

Vessel of the Florizoan

Hafeez opened his eyes to an unfamiliar ceiling, a thick canopy of lush green leaves replaced the hotel's plaster he had been used to. For the last week he and some friends stayed at a cheap hotel on a colony orbiting Floris 4. Its accommodations were bare bones, but sufficient enough as a rest stop between excursions to the planet's surface. He remembered they were booked in for a week's stay, and if he was right, today was the seventh day of their trip. Hafeez briefly recalled veering away from his friends on the sixth day, tired of the long hikes and lack of consideration for his inability to go for long without needing rest. He reached for his inhaler and touched bare skin where his right trouser pocket should be, and realized he was stark naked beneath a pliable bed-sheet sized leaf.

"Where are my clothes!?" He yelled and tried to roll off the bed. His rightward roll was impeded by the sloshing, fluid filled structure he found himself on. Every attempt to remove himself from it made it slosh, swell, and wobble precariously under his weight. Hafeez liked water balloons, but disliked waterbeds; a short, but fat man like himself tended to stress them to their limits. So he never found himself being able to enjoy the comforts of a waterbed without fearing it might burst. Whatever this thing was made of, it held his weight too well. He almost wished it would burst under his heft, just so he could free himself.

He hit the floor with a thud. Hafeez scanned the room and discovered it was made from a singular piece of tree wood. He got to his feet and trudged toward an open archway, veiled with a green sheet that looked like transparent plastic. It felt soft under his hands, and smelled like warm apples. He parted it carefully and gazed out on a collection of trees big enough to act as the support beams for a space colony, ringed with wooden walkways and huge rope bridges to connect them. He looked down and saw the trees disappear into a body of clear water. However he wished the water hadn't been so clear, because he was able to see the light eventually fail to illuminate its depths. He shuddered at the thought of sinking, he wasn't a good swimmer.

"I must still be on Floris 4..." Hafeez wondered if his friends were looking for him.

"Oh, how strange. You're already awake." A feminine voice made Hafeez spin around and drape the plastic-like material around him to cover his nudity. He then remembered it was transparent, but clung to it anyway. The voice belonged to a humanoid about three heads taller than Hafeez, who stood at just above five foot two himself. Their skin was a waxy red color in contrast to Hafeez's light brown complexion. They had an ostensibly human physique, but their weight collected around their belly, thighs, and legs, and they visibly wobbled when they moved. They had two sets of eyes, set one above the other, smaller than a human's, and a short, round nose. The most curious thing Hafeez noted was the collection of leaves sprouting from their scalp, which mimicked the distribution of human hair. They were clearly sentient, but there had been no record of an indigenous species in the guidebook holo.

"Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you."

“You can understand me?” Hafeez asked, letting go of his ineffective covering to move his hands in front of his crotch. The planet’s resident didn’t seem to wear clothes, a smooth bulge existed where genitals would be on most bipeds. “I didn’t know anyone lived on Floris 4,” he laughed awkwardly.

“Floris 4?” They cocked their head and walked towards Hafeez. “Oh, that’s what you call the Mother Planet. We don’t typically refer to it by anything other than Mother, but the colony overhead named it without our input. The tourist board likes to take advantage of our insular nature, and our aversion to violence, and makes up all sorts of wild facts about our home.” They saw Hafeez’s scared expression, and stopped their approach. “My name is A’pel Tarra, I found you collapsed in the jungle.”

Hafeez looked around. “Um, where are my clothes?”

A’pel blinked all four eyes. “Ah, you really don’t remember. Do you?” A’pel motioned to a square container next to a window, and inside were the shredded remains of the planet-side excursion suit provided for tourists. “An improperly maintained guardrail broke under you, and you fell down a steep incline. I was watching a different group of tourists when I saw you fall, you had two broken limbs, massive internal hemorrhaging, and a fractured skull.”

Hafeez immediately began checking his legs and feeling his chest and stomach. “What? How? No, wait, what?” He apparently suffered enough blunt force trauma to render him bedridden for months, and he felt fine. “Why am I not dead?”

