter how hard she fought, all she achieved was making it stretch a little. "Let me out, you stupid sextoy! Let me–"

A great groaning and a gurgling, like the start of a giant engine. Herta froze, silent and unmoving, and in her chest that tiny seed of panic her consumption had planted sprouted, growing fast.

"Help! Somebody help me!" Eyes wide, she pounded on the walls with all the power her limited freedom to move allowed her. "Someone help me! Caelus! Caelus, help!"

The darkness lit up, turned a shocking, blinding pink, and as it scorched her eyes, a terrible warmth spread through her, a comforting, cosy, yet somehow insidious warmth, as if she were being drowned in a pot of chicken soup. She screamed and thrashed that little bit harder.

With a *glop*, something dripped onto her thigh. Heart racing, Herta dropped her eyes in panic – was it acid? Was the robot spraying her in acid? There was none of the pain she would have expected, not in the slightest, and when she raised her hand, she soon figured out why.

In the light, the skin of her hand glistened, shining bright, like ice in the sun. And the comparison was accurate in more than one dimension: with a *plop*, a finger fell from her hand and landed with a *splot* on a thigh which also seemed a little runnier all of the sudden. Already, a thick puddle of her had formed under her legs.

Herta's screaming, already so loud, grew suddenly even louder.

With a *splat*, something stabbed her in the chest. Looking down, she squeaked to see it was a whisk – a large, industrial whisk, of the kind used to mix giant batches of ice cream. "N-no!" she cried, realizing the implications immediately. "W-wait! No!"

With a *whirr*, the whisk started to spin.

In an instant, Herta's already liquid form became a maelstrom, a swirling spiral of beige and black and purple, with a tiny hint of white as her terrified eyes circled the center. *Help me! Help me!*

After a minute or so, the whisk withdrew, and the cauldron around her shrank, forming a mold, and squeezing her fluid new form even tighter in the process. Herta squealed as it crushed her into its new shape, crumpling her like a simple piece of paper. Parts of her body were touching parts of her they really shouldn't have been touching, parts she never wanted to touch in any circumstances ever: among other things, she had the nape of her neck wedged deep into her vagina. *Nnnn~! Ah! St-stooooop! Stop!*

The sack in which she sat continued to tighten, squeezing her smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller, until she'd been crammed into a flat cuboid small enough to fit in her own palm, so tightly crushed, she could only whimper at the pressure on her body. *Nnn~! H-help me! Nnnnnnn~!*

Just as she thought she'd collapse into a singularity, the pressure released, and with a whirr and a blast of air, she was sucked out of the chamber, and out, out into—

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"Urgh, what's taking so long...?" Gritting her teeth, March 7th stomped up and down the corridor, looking like she wanted to slug someone. "She really thinks that, just because she's a genius, she can make everyone wait around like this?!"

"Basically," said Caelus.

"Yes, that's exactly what she thinks," said Himeko, inspecting her new wristwatch. She sighed. "Still, she is taking a while. Hopefully she finishes up s— Ah, here we go."

The door of Herta's office swished open, and out stepped the Maidmotron, her vacuum-tail swishing happily as she walked. Of Herta, however, there was no sign whatsoever.

"...Well?" said March, peeking past her. "Where's the doll witch? What happened? Did she figure out what happened yet?"

"I'm afraid Madam Herta has been called to a more urgent task," said the Maidmotron, wringing her hands demurely.

"Urrrrrrgh!" March almost headbutted the wall.

"As a token of apology, she asked me to present Master Caelus with this." And rummaging in her cleavage, she produced a sleek purple phone. She plopped it in his hands.

"Oh," said Caelus, inspecting it with a frown. "Thanks."

"Has it got any cool games on it?" asked March.

"No," said Caelus, turning the phone around so she could see it. "Just porn." And he flicked his thumb, sending the screen flying through a whole album of naked, slutty Herta pics.

“Huh,” said March, blushing. “Do you think she might be into you?”

“Probably,” said Caelus, with a shrug.

Nnn~! Nnnnn~! Stop! Stop! Looking at my body...! Help! Heeeeeeeelp!

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Back on the train, the four of them gathered in the parlor car, looking frustrated, concerned, impassive, and servile, respectively, though exactly which emotion belonged to whom at any given moment seemed to vary.

“What do we do now?!” cried March, who was the main holder of ‘frustration’. “If *Herta* couldn’t figure out the mystery, what next? Are we supposed to go straight to Noose, or whatever THEIR name is?”

“I think that, for the moment, it might be best to turn our attention to other things,” said Himeko, studying the Maidmotron curiously. “Perhaps a clue to the mystery will turn up on its own, given time.”

“Ugh, fine,” said March, rolling her eyes. “What are we gonna do with the robot in the meantime?”

Himeko scratched her chin. “Hmm...”

The Maidmotron coughed. “If I might be so bold, madam, might I suggest employing my services yourself? After all, you are the hosts of a grand and rather spacious vehicle – I imagine it must take quite the effort to keep it in such a pristine condition.”

March blinked. “Actually, how *does* the Astral Express stay clean?”

“Pom-Pom,” said Caelus.

“What, like, with magic?”

“With a bucket and mop.”

