

The Sprint

Bernard and his friend Greg were what one might call hypercompetitive. Everything they did within arm's reach would inevitably become a contest to see who could best the other, from peeing in opposing washroom stalls to speedrunning video games. The pair were always in agreement when a new contest reared its head for them to participate in; just another opportunity to see who could notch another win on their belt. But their drive to compete tended to get them in sticky situations that more often than not, ended up with no clear victor and a fair share of cuts and bruises. And today, as they stood on the outskirts of a messy forest trail that looked like it had gone years without maintenance, it looked like they were about to get themselves into another accident of their own making.

Oh how little they knew if they thought they were going to walk out of there with a few nicks and scratches...

According to local legend, the forest trail, tucked away in the depths of an outback patch of wilderness, was supposedly cursed. But there were no specifics mentioned about this 'curse', nothing about its effects and what triggered it was noted in the simple rhyme whose original script had been lost to time, surviving only in simple accounts told by the current generation who succeeded the old. Something the two men were clearly out of the loop about if they chose that trail to host their latest competition at.

Funny how their parents didn't seem to be aware of this cursed forest trail even though they were locals, born and wedded in the same humble little town.

"So...how're we gonna do this?"

"Hrm...it's literally just one long ass stretch of road...minus the bumps...so we do this; a straight sprint down towards the other end, and whoever reaches the other side..."

"...get's to treat the winner to lunch?"

Sharing a laugh as they bickered on the conditions for winning and losing, the unseen energies that gave the forest trail its title began to stir, primed for activation upon sensing the two young humans entering its domain. Tendrils of untamed magic wafting through the air of the natural corridor like fine hair, just waiting for someone to walk by before latching on to them...with unpredictable results.

But before long, the two men were set, taking up positions on either side of the trail, bracing themselves like sprinters at a marathon before kicking up a hail of fallen leaves upon the beeping shrill of a stopwatch going

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off, dashing down the forest trail side by side, evenly matching the other's stride with only a minute difference presented by Greg being a hair ahead of his friend.

And the moment the runners strike the first tendril, their fates were sealed as the magic ensnares the two men, beginning a slow burning physical alteration of their bodies that only speeds up with the more threads they snag in their bid to outspeed the other as Bernard and Greg succumb to their individual transforms.

For the brunet's case, his jock like stature would be subject to the pressure applied by the intangible energy pressing down on his form, pulsing rhythmically like a beating heart, with each cycle stripping Bernard of his hard earned muscle, making it harder and harder for him to match up with his friend's speed...who curiously enough, only seemed to be speeding up after one or two blunders caused by the very same issues currently plaguing Bernard as his seasoned runner's posture begins to fade; slouching forward, slender arms flailing and pumping, all while he found it harder and harder to keep his legs moving once webs of sweat soaked skin begins to form between them, trading familiar human smoothness for a strange leathery hide that births an alien coat of fluffy fur all across his barely recognisable form. Not like his friend was fading any better of course.

Except the changes affecting Greg were far more drastic and advantageous when it came to running, for what could be better for running than three pairs of legs that were moving so fast they were barely visible? While his friends legs were slowly fusing together, Greg's lower half was elongating and expanding into a cone shaped mass of bulbous flesh, darkening from its core as pale beige skin begins to glisten with a subtle glossy hue before being painted over with a khaki tinge that spreads all over Greg's now toned body. Not being one to exercise or eat a lot, the man had the stature of a skeleton. But now he was beginning to look plump in a feminine sense of the word; pronounced curves pushing through broadened hips, tight pinches around a narrow waistline and a chest that was beginning to grow increasingly wobbly with each bounding step he took.

"Ga-gh!"

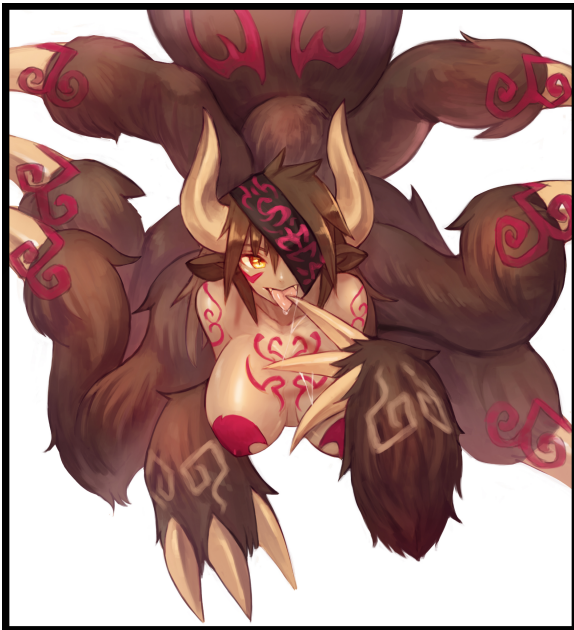
Turning her back towards the source of the shrill scream, Greg's brow furrowed at the sight of her friend lying face first on the forest floor, except something about him seemed strange. For one, his legs were gone, fused into a singular extension of thick rubbery flesh coated in cotton like mounds of fur. But it wasn't just his tail...the entirety of his back was plastered with the new growths, layered over in increasingly thick, frayed tufts that grew outward like a flower. Framing a face...no, a body that had lost almost all its masculinity. Bernard was starting to look like a-