A’pel’s hand was soft and cool on Hafeez’s skin. It reminded him of how hot Floris 4 was, as a bead of sweat dripped down their red and green skin which he was now realizing resembled an Earth apple. “We used our healing juices on you, but I am afraid they may have caused some changes to your physiology. It will take a few days to ensure you are... fit to leave. But do not worry, you are welcome to remain with us until then.”

“A few days? But my friends, they’ll be leaving today! I can’t stay here. I have to let them know I’m alright,” Hafeez protested.

A’pel hesitated. “I see. Well, I doubt you will want to leave without some kind of covering for your reproductive organs. Follow me.” They gently nudged Hafeez through the archway and on to the circular wooden platform ringing the tree. Above and below the two were more walkways, with more archways that led into circular abodes. “Come, I’ll take you to a tailor. We have no laws against nudity as your kind does, but some of us adorn ourselves with fabrics as a point of individuality.”

Hafeez followed A’pel awkwardly through the settlement. He clung tight to the thick ropes connecting the platforms, and when his hands were free, he resumed covering his crotch. His cheeks were flushed red, but despite his nakedness, he wasn’t paid much attention by the other inhabitants. They were all of a similar heft to A’pel, and with a few exceptions for extra limbs or

changes in facial features, held a humanoid form. The deeper they went, descending bridges towards a smaller tree covered in strips of cloth and silk, the more Hafeez noted that everyone resembled a fruit of some kind. He briefly saw a round, attractive looking denizen with the dark blue skin of a blueberry and blushed.

“You’re native to this planet, right?” Hafeez asked.

“We are,” A’pel responded and stopped outside of the archway to the decorated tree-home.

“Then why do you... look so um, I don’t want to offend you, but why do you look so human?”

A’pel laughed. The water-weight stored in their lower body wobbled. “Oh, I was wondering how long it would take you to ask. Whenever tourists find our home we secretly make bets with one another to see how long it takes until they ask us the usual questions.” Their four eyes creased with a smile. “Usually they ask why we look like the fruits of Earth.”

“You know about Earth?” Hafeez blinked.

“Of course. In part, it’s how we came to exist. Our forms were chosen. Your people experimented with growing new fruits to excessive sizes, using Floris 4 as a test bed. We Fructizoan’s, our souls are bound to the waters within our bodies, our skins were merely taken from the scraps of your experiments when you left the planet behind. Humans get bored quickly, we notice.”

Hafeez blinked, and tried to take the information in without pestering A’pel for elaboration on... everything, really. “We do, that’s sadly true. But why are you being so accommodating. Experimenting on your planet, leaving the technology behind, and returning later to set up a tourist colony once everything’s flourished? Aren’t you mad?”

A’pel hummed. Hafeez hadn’t paid much attention to their voice before, but when they hummed he noticed their voice had a resonant quality to it. And when he stopped speaking, there was a dripping sound. They said they were filled with water, maybe it was a side effect of that? Hafeez thought it had a calming quality to it, he humorously thought they might make a good living off ASMR videos on the holo-net.

“No. Not at all. Human carelessness let us claim knowledge of their forms, and the giant fruits they left behind we assimilated and became part of us. What’s the saying you have, one man’s trash is another’s treasure? It’s a bit crude, but it’s apt. Now come on, let’s get you fitted with... ‘something’ to hide your modesty. There won’t be much in your size, but I’m sure the tailor can set up something.”

Hafeez and A’pel entered through an archway covered in a rainbow of different fabrics. Some were easily recognisable, and some were rarer and not found on Earth. There were even a few Hafeez had no reference for. It was obvious that the tailor’s abode catered to the uniqueness of

Florizoan physiques. There were outfits made to fit the impossibly wide hipped variety, like A'pel, and there were accessories made to fit sleeves thicker than Hafeez's belly.

"Welcome!"

A Florizoan with six arms, and a spherical body punctuated with sharp spikes greeted them. They had two eyes, not four like A'pel. And the thick outer skin of a pineapple. A crown of green leaves acted as their hair, and their face was squarer, with a prominent jaw. Their midsection was almost barrel-like. It was clear they had based their form on the pineapple. But one crucial difference was the spikes. They were much sharper than an actual pineapple, and they had been shaped into sewing needles. Threads were tied to them, and almost formed a web like structure around the tailor, each strand pointing to a different garment under construction.