“Oh.” March swallowed guiltily. “Maybe I should stop throwing my sandwich wrappers wherever. I thought this thing was like the Polar Express.”

The Maidmotron coughed again. “Forgive me impetuosity, sir, madams, but if you wish to employ my services, might I request you confirm as such right away? After all, this is such a large train, and I would like to begin work *en toute hâte*, if I may.”

The three of them shared a look. “I mean, why not, right?” said March.

Caelus shrugged.

"I suppose there's no harm in it," added Himeko, after a moment.

The Maidmotron curtsied with a smile. "Thank you, sir, madams. I promise you, I shall be the very *essence* of servility."

The lights flickered, throwing the Maidmotron into darkness. For a second, all they could see was her smile, glinting from the shadows like the moon on an autumn night.

"Jeez, does Pom-Pom do the wiring too?" asked March.

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Sparkle crept through the Astral Express like a sneaky, dog-like animal with a renowned history as a trickster. Possibly a coyote.

Skirting the walls of the party car, she came to a stop outside Caelus's room and rubbed her hands together greedily. "Now," she said. "Let's see what you do when you're all alone, Caelus." She opened the door with not a squeak from the hinges.

What she found on the other side was a little disappointing though: instead of Caelus with his pants down (or even just his top off), there was nothing more than a dark, empty room.

Stepping inside, Sparkle closed the door with a frown. "Well that's kind of disappointing." She shrugged. "Well, since I'm here, I might as well go through his underwear drawer!"

On her way past the bed, however, she came to a sudden stop, her eyes caught by a little rectangle glinting in the dim light creeping under the door. Frowning, she picked it up and found it was a phone. An *unlocked* phone. Her grin glimmered almost as brightly as the screen.

The first thing she did, of course, was open its album to see if it had any candid photos, and what she found when she did actually gave her a moment's pause. "Holy shit," said Sparkle. "Caelus and Herta are having a fling."

(Nnn~! N-no! We're not...!)

Sparkle worked her jaw and chewed her lips for a few seconds, letting this new information work its way through her brain. She didn't quite know how she felt about Caelus dating someone else, but if nothing else, here was a whole ton of new blackmail material. She wondered what she'd be able to get out of that stuck-up bookworm with it...

Her prize secured, she turned to leave before someone else caught her. But halfway to the door...

"Ahem. Good evening, mistress."

Sparkle whirled, her fists raised to fight. "Who-?"

A figure stepped out of the corner of the room, where she'd been standing in the shadows. "Good evening, madam," repeated the maid. "Forgive me for not making my presence known earlier, but you've caught me in the middle of cleaning the master's chamber."

Sparkle simply stood and stared at her, frozen. "What."

The maid smiled. Was it just Sparkle, or did she have lots of cracks on her? The bitch looked like a porcelain doll. "Might I inquire as to your name? I'm afraid I don't recall seeing you on the passenger list."

Sparkle's mouth became something like a crack itself – a glinting white one – as something resembling a grin returned to her face. "The passenger list, huh? I don't remember seeing *you* on it either." *The Astral Express has a passenger list?*

"Oh! Where are my manners?" said the strange maid. "I am the Maidmotron 9001, state-of-the-art cleaning (and sexual relief) robot par excellence."

"Sorry, cleaning and...?"

"My purpose, as it were, is to keep the Astral Express clean of any unwanted filth," said the maidbot, taking another step forward. "With that in mind, you *are* an official passenger of this train, are you not?"

Sparkle rubbed her philtrum with a smile. "Maybe. Maybe not. What are you going to do? Throw me into space?"

The Maidmotron looked genuinely shocked. "À Dieu ne plaise! That would be obscene." She smoothed down her skirt. "...I am going to make you into something *useful*."

The vacuum struck faster than Sparkle could react. All she saw was a blur of grey coiling from behind the maid's back, and with a sucking sound–

Schlup!

Everything went dark. "H-hey!" Trapped in a dark black tunnel, Sparkle squealed as it tightened and shifted around her. "Let me out, you bitch! Let me out!"

The suction intensified, and like a mouse in the throat of a snake, Sparkle started to slide through the tunnel's length, squealing as her arms rubbed its sides. "H-hey! Hey! What are you doing with me?! What are you–?!"

With a plop, she dropped into a sack, a large, stretchy sack that swung as she thrashed inside it. Just as she thought she might be able to tear through it, it tightened, folding her like a piece of paper. Doubled over, with her head in her knees and her arms trapped behind her back, Sparkle squealed as the sudden pressure – it was even worse than the tube. "Nn~! L-let me...! Let me out, you bitch! Let me...!"

A blinding pink light, brighter even than the spotlights at her concerts, shone from all around her, striking her eyes and passing through them to sear the rest of her with its intensity. Sparkle slammed them shut, screaming, as her nervous system caught fire.

As she writhed, twisting in terror, something went *gloop*. Sparkle's eyes snapped open again, and with a gasp she watched as a piece of her chin dripped off, striking her knees with a loud plop. "Wh-wh-what is—?" Her voice cut off as her lips, melting, stuck together, though her eyes, open wide, did a good enough job showing her terror. "Mmmmphf!"

Something dropped from above, slamming into her melting back with a squelch. And as Sparkle writhed, it started to spin, leaving her squealing even louder as it blended her like a smoothie. "Mmmphf!"