"Whuh?! M...my head..."

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Leaning her weight momentarily on one side of her flank as armored pincers stab into the floor to keep her standing after the haze of dizziness that had taken ahold of her mind after getting her head wrapped up in a low hanging vine of metamorphic energy, Greta raises bloated hands to her head as they morph into massive bear like paws tipped with chitinous claws that were once human fingers, exploding with furry growths that run all the way up to her elbows before stopping in wild, curly locks far removed from Bertha's adorable pomf. Eyeing her fallen friend with a mischievous smirk before yelling an encouraging taunt her way, oblivious to how she'd vocalized it with a gruff yet effeminate voice through lean lips jutting out beneath the visage of a spunky lady formed from wide eyes that had narrowed down the middle while pimples and the beginning of a stubble were washed clean in favor of delicate ashen brown skin shimmering with a natural polished sheen.

"Oii~ Better quit nappin' or I'm gonna win~"



Greta paid no heed to the decorative sash covered in strange symbols reminiscent of Japanese script that had slapped itself over her left eye in tune to the bovine features pushing free out the sides of her head; fluffy ears crowned by immense horns poking through a spiky bob of brown hair far removed from the dusty blonde it had supplanted. After all, these were features of a pure blooded Ushi-Oni like herself! Six arachnid legs, a sturdy rock like abdomen containing the organs she needed to spin her webs with alongside a ravenous digestive system thanks to her species' trait of an abnormally high metabolism that demanded they eat a wagons worth of food everyday lest they go hungry...and when they did...it wasn't a pretty sight.

Lazily scratching her fur crowned loins with a lax hand in response to the subtle rosy warmth of her hunger beginning to kick in before speeding back down the path with a thunderous rattle emanating from her bone tipped legs carrying her like the wind through the forest, the monsterfied human leaves her still changing friend behind as she struggles to rise back up to a standing position on her meaty tail, wincing at the red welt left on her right elbow after the fall had sent her straight into a wayward patch of stone, cutting into fragile skin that hadn't been so soft before, soft enough that even a well landed punch might deliver serious damage to the portly half serpent lady covered in a curious mix of fur and scale, an impossible fusion much like the spider-cow scurrying away from her. Blackened eyes lock on, scowling in annoyance at the fact that Greta hadn't bothered to help her up after ~~her dear friend had suffered a terrible fall~~ she had taken all that time to fake a fall in an effort to get her crush to pick her right up.

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And as she gives in to that newfound spark of ferocity burning in her heart, Bernard's human mind finally succumbs to her more monstrous side as a newborn Bunyip by the name of Bertha, flexing her tail muscles in preparation for an amazingly powerful leap that would send her flying forward far enough to catch up to the lax Ushi-Oni who had the misfortune of ignoring her.

"Fine...if a competition's all you care about...then it's a competition you're gonna get!"

A loud thumping boom, and Greta was instantly spooked, turning around just in time to see her once fallen companion making insane strides toward her through the use of her tail, bouncing like a ball toward her with fury in her glowing eyes, coaxing her six legs to speed up in an effort to keep her head start.

"No fair! That's not how you're supposed to use tails!"

"That's what you get for ignoring me bietch! And who says what I can and can't do with my tail?! It's how I catch food!"

"You're *hunting*?!"

For a Bunyip, Bertha was especially quick to anger, losing the docile mask she usually presented herself under for a more brash persona in line with Greta's tomboy vibes. Vulgar, curt and possessed by a drive to accomplish whatever it was she had on her mind at the time. And right now? She needed to win this race just to prove a point. She hadn't cared that much about her friend's proposal to see ~~who was the fastest~~ whether Bunyip or Ushi-Oni could best the other in a straight sprint, but after seeing how oblivious she was to the faux pain she'd creased her pristine visage in, Bertha was in it to win.