"Pyne, I need a rush order," A'pel walked towards a receptacle filled with a shiny blue material, picked it up, and placed it on the wooden counter in front of the tailor. "Can you fashion this into, uh..." A'pel paused. "What do they call it? Human apparel isn't my forte. Under where, I think?"

Pyne laughed. His voice was hollow and bassy, like it came from a large, empty room. "Oh, yes. I can make something with this. Hold on just a moment."

Hafeez watched Pyne work, and forgot his immodesty. The pineapple shaped tailor plucked needles from his body, and began skewering and threading the fabric. A coordinated dance between his six limbs in hyperspeed. It took seconds for him to work the shiny blue folds into a pair of blue underwear. Which he handed to Hafeez, and nodded at him with some urgency. "Wear it," he said.

"Sorry, Pyne's a bit insistent people try everything on the moment he finishes making it."

"A pity I can never get 'you' to wear any of my garments, A'pellius."

Hafeez awkwardly stepped into the underwear after placing it on the floor, and bent forward to pull it up over his fat legs. They slid over his thighs and snapped tight over his crotch. The underwear was practically a speedo, but at least his bits were covered. It wouldn't pass for acceptable on the tourist colony up in orbit, but it would do for now.

The two left the tailors and A'pel resumed leading Hafeez through the settlement. They didn't seem to have a destination. None obvious to Hafeez anyway. But he followed, he was a stranger on an alien planet. And he was grateful for the company if nothing else. But one thing made him curious.

"The tailor called you by a different name. Is A'pel short for something?"

A'pel tensed. Their pace slowed to better have a conversation with Hafeez, who was thankful for the consideration. "Yes, it is. My formal name is just too... much, at times. It's tied to my role here."

“And what is that role?”

A'pel stopped and looked over their shoulder. They looked worried, all four eyes avoided meeting Hafeez in his two. “Well you see, I'm the—”

“A'pellius,” sounded a strong, booming masculine voice cast down by an enormous pear-like Florizoan. He had no visible eyes, and a tangle of vines covered the space they would have occupied on a human face. He looked swollen with the water all Florizoan's carried inside of their body. His upper body possessed a plump set of breasts, which were flatter and wider, indicative of the shape human men's chests grew when they gained excess weight. The further down you looked, the wider, and tauter his body became until it looked like a balloon. He was so full of water, his green pear-like skin was semi-transparent around the hips. By the way A'pel straightened up when he spoke, Hafeez inferred he was important or at least outranked them.

“The human is still with you, I see.” He turned to face Hafeez. Even without eyes, Hafeez could tell he was being stared down.

“Yes he is, lord Py'reus. I was just about to—” A'pel turned to look at Hafeez. “Um, could you give us a moment? We need to discuss something important. Something... outsiders aren't privy to.”

Hafeez blinked. “Oh of course,” he wanted to stay and listen, but he was practically naked, fully unarmed, and alone in a strange place. Even if he protested, what could he do? He briefly thought he could lie about human capabilities, and pretend he had some kind of power. That would have been foolish. They had a deep understanding of human physiology, they would see through it in an instant. He resigned himself with a small sigh, and took a walk to the other side of the platform.

As he walked away, he heard what he assumed was the Florizoan's native language. To his ears it sounded like a sequence of splashes and watery trickles, he wouldn't have been able to understand them anyway.

“Yes Honored Gourd, right away!”

On the other side of the tree a lanky Florizoan with banana skin was bowing to someone inside, and sprinted off in a panic. They were speaking English for some reason, which struck Hafeez as odd. He walked up to the archway to figure out why. It was covered in thick red opaque plastic that smelled like cherries, and he parted it carefully to see what was inside. A laugh resonated from inside, and his eyes widened in shock.

“Oh, another human? It has been such a long, long time.”

A man with shiny gray hair addressed Hafeez from a throne of pillows, glittery trinkets, and bowls of fruit. A man the size of an elephant, with most of his bulk residing in his stomach that

pooled on the floor like an enormous water balloon that had been left on a running tap and forgotten about. If he had legs they were lost underneath his bulk. He reclined on a set of gigantic weather-balloon sized pillows, which upon inspection, Hafeez recognized as the man's ass cheeks. His anatomy had been changed by something.