Whipped into a formless bowl of red and beige with a single streak of black, Sparkle whimpered as the sack in which she sat changed its shape again: this time, it expanded, stretching into a large cuboid with a tall wall attached to the back and two smaller ones running along the sides. Worse, it heated up, making Sparkle squeal as her molten body boiled and bubbled and bloated to fill it, expanding like a clump of dough in the oven.

Though she didn't have a mouth anymore, Sparkle still managed to do plenty of screaming internally. *Nnnn~! Stop! Stooop! What are you doing to me?! Her earlier anger was gone now – a part of her wanted to cry.*

Between her walls, something swelled. Two of them, each as plump and firm as the other.

Finally, just as she thought she'd burst, the heat cooled, the sack sagged, and the suction from before returned, inverted. With a silent squeal, Sparkle shot back, back the way she'd come, out of the pipe and out, out into...

She struck the floor with a thud and lay there, struggling to move or indeed do anything but listen to the harsh clacking of the robot-maid's heels as she walked carefully around her. Her shadow swept into view, backlit by the light creeping under the door, like a specter before the moon, and if not for the light of her eyes, Sparkle wouldn't have been able to read her emotions.

"Hmm," said the maidbot, cocking her head and studying her carefully. "You're not quite what I expected, but Master Caelus should be pleased with you regardless. A couch is a couch, after all, no matter how plump its cushions.

Sparkle could only stare at her in terror. *A c-couch?! Wh-what do you mean a couch?! What are you talking about-?! What-?!*

The maidbot took a step closer. "Perhaps it would be better to test you, before making Master Caelus aware of your presence. I wouldn't want to disappoint him, after all..." And turning around, exposing the giant porcelain doll-cheeks hidden beneath that skimpy french maid skirt.

Sparkle, if she'd still had a mouth, would have squeaked. *W-wait! Don't you dare! Don't you dare sit on me, you bitch! Don't you—!*

Squeak! To the sound of compressed springs, the maidbot dropped into her, squishing Sparkle's breasts, now pillows, into what had been her face and leaving the Masked Fool-turned-sofa to whine in wild ecstasy.

Nnnnn~! Nnaaah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Oh, get off me! Get offfff...!

"Hmm," said the maidbot, making herself comfy. "I suppose it could be worse."

Nnnnnn~!

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Silver Wolf chewed on her pocky with a frown as she marched, bold as a cat (or possibly also a coyote), through the Astral Express.

Finishing her current stick, she bent her head to the right and, with some oral dexterity, managed to extract another piece of candy from the box tucked between her ribcage and her arm. She couldn't use her hands – they were too busy fiddling with the phone she was holding. She could only barely use her eyes, which, similarly, were locked on its screen, making sure the maid she controlled sucked up every scrap of garbage with her vacuum. The mansion needed to be spotless if she wanted the high score!

With her attention thus absorbed, it was inevitable she'd eventually bump into something. This time, it happened to be March 7th, who'd been trying to take a candid photo of her. "Oof!"

With a crash, they ended up on the floor. Sticks of pocky flew everywhere.

"Hey!" cried Silver Wolf, scrambling back to her feet again. "Watch where you're going! You just cost me my high score!"

March, who'd been looking through her camera's lens and consequently had taken the device to the face, took a second later to recover. "What do you mean 'watch where you're going'?! What are you doing on our train?!"

Silver Wolf picked up a stick of pocky and turned it around, marveling at how clean it was – the candy hadn't picked up a single speck of dust. "I'm here to see Caelus," she said.

"Oh! Okay! Well, let me help you find him then and– What do you mean you're here to see Caelus?! Who do you think you are?! How the hell did you get on the train, you crazy hacking witch?!"

"You just answered your own question," said Silver Wolf, with a smirk.

"What does that even *mean*?!"

From the end of the corridor came the rustle of a feather duster, and a porcelain face poked itself into view. "Excuse me, Mistress March, but I can't help but notice we have acquired another guest."

Silver Wolf quirked an eyebrow.

"I wouldn't exactly call her a guest..." said March, folding her arms.

"Am I to presume she is an intruder then?" asked the maid bot, her vacuum-tipped tail coiling.

March scratched her chin in thought. "Somewhere between? Like, we shouldn't throw her out the airlock, but we also shouldn't escort her to the buffet car, you know? Mostly we're just a little rude to her."

"Acknowledged," said the maidbot. She turned to Silver Wolf. "Greetings, slattern. I am the Maidmotron 9001, the latest in state-of-the-art cleaning (and sexual relief) technology."

Silver Wolf stared at her impassively. "Why do you have a maid bot now?" she asked, turning back to March.

"Oh, we found her in a mysterious drifting starliner," said March. "She was the only one left alive..." She frowned. "Robo-alive?"

"That didn't raise any alarm bells?" asked March.

"She's a maid, Wolfy," said March, as if she were an idiot. "You're meant to ring the bells *for* her."

"What does *that* mean?" She shook her head. "Whatever. Haven't you checked her memory banks? Maybe she has a clue or something."

March shrugged. "We tried taking her to Herta, but she said she had more important stuff to do." She leaned in, as if to impart a secret. "And then she gave Caelus a phone full of naked pictures of her!"