At this point, the threads no longer had any effect as the pair zipped through the forest trail. Now that Bertha's hide had been dyed gun gray and her ordinary human arms had been repurposed into shaggy paws, her body had been irrevocably altered, never to grace the feeling of a meaty rod hanging down between nonexistent legs where only a fluffy patch of natural underwear laid to conceal a tight, virgin vagina she one day hoped for Greta to pierce, therefore claiming her as her mate. As rare as it was for their kind, a hermaphroditic Ushi-Oni like her friend was mistreated by the rest of her ilk. Even though she tried to hide it when they first met years before they began traveling together, the

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unmistakable scent of bitter manliness exuding from her crotch in waves had Bertha reeling in intense estrus she had learned to keep in check now thanks to her status as a wizened adult, partially why she had taken on a sort of advisory role to Greta's foolhardiness. Sort of like a big sister to her...or maybe even a stern wife!

She liked that thought, and amidst her furious bounding, she couldn't help but smile at the idea. It still seemed far off considering how oblivious Greta had been to her advances, but in a couple of years maybe...maybe one day they'd have competitions about who lasted longer in bed rather than trivial stuff like this...not like she didn't enjoy them of course, especially when she got to take in the sight of her friends enormous rump jittering like mad in her attempts to reach first place...and totally not because she was running for dear life now after noticing how Bertha was hopping with arms spread apart, reaching out with an eagerness to get within grappling distance...

Normally she would welcome the sight of a busty Bunyip hopping her way, but the combination of Bertha's tribal accessories rattling with a bone chilling clatter akin to rotted bone after each earthshaking landing and her glowing eyes approaching out of the darkness of the enchanted forest made for an unnerving sight that had her willing her burning legs forward despite the sinew screaming for her to let them rest.

"What was that about a nap? Seems to me like *you* need a wake up call instead~"

"H-How're you so fast?! You never work out!"

"Trade secret dear...eyes on the road! We're almost at the end!"

True enough, the literal light at the end of the tunnel was fast approaching the duo. With Bertha shortening her leaps to quick hops after exhausting most of her energy reserves during the initial burst that had put her right next to Greta, it seemed the two were evenly matched, occasionally beating out the other whenever one of the Ushi-Oni's legs would give out from under her, too exhausted to keep going or how the Bunyip's taxed muscles would cramp, sending her falling face first before barely managing to right herself at the last second.

But still they would keep going, two like minds set on proving to no one but themselves that only one could reign supreme for their own childish reasons.

With a sudden crash and an explosion of leaves, a mess of writhing scales and twitching arachnoid limbs would emerge from the other side of the forest in a gray-white ball that rolls a few meters across the grass before coming apart into two separate masses, allowing the weary women some much deserved rest as they laid together, side by side under the opulent rays of a warm afternoon sun bathing down across the verdant plains of a fantastical world where all manner of beasts and demihumans lived, sharing a planet with the

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humans they had entered the forest as before being spat out as monster girls with not a lick of their former lives remaining inside their minds.

Whatever lives they lived, what would happen to their own reality now that they had been plucked from it didn't matter to Bertha and Greta, not when they had each other now and forever as their hands eventually met, linking claw with soft digits as they laid out in the grass, panting heavily with sweat oozing from their pores.

"S-So...I think we can agree...that us Ushi-Oni..."

"Are *definitely* not...superior to the Bunyip...you were s-scrabbling back there...just to keep up!"

"Hey...it's called...a trick of the l-light? Yesh...that's right...you were...seeing...things..."

"We'll call it...even...you're starting to sound...like you're a filthy drunk...G-Greta?"

Turning her head weakly over toward her friend, Bertha chuckles at the sight of the unconscious Ushi-Oni, snoring loudly now that her energy reserves were thoroughly exhausted. The ravenous spider would be ready to eat two whole cows by the time she awoke, which meant she would need to go hunting for food before then...what a baby....

"Can't even go to sleep without someone fussing over you..."

Coiling her fur laden tail beneath her friend to act as a makeshift backrest, Bertha slides in close to Greta's pert chest, planting her face in between the warm fleshy melons so she could better embrace the comparatively cold skin of her Arachne friend, enveloping her in her fluffy coat of fur she needed to wash next time. As if her own sweat wasn't enough already. But she would do anything to ensure her darling dearest remained safe and sound, stroking the outcast's fuzzy head like a mother raising her hatchlings while her own fatigue begins to claim her consciousness.

"...good night darling..."

There would be plenty of time to scrounge up some good after she had a good long nap with her arachnid companion serving as the bestest pillow there ever was. All while a certain cursed forest in another world falls back to relative normalcy, awaiting the next visitors to step foot within its beckoning maw like the two men who had vanished from the face of the Earth the moment they had gripped the first snare, ending up much closer than either one could have ever thought possible...

THE END