"Let me guess little one," when he spoke his face wobbled. His cheeks were full and soft, and his double chin was plump like rising dough. Even with the gray hair and deep lines which implied his age, his ballooned body gave him an agelessness that defied time.

He reached for a slice of melon bigger than Hafeez's head, and chomped into it. "Fell away from the holiday makers, had an 'accident,' and woke up to the care of a plump Florizoan with waxy skin like a red delicious?" He devoured it ravenously and plucked a mango from another basket. He bit into it, and let the juices run down his chin and into the crevice between his breasts. Hafeez's underwear tightened, and he couldn't look away. "The Florizoan's have a type, I must admit. You may be a hair shorter than I was before my feast, but oh, you are ever so abominous. Practically a sphere on legs."

Hafeez blushed, but he couldn't help but feel 'slightly' offended. He liked his fatness, but having it pointed out so descriptively still felt odd. "What do you mean they have a type?"

"Oh just approach, I can tell we are cut from the same cloth my lad," the older man gestured for Hafeez to come closer. Hafeez obliged, and the man smirked. "Oh, A'pelli has n't told you what you're REALLY here for, have they?" He rolled his eyes in mock annoyance. "What a contrarian. They act so coy, but once they begin their work, they rarely stop for breath. I have rarely seen a cultivator as dedicated as that one."

"Alexander!" A'pel appeared in the archway, alone now. They looked angry. Hafeez didn't even think they were capable of anger. They stomped forward and pointed accusingly at the bloated elder. "You're trying to scare him away so that 'you' can be the subject of the feast, aren't you? I have told you, over and over, the trees need variety!"

Alexander laughed uproariously. His body quaked, and his fat began to oscillate wildly. "Guilty as charged. I'm a glutton, a glutton of your design. If you expose a lowly pet to the nectar from their master's table, can you really blame them for wanting more?"

Hafeez turned to look at A'pel. "What is he talking about?"

A'pel took Hafeez by the hand and dragged him outside. "You shouldn't have seen that."

"... he was so big."

"I know, I know. I assure you he's not in pain, in fact he's much healthier than a human would be normally. All humans end up like that, after their first feast." A'pel gave Hafeez an odd look.

“You don’t look too perturbed by meeting an enormously fat, devious man with breasts bigger than your entire body. You’re not... disgusted, or worried, or—”

“Am I going to be as big as that?”

“You ‘want’ to be like him?”

Hafeez nodded enthusiastically. “I ‘hated’ the tourist colony. I only went on the holiday to try the food. But my group wanted to go on hikes, every day. All I want to do is eat, and by the sound of it, that’s what you have in store for me. So I’m all for it, when do we start?”

A’pel rubbed their face and chuckled. “Goodness, by the Mother Planet, what a strange one. Even Alexander was apprehensive at first, and he’s our largest supply. And here you are, wondering if you’ll surpass him.” They clapped a hand on Hafeez’s shoulder. “We can begin whenever you’re ready. Just know that once you undergo the feast, you won’t be able to leave the planet for quite some time.”

Hafeez shrugged. “I don’t mind. When do I eat? Oh, I’m not going to have to do any exercise right? I have asthma.”

“You won’t have any want for breath or sustenance at the feast, trust me.”

Hafeez sat on a wooden disk at the far end of a clearing away from the suspended village. He was carried down and away from the deep waters the village was erected above on an open top palanquin, carried by four pallbearers with furry coats like kiwi fruits and serpentine heads. He was instructed to sit in the middle of an emerald green disk, and to remain there until the feast had ended. He eyed the carts being brought into the clearing, filled with fruits from Earth. He was salivating at the thought of getting to sample them all. They were plumper, juicier, and healthier looking than anything back home. And if they made him grow to the voluminous proportions Alexander had swelled to, even better. He turned to A’pel, who stood beside him, wearing a long robe made of woven leaves.

“When do we begin?”

“Now.”