"So? Those dolls have nothing under their clothes anyway."

"No, no, the *real* her, not the dolls." She squinted. "Why do you know what Herta's dolls look like under their clothes?"

"W-well, even if Herta couldn't help, I bet I can!" said Silver Wolf, sweating with sudden enthusiasm. "Lemme take a look at your little robot, and I'm sure I'll find the answer!"

Silver Wolf wasn't the only one sweating – the Maidmotron looked like she'd sprung a leak somewhere around the temple. And possibly under the armpits. "Sp-speaking of taking a look...! Mistress March, you asked me to inform you if Master Caelus—"

March grabbed her arms. "He's in the shower?! And he forgot to lock the door?!"

"Indeed, Mistress."

"Hot-*diggity*-dog!" Grabbing her camera, March gave it a cock – sending a pair of shotgun shells flying across the carriage – and, raising it high, sped off in the direction of the baths, leaving Silver Wolf and the Maidmotron to watch as the trail of smoke left in her wake slowly faded.

"Caelus isn't the only one who needs a shower," said Silver Wolf, inspecting one of the shotgun shells. "Anyway..." She cracked her knuckles. "Time to take a look in your memory banks, I guess."

She turned back to the Maidmotron, but to her surprise the machine had vanished. "Er...? Hey, where'd you go? Was there a spill in carriage #9 or something...?"

Footsteps crunching the carpet behind her. She spun.

The head of the vacuum loomed, open, before her, yawning like the mouth of the serpent, its throat a line of circles descending into blackness. The only thing it was missing was the fangs. Her hair fluttered, snatched upward, drawn towards the opening like water to the plughole.

She had just enough time to blink before everything went dark.

As the rubbery walls of the Maidmotron's tail wrapped tightly around her form, suckering to her body like a sandwich's wrapper, Silver Wolf squealed and thrashed, struggling to pull out of her. "E-eh? Hey! Hey! What the hell are you doing?! What-?! Hey!"

The tunnel squirmed, tightening at her feet, and with a gasp of shock, Silver Wolf slid slowly up it. Up, up, up, till at last she reached the apex of the arch, and with a muffled scream, dropped back down again. "Heeeey!"

With a plop, she passed out of the tail and into an elastic sack, which bounced her up and down as it struggled to hold her mass. Trapped in its tight, dark confines, Silver Wolf could only thrash, punching and kicking at the rubbery walls surrounding her. "Hey, let me out! Let me out, you bitch! What the fuck do you think you're doing?!"

Just as suddenly as it had gone dark, everything now became very bright and very pink. Silver Wolf squealed, struggling to shield her eyes, as the searing light shone through her like she was glass, illuminating her every cell. "Nnnn~! Nnnnnnnnah!" She could feel the heat of it all the way down in her core.

At the same time, the sack she sat in tightened even further, squeezing her body so hard she could barely breathe. With her legs held against her chest and her arms behind her back, Silver Wolf could only whimper as the heat pervading her figure grew hotter and hotter. "Nnnn~!"

A bead of sweat dripped from her brow and fell, with a splot, into her knees. Only, on closer inspection, no drop of sweat had ever been so large. Or as thick.

As if to confirm her thoughts: *splot, splot* – two larger drops fell from her head and struck her knees as well.

“Wh-whuh-wah–” To her horror, Silver Wolf found she couldn’t talk: her lips had melted and run into each other like they were made of wax. “Mmmphf! Mm-mmm-mmmphf!”

It wasn’t just her lips: as Silver Wolf watched in rising terror, her entire body imitated the mythical chocolate teapot and assumed a less than solid state of existence. “Mmmphf!” Pooling in the bottom half of the strange sack, she squealed as she fought to keep moving.

With a *squelch*, something slammed into her. And just as she thought her situation couldn’t get any more ridiculous, it started to spin, fast, turning her body into a gloopy human maelstrom. She squealed (internally if not out) as the dark walls of her confines span past her and past her and past her and–

Just as she thought she’d throw up, the spinning stopped, and after another second or two, she did too. Lying there, still sloshing to-and-fro with leftover momentum, she moaned, struggling to figure out what was going on.

To make things even more confusing, the cage around her tightened, forcing her liquid new body into an even *more* embarrassing shape. Compacted into a cuboid, Silver Wolf could only squeal as a thin gap opened in the cage, allowing a portion of her – a portion of her comprising her genitals, worse than anything – to spill out into a secondary mold.

Nnn~! Wh-what...? What’s happening to me?! What’s happening?! Heeeelp!

The terrible heat whad suffused her body since the start vanished now, replaced by an equally awful chill, which left her whimpering and shivering as her body hardened into its new form. *N-no!* she cried, teeth mentally chattering. *N-no! No! Please...! Stooooooooop!*

And, as if on cue, everything did. With a schunk, the gate behind her opened, and to the sound of sucking, Silver Wolf shot backward, up and out of the maidbot’s rubbery tail.

She landed in a pair of gloved hands. Both halves of her: the larger, cuboid one, and the smaller, more oddly-shaped one attached to it by a wire.

“Hmm,” said the Maidmotron, looking down at her. “I suppose this will do.”

Looking up at her, Silver Wolf wanted to scream. *Put me down, you bitch! Let me go! ...And turn me back! What the hell have you done to me?!*

Voices coming down the corridor – with a cock of the head, the Maidmotron turned, revealing Caelus, sweaty and flushed, and March 7th, in a headlock under his arm. “I’m soooooorry!” she whined. “I’m soooooooooorry! I thought you were using the shower, not the toilet!”

“Greetings, Master, Mistress,” said the Maidmotron, curtsying at their approach.

“Hey, what happened to Silver Wolf?” asked March, ceasing her struggles.

“My apologies, Mistress,” said the Maidmotron, “but I’m afraid she was arrested.”

“Arrested?!” cried March.

“Arrested?” said Caelus.

Arrested?! thought Silver Wolf.

“Indeed. Forgive me, mademoiselle, but the space police arrived to take her into custody while you were occupied with Master Caelus’s... *toilette*.”

“The space police?!”

“The space police?”

The space police?!

“You mean the Galaxy Rangers?” said March.

The Maidmotron thought about this for a second. “Sure.”

The two of them stared at her.

“Fortunately,” continued the maidbot, sounding keen for a change of topic, “prior to her incarceration, she was able to present me with the purpose of her visit.” And without further ado, she pressed Silver Wolf into Caelus’s hands.

“A games console?!” cried March.

“A games console?” said Caelus.

Metal Gear?! I mean, a games console?! Nonononono...! You can’t be...?! How?! How is it even possible?!

“Come on, let’s try it out!” cried March, already rushing for Caelus’s bedroom.

W-wait! cried Silver Wolf, bouncing in his hands. *Wait, you can’t just...! Wait!*

*

March clicked her teeth and worked her jaw as she struggled to plug Silver Wolf’s games console into the TV. “Ugh, come on,” she said, fiddling with the wires. “It only has two holes! How can it be this hard to get the plug in them?!”

(Nnn~! Ah! Ah! M-March, stop! Stooooop!)

Caelus, meanwhile, inspected the bright red couch sitting beside the bed. “Don’t remember having a sofa,” he said, folding his arms with a frown.

“What were you sitting on before?” asked March, looking over her shoulder.

“The floor.”

March rolled her eyes. “Well hurry up and push it over, because / don’t want to.”

Caelus flicked a glance at the Maidmotron, who was standing by the door in an ominous spot of shadow. “...Could you?”

“As you wish, Master.” Marching over, she grabbed the sofa by the side and, as if it weighed nothing, swung it into place in front of the TV.

(P-put me down! Put me down! D-don’t you touch me, you evil–! Nn~! Ah!)

With a worryingly loud snap, March finally succeeded in getting a plug into the console. “Ah-hah!”

(Nnnnnah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Oh Aeons! F-fuck! Fuck! Take it out! Take it ouuuuuuuut!)

“Okay,” said March, rubbing her hands. “Now for the game... Let’s see. What have you got...?” She rummaged through Caelus’s collection with a frown. “Aaaaaand it’s all porn games. You’re not embarrassed about that? Not even a little?”

“You tried to take a picture of me on the toilet,” said Caelus.

March, chastened, grabbed a copy of *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, and slipped it into the console without further protest.

(Nnnn~! Nnnnah! Oh Aeons, it’s like a fucking gag. Stop! Stooooop!)

As the game loaded, March picked up the controller, took a step back, and in a single overly-dramatic motion, threw herself back into the couch.

(Nnnnah~! Ah! Get off me! Get off me! Nnn~! It’s like you’re crushing my tiiiiits! ...Wait. Nonononono, not you too! Stop! Stooooop!)

Caelus took a seat with only slightly less force than March.

(NnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnNNNNNNNAHHHHHHH!)

“Okay, let’s see... How do you play this...? Push Start to Start. Hmm, sounds simple enough...” She pushed Start.

(Ah! H-hey—! D-don't touch that! Don't touch that—Ah! Ah! Nnnnnnah~! Nn~! Stooooop!)

As March pounded away at the controller, the Maidmotron, looming ominously over the two of them, coughed. “Forgive me, Master, Mistress, but I take it you have no further need of my services...?”

“Nah,” said Caelus.

“C'est excellent. In that case, I shall return to my duties...”

The lights flickered, throwing her face into shadow.

March rolled her eyes. “Pom-Pom needs to hire a fucking electrician.”

Himeko opened the door of the Express's laundry room with a frown.

The Maidmotron stood on the far side by the washing machine, humming to herself as she dutifully extracted a fresh basket of laundry from the machine. She'd placed a handknitted towel, reading 'Cleanliness is next to Aeonliness', on the rail.

For several seconds, Himeko simply stood and watched, working her jaw in thought. Finally, just as she was about to make herself known—

“Yes, Mistress Himeko?” asked the maidbot, without looking up from her work. “Is there something you'd like to ask of me?”

Himeko couldn't prevent herself from jumping a little, but she managed to keep her composure. “Actually,” she said, “I have a few questions I'd like you to answer...”

The Maidmotron stopped folding laundry and looked up, one eyebrow raised quizzically. “Oh? Well, by all means, ask away, Mistress. As your loyal servant, I shall do everything in my power to answer.”

“How did you end up working on the starliner?” said Himeko. Closing the door carefully behind her, she crept into the room like she was afraid of stepping on beartraps.