A’pel raised their hands and called for the attention of the Florizoans, who were carrying bowls of fruit and arranged in a crowd in front of the emerald disk’s platform. “We are gathered here today to bless the soil with the water of plenty, but first, we must prepare the vessel. The water of plenty will only spill from a sated container, one that is fit to burst with joy, and pleasure, and only then will our people be blessed for another year!”

“Wait, burst?” Hafeez looked at A’pel in surprise. He noticed Alexander, along with a line of other humans, seated on their own palanquins. They were not as enormous, but they were still far too ballooned to be natural. Hafeez envied them, and made a mental note to surpass them. “Let the feast begin!”

Hafeez rarely had an opportunity to let his gluttonous side loose on Earth. Here it was encouraged. The first Florizoans left three baskets of mangoes, prepared and ready to eat in front of him. Each bigger than his head. He picked them up, and bit deep. He felt a warmth in his throat, sliding down into his belly. On contact with his stomach acid a reaction took place and he let out an involuntary moan. His flesh shone where the juice from the mangoes splashed it, and his stomach stretched. Every bite made him bigger, and wider. He abandoned all pretense of politeness and ravenously tore the mangoes apart, hungry for the feeling that enraptured him when he grew.

“The vessel swells, let us cheer for him! Grow, mighty one! Grow!”

“Grow, grow, grow! Swell, swell, swell! Expand, expand, expand!”

Hafeez sat cross legged on the disk. His entire body fattened up with every bite. When the mangoes were finished, he moved on to bananas and apples and pears. He finished the offerings faster each time. His gluttony increased, as his eating accelerated and his legs disappeared underneath a protruding belly and rolls of back and side fat. Some Florizoans stayed at his side and massaged him. They rubbed scented oils between his rolls, and as the baskets became harder for Hafeez to reach because of the obstacle his expanding anatomy became, they fed him by hand.

“It’s time,” A’pel raised their hands. “Hafeez. Are you ready to bless the soil?”

Hafeez, eyes half lidded with warmth and pleasure, nodded.

“Ah, here comes the fun part,” Alexander said and watched keenly with the other humans at the back of the crowd.

A’pel spoke in their native language, and shouted, their voice akin to a thrashing river current. Great vines erupted from the ground and ensnared Hafeez. One pushed its way into his navel, while another slid delicately between his buttocks and pushed inside him. Two more latched on to his nipples, and formed seals like suction cups. And one, much thicker than the others, entered his mouth. The tip expanded to fill his mouth with a soft, marshmallow like texture. It blew sweet, warm air into him.

Great globules of the same air traveled along the rest of the vines, and pumped into him. He moaned and the underwear he had crafted for him strained with a small bulge, indicating his arousal at the situation. He was lifted by the vines above the crowd, who cheered for him. It was difficult for Hafeez to hear them over the groaning of his flesh. He felt like a great balloon, and

the thought of being so enormous for so many people excited him. In such a positive light. On Earth he was derided for taking up too much space, but now he was being championed.

He grew wider, and fuller. His rolls of fat tightened up and became one continuous curve. His flabby arms and legs ripened with the sweet air into shiny, oblong balloons of descending sizes until they ended in round balls with stubby little balloons which used to be his fingers. Hafeez could feel himself reach the end of his elasticity. Filled to the brim with fruit, and pumped to the limit with sweet air. He was a twice-filled blimp, long past his capacity. He blocked the sun from reaching the clearing below, and he creaked with the din of approaching thunder.

Hafeez's eyes rolled back and thought to himself. 'I'm so happy I could burst.'

He exploded without warning. Golden liquid flooded the clearing, and the Florizoans rejoiced. It glittered and soaked into the ground, the Florizoans themselves grew bigger with the nutrients. A'pel nodded affirmingly, and watched as a puddle of thicker, congealed gold returned to the center of the disk. The silhouette of an enormously fat human formed, and then emerged as the goop liquified.

"Ugh..." Hafeez was still smiling. "I went boom."

A'pel stood over him. "You did, and you will again. You're one of our sacred vessels now after all. You have nothing to worry about for as long as you desire. All you need to do is grow fatter, and allow us to burst you once a month; you will be reconstituted by the Mother Planet each time. And each time, your yield will increase."

Hafeez briefly considered returning to normalcy, but shook his head. "I want to be even bigger next time."