The Maidmotron cocked her head, as if in recollection. Himeko wondered if this was a deliberate affect or just part of her programming. “Why, I was hired as a maid, of course.”

“Hired?” said Himeko.

The Maidmotron wrung her skirt, as if embarrassed. “Ah, forgive me. Purchased, rather.”

“And how long did you work for them?” said Himeko, tapping her arm with a single slender finger.

The Maidmotron cocked its head in thought again. Himeko wondered whether it was truly checking its memories or just fabricating new ones. “For seven voyages,” said the robot. “Two years, four months, that is.”

“Uh huh.” Himeko took another step forward, bringing her and the Maidmotron within a meter of one another. “And you’re sure you don’t remember anything from that final voyage? The one where everyone disappeared?”

The Maidmotron smiled weakly. “Non, madam. My memory, it is as you say, a blank.”

“I see.” Himeko worked her jaw. Well, it was now or never. “Because I’m afraid some new evidence has come to light.”

The Maidmotron visibly stopped moving. “N-new evidence?” she said, forgetting her accent in her surprise.

“On our return from the starliner, I managed to acquire a copy of its security footage. *Most* of it had been deleted, of course. But *I* was able to locate a backup copy. And I just managed to decrypt it.” She’d done nothing of the sort, of course. “It showed me something *very* interesting.”

Here was her logic: the Maidmotron was blatantly suspicious. Not only was it the sole survivor of the disappearances on the starliner, but now Herta and Silver Wolf had gone missing in its presence as well. At best, it was a witness. At worst, it was the culprit. And while she might not have any evidence either way yet, if she could put enough pressure on it to make it say something—

“Oh my fucking Aeons,” said the Maidmotron, massaging her temples. “I can’t *believe* I missed a copy.”

It was Himeko’s turn to freeze.

“Well,” said the robot. “There’s only one thing to do then.” And raising her hands, she clapped, once, emphatically. “Mistress March needs some new lingerie, you know?”

“Lin—”

Her tail struck with the speed of a scorpion’s.

Himeko had barely an instant to raise her arms in defence. One second she was standing in the warm light of the laundry room – the next, everything had become very tight and very dark. Trapped in a rubbery tube that clung to her sides and squeezed hard, she squirmed, gasping and fighting the early stages of panic even as a flood of vindication washed through her mind. *I was right...!*

...Now what?

With a roar of a vacuum, she shot squealing upward. Up through the pipe, around its bend, and down, with a scream, into a tight, jiggling sack, which made a *bowoing* sound as it stretched to accommodate her. “Nn~!” Sitting back, she pressed her hands into its upper half even as she stabbed the heels of her shoes into its lower. “Let me out!” she cried. “Let me out! What are you trying to do with me?!”

The Maidmotron, if it could hear her, didn’t respond. At least not verbally – what happened next was certainly a response of sorts:

With a flash, the pendulous sack in which Himeko sat turned as bright and as hot as an industrial furnace. She gasped, throwing back her head in a whine of panic, as the intense heat raised a sheen of sweat across her skin. When she breathed in, the air practically scorched her lungs.

Heart pounding faster than ever, she thrashed and fought with each further vigor, slamming her fists and her heels deep into the walls of the sack. No matter how hard she tried, however, it refused to give in to her, and with every second, the effort and the heat left her a little more exhausted. In seconds, she had to give in entirely.

With a plop, something dripped from her chin.

Himeko looked down, following the sound, and with a gasp, found her chest rippling like a puddle in the rain. Even as she watched, too stunned to react, another big glob of something fell from her head to strike her breasts, breaking the surface of boobs and top alike as if they were nothing more than a pond.

Trembling now, she clasped her chin, where the substance seemed to have come from, and when she drew her hand away, it brought a strand of something thick and sticky with it. For a second, she thought it was semen. It took her a moment to realize it was flesh.

Even as the first of many screams rose from her throat, her head sank into her neck, and her breasts slithered down her front, and her body pooled beneath her as a thick puddle of liquid humanity and cloth. In seconds, she looked more like a bowl of melting ice cream than a person.

As she squirmed in renewed panic, something resembling a whisk descended from above, entered her, and spun up, whirling her like a bowl of freshest cream. Himeko screamed as she turned, losing what little solidity remained to her – soon, she was only slightly thicker than custard. *Nnn~! St-stop it! What are you doing to me?!*

The whisk stopped. Her prison rippled and shifted, splitting into two distinct segments, into which her molten body flowed like iron into the mold. The overlapping of her form made her tingle all over, so intensely erotic that she briefly lost track of what was happening.

When her senses returned, she couldn’t tell quite where she was: split in two halves, each in a different shape, her arms curled over her shoulders and her legs bent backward and everything so flat and so light the slimmest breeze would be enough to carry her away.

Finally, the heat vanished, replaced by a painful cold, and just like that, Himeko shot back, backward and out, screaming as she went, screaming for the Maidmotron to stop.

**

A knock at the door startled March out of her reverie. Dropping her candid photographs of Caelus, she pushed them hurriedly under the bed, threw on a dressing gown, and hurried to answer.

It was the maid. "Good evening, Mistress March. As requested, I have acquired a new set of lingerie for you."

"H-huh? I don't remember requesting any lingerie," said March, though admittedly, she didn't remember many things at all.

"I assure you you did, Madam. I've even gone to the trouble of acquiring 'a pair that Caelus will find erotic' as you specifically—"

March grabbed her and pulled her into the room, pausing only to make sure no-one had overheard before she slammed the door behind them. "Okay," she said, after a moment. "That *does* sound like something I'd request."

"Would you like to try them on, Mistress?" Without waiting for an answer, she pressed the underwear into March's hands.

March swallowed. "Well... I guess I might as well..."

She approached the mirror. As she went to remove her dressing gown, however, she felt the Maidmotron's eyes on her back like the legs of an evil beetle. "Can you—? Um, can I get a little privacy?"

The Maidmotron looked offended. "Madam, please. I am both a professional maid and a robot. You need no more be embarrassed to change in my presence than you should in that of a washing machine, I assure you."

"Okay, if you say so," said March. Though she couldn't help but notice the Maidmotron's hand creeping under her skirt in the mirror.

With a sigh, she threw off her gown anyway and, ignoring the little squeaks and moans behind her, she raised her new lingerie to her eyes and studied its soft fabric – white with a few dashes of red and gold, it reminded her of something, though what she couldn't say. She liked it though.

She gave the straps an experimental stretch and, without further ado, slipped her hands through them.

*(Nnn~! Nnah! Ah! March! March, stop! Please, it's—Nnnnn~! It's me! It's Himeko!
It's—NNNNNNNN~!)*

Hooking the bra's claps, she adjusted the cups, making sure they fit her boobs. Hugging her tight, it made her look at least a size or two bigger – staring at her cleavage in the mirror, she couldn't help but blush.

Now it was time for the panties. Pinching their straps, she gave them an experimental tug – as she did with all her new underwear, of course – and, satisfied that they weren't made of paper, raised a leg to slip it through the hole.

(Nnnnnnah! NNNNNNNNAH! AH! AH! AHAH! Oh Aeons...! Aeons, it's like she's sticking her foot up my– NNNNNNNNNNAH!)

It took some effort to tug the panties up her legs – they were just that little bit too small for her. She had particular trouble with her thighs, but fortunately the sexy white fabric was more than stretchy enough, and at last, with much tugging and grunting, she managed to get them up to her butt. She released them with a snap and studied herself in the glass. "...Wait, do they make my butt look bigger too?"

"They make you look fabulous, Mistress," said the Maidmotron, oil pouring out of her nostrils.

(NNNNNNNNNNNNNN~! NNNNNNNNNNNN~! AH! AH! AH! AH! Oh, Aeons! Nnnnnnnn~!)

March marched through the train with a kick in her step and a swing in her arms, humming happily to herself as she passed through the cars.

Things had been going pretty well for them all recently: Caelus had finally beaten *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*. Pom-Pom had gotten their electrician's license. And *she'd* got a comfy new set of lingerie that Caelus was going to *really* enjoy once she finally coerced him into a situation where he could see it. Sure, Himeko might have disappeared. But the Astral Express had never been so *clean*!

Entering the party car, March came to a sudden stop. The Maidmotron stood only a few meters ahead, dusting a large, ornate vase. Seeing March's approach, she stepped back to curtsy. "Good morning, mademoiselle. And how are you today?"

"Good, good," said March, amiably. "What about you, Maidmotron? You enjoying your new life on the Express?"

The Maidmotron blinked, as if the question had occurred to her. "You want to know how I feel?"

"Well, *yeah*," said March, with a little laugh. "You're a member of the crew now too, right? Of course I want to know how you feel!"

For a second, the Maidmotron stood silent and still, a small tear of oil glistening in the corner of her eye. Finally, she took a deep breath (or the robotic imitation of one) and, smoothing

down her skirt, folded her hands behind her back demurely. "Thank you, Mistress March. I can honestly say that, of all the places I've worked, the Astral Express has been by far the nicest. You and Master Caelus have treated me better than anyone I've ever worked for!"

Her expression darkened. "Especially the bastards on that awful starliner! *They* treated me like any other machine! Like I was a Roomba! A Roomba with tits! Well, I made them pay! I made them *all* pay!"

"What, like a surcharge?" said March.

The Maidmotron blinked. "Yes," she said, very quickly.

"Well, it's good to hear you're happier now," said March, giving her a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "Anyway, I've gotta trick Caelus into stumbling on me in my underwear, so I'll speak to you later. Ciao!" And with a little wave, she slipped past...

...bumping the vase on its stand as she did.

Time slowed, brought near to a halt, as the delicate work of art wobbled back and forth on the pedestal like a pudding on its plate and finally, with crushing slowness, tipped over the edge. It fell towards the floor like a porcelain bomb, turning and turning, and detonated on impact with a resounding crash, throwing shards of pottery all over the room.

March and the Maidmotron stood and stared at this, neither speaking.

Finally, March 7th coughed. "Er, sorry about that..." She made to leave.

The maidbot blinked. "M-Mademoiselle? Where are you going? Surely you're not just going to leave it?"

March winced. "Well, I mean, I would, but, like, it's kinda *your* job, isn't it? You know, since you're, like, a cleaning robot." She took a step back. "Right? Right. Okay, speak to you later. Byeeeeeeee...!"

The Maidmotron stood and watched her retreating back for a second or two longer. And finally, with a twitch of the eye—

March soon reached the far end of the carriage. But as she went for the door, she heard something like a vacuum. Was the Maidmotron cleaning up the mess already? Wow, she was such a hard—

She flew back as if yanked by the hair, and everything became very dark and very tight and very rubbery. "E-eh?! Hey, what's—?!" Squealing, March scrabbled to escape, kicking and pounding at the slick grey walls around her, but it was like trying to beat a piece of taffy — no matter how hard she punched, she couldn't do any damage. "H-hey! Let me out!" What the hell was even happening?! Had she been eaten by a giant snake or something?!

The suction still snatching at her hair grew suddenly intenser, and as March yelled in shock, she shot up, backward and up, as the walls of the strange tunnel tightened around her, suckering to her sides even as the suction tugged her through it. “Nn~! St-stop! Put me down...!”

She slid upward, upward and back, around a bend that hurt her spine to cross and down, down again, till she passed with a plop into a large, jostling sack. She landed on her head and ended up sprawled on her back, her arms and legs splayed at awkward angles. “Ooo...”

Sitting up, she rubbed her temple and groaned. Where was she? What the hell had happened to her?! Where was she?!

The sack shook, as if whatever it was attached to were moving. A bolt of renewed panic flashed through March’s brain. “Let me out!” she cried, pounding at the walls. “Let me out of here!”

In a flash, a literal flash, the world turned the pink of strawberry bubblegum. March screamed, struggling to cover her eyes, as the blinding light tore through her and incinerated her strength, leaving every cell in her body bubbling and hot.

It took her a second to regain her breath. “W-what-?” she asked, panting and red. “Wh-what’s happening now...?”

Glop!

Blinking, March looked down and found a lump of something sticky and pink sitting on her chest. As she watched, it spread, like a lump of melting ice cream across a plate, pink over white. As she tried to work out what it was, another blob landed with a splot beside it. *Splot!*

Something slid slowly in front of her face, like a big dollop of shampoo dripping from her hair. March’s eyes crossed as she struggled to see what it was.

It wasn’t shampoo. It was a close guess though.

March screamed. *I’m melting?! I’m melting!* Her fingers dropped from her hands with loud splots, while her eyes and her mouth slid slowly down the front of a head which was itself collapsing into the mush of her sinking neck. In seconds, she was looking out of her torso. “Mmmphf! Mmmphf!” She squealed as her lips stuck together.

Reduced to a puddle of human slurry in the bottom of the sack, March squirmed and screamed, or tried to, at any rate – it practice, it mostly just resulted in a lot of sloshing and splashing sounds.

Help me! Please, someone help me...!

Above appeared a whisk, or something resembling one, anyway – March had never seen one *this* terrifying on the *Great Belobog Bake-Off*.

W-wait! Don't! Please, don't--!

Splosh! Stabbing her right in the gloopy soup of her stomach, the whisk dived deep into her gut and, without the slightest build-up, *whirled*. March screamed as it spun her like a top, turning her already messed-up body into a maelstrom of flesh and cloth. *H-h-h-h-h-h-help meeeeeeeee...! Stoooooop!*

If anything, the whisk sped up.

By the time it finally came to a stop, March had been so badly spun around that she could barely remember who she was, let alone what direction she was facing. *The fourth of July! The fourth of July!*

As the heat slowly died, the cavern in which she sat slowly shifted, a dull stalactite descending from the ceiling to force its way down her throat even as the walls around her tightened, squished her fluid body flat against it, especially around what had formerly been her legs, which it squeezed till she had a bizarrely top-heavy figure. It opened pipes in itself around her arms too, allowing them to spill into a shape resembling handles. Meanwhile, the stalactite continued to force its way deeper and deeper, leaving her whining in pleased horror as it hollowed out her altered form.

At last, the heat cut out entirely and was, in an instant, abruptly replaced by an evil cold, straight out of the depths of winter. In it, March's flesh became hard, cold, and brittle, almost like...

With a snap, the stalactite and all the sacks other strange extrusions withdrew, and the suction returned, pulling her back the way she'd come from. March screamed as she shot back through the pipe, over the hump of the arch and down, down again, down and again, until she landed on--

Clunk!

March came to a stop level with the Maidmotron's bust and stood there wobbling from side to side and wondering what the hell was going on.

"There," said the Maidmotron, seizing her by the hips and holding her fixed in place. "It's so much easier to make a new vase than repair a broken one."

M-make a new vase? thought March. *You mean... No. No! No, I can't be a vase! That's not possible! It's not--! It's--*

"I would have preferred not to use you Mistress March," continued the robot. "But, well, you *did* ask me to clean up your mess. I have my limits."

The puzzle pieces of the mystery came together in March's mind with little clicks. *You... You were behind all those disappearances! No! How is that possible?! There was no foreshadowing at all!!!*

“Well,” said the Maidmotron, “time to return to work. I’m sure Master Caelus will appreciate a massage. Au revoir, Mistress March~.”

N-no! Wait! Come back! Maidmotron! Maidmotron, I’m sorry! Please, just turn me back! Turn me—!

The door of the carriage slammed with a *thunk*, making the new vase wobble on her pedestal.