

Customer#2 (Vekar)

Riding off the success of his previous work, refreshed after sleeping with Calan, he instantly set up his booth again, now with an even bolder smile across his face. He was ready to get a new client, perhaps even see Calan again? Grink couldn't help but kick his feet in his stool excitedly. Any possibility of monsters could be at his booth at any moment. Grink could hardly contain his excitement as he bounced in his seat. He kept his head on a constant swivel, ready to call over any passing creature that had the misfortune of looking his way in hopes of advertising his booth to more people. While most rolled their eyes in a tie between annoyance and disgust, one in particular seemed intrigued by the concept, though the monster kept walking, leaving a snake tail to carve the ground behind him. It made Grink content enough to mentally note the peculiar creature as a future client. Now only remains the waiting game.

"Ahem? Hello? Little lizard guy?" Grink shot up at the nickname, looking around to see a scaled creature ahead of him. They had undeveloped horns over their head and a long body with wings curled over their sides. Grink's face ignited instantly at the sight of a dragon just ahead of him. He was younger than most dragons, though considering the lifespan of a dragon, that didn't say much about his age. Grink shuttered at the opportunity to serve a dragon, with most lizards of his species seeing a dragon as a type of golden ticket, viewing all dragons as distant genetic ancestors to the smaller subspecies. Dragons embrace this image themselves, finding it as a symbol of status to have multiple lizards as pets.

"Y-yes? Yes! I'm the little lizard guy! My name is Grink, how can I help you today!?" Grink's heart beat louder than his voice did and the dragon was clearly caught off guard by this. He scoffed, rereading the sign above as if he'd been misled.

"I was kicked out of my father's grooming station and just happened upon this. I assume that you've served masters before and that you have experience with dragon scales?" The dragon glared at Grink with an upturned chin, causing Grink's gut to stir nervously.

"Actually... No? I've only recently started this and you're one of my first customers! Being that you're one of my firsts, I can give you an exclusive deal of a full-body package for a discounted price if you recommend me to a friend!" Grink proposed with a practiced smile across his face. The dragon scoffed, insisting on not introducing himself.

“Hmm. So let me guess... You don’t have the dragon brushes that are made *specifically* for our scales? I also assume you also don’t have anything that can imprint a scent on our coat. Such an amateur waste of time.” The dragon groaned as he turned to walk off. It was much later in the day, most places were closed and the sun was about to set. Though something caught Grink off guard.

“Why would I use a dragon brush?” He asked, causing a flick of the dragon’s ear as he turned around with a curled lip.

“Because I’m a *dragon*, duh!”

“But your scales haven’t fully developed. Your horns don’t have the ridges yet and your scale colors are still faded and slightly transparent on your underbelly. Trying to apply a dragon brush to your scales would do more damage than good and it may even have been permanent. Your fur is also-”

“Ok, you!-”

Grink was cut short by the dragon stomping a paw on the booth, snapping Grink out of his tangent and glaring at him with bared fangs. The dragon eventually scoffed and eased off of Grink’s homemade booth and looked away in dismissal.

“So... What would you recommend?” He asked, clearly taking no pride in what he viewed as defeat, though Grink couldn’t be more excited, finally serving a dragon on his second day! His family would either be overwhelmingly proud or furiously envious. Grink looked under his booth and shuffled through his various tools and equipment until he pulled out a short brush with thick and solid bristles. Much too rough for any normal creature though just soft enough for a premature dragon.

“This should be fine! There aren’t any dragon brushes for those with premature scales, so the best way to treat it is with a brush usually meant for a different reptile with a similar coat. This would do the trick naturally without causing any harm or discomfort! So, will you like the full body treatment, specific area for me to focus on? Or something else?” Grink proposed, again doing as he previously practiced. The dragon scoffed before lowering his guard, now trying to rationalize his order. The dragon was an heir to a long lasting dragon family, though not one of the respected ones. The ancestry that Grink remembered was of the dragons that raided kingdoms and enslaved monsters against their will, though they have changed with the times. His name was Vekar. He wanted a simple brush down to clean off the remnants of his old shed and to clean his newer one in the absence of water appropriate for cleaning a dragon. The process led to Grink shuffling excitedly in his seat

before getting back out his rug to situate it under the orange sky. Every lizard was ingrained with the hope of serving a dragon, to simply imagine himself in his position was enough to make Grink awkwardly giggle to himself, much to Vekar's disgust. Eventually, the dragon laid down, allowing Grink to start. Being the time, he wanted to test his communication with customers.

"So I'm going to start along your back and work my way down to your belly and then go back over it once I'm done. Is that alright?" Grink asked, climbing over the dragon's arm and reaching the bridge between his shoulders. Much to his surprise, the dragon he was serving was only slightly larger than the size of Calan from his prior work day. Naturally, Grink would never be able to climb a dragon's arm on his own, making it clear just how undeveloped Vekar's body is. Though he would never vocalize these distinctions, knowing better than to insult a dragon of any kind or caliber.

"Sure, so long as it gets done right. If anything is askew, my father will be hearing about it!" he barked, causing Grink to shutter. The thought of getting a dragon to attack him was enough to scare his scales off, but in Vekar's family especially, they were already monsters to be feared. Soon enough, Grink began to stroke along the scales with the brush. Based on how smoothly the brush went though, it was hard to imagine that this was the roughest brush he had with the toughest scales he's seen in his life. Grink kept the movement going, seeing some of the dirt be moved off the surface level skin and seeing some of the patches of his old skin that were tucked in awkward places like behind Vekar's ear, the insides of his calves, and even some right next to his eyes. Grink felt beyond honored to be so close to a dragon in this way.

Most of the dirt came off quickly, alongside the aged scales. Soon enough, Vekar's coat was clean and ready for the next step of treatment. Being that they had just been scraped over the top, most dragons require a protective layer over their scales until their scales reaffirm themselves as the indestructible force of nature they are more commonly known for. In most cases, simply being in the brown home and out of harm's way would be enough of a substitute, but being that Vekar is outside and doesn't have the harder scales coming in soon, the protective layer input was a necessity. Grink left off his customer's back and skittered back over to his booth for a bucket of his to mix together the mixture. He already had a large tube of it, though applying to directly could lead to a more sticky and inconvenient outcome, so he had to use the lavender spray from Calan and mixed ratio of it

into the protective layer in order to water it down as well as applying an excellent scent over the customer when it's done!

Grink mixed it together, taking a whiff of it and sticking a finger in to apply it to his arm, ensuring that it would have the desired effect. Once it was complete, Grink lumbered the heavy bucket over to his awaiting customer. Being that the brush he was previously using would now only wipe away the layer before it sets, and that Grink didn't have many dragon-grade materials, Grink had to resort to using his hands to carefully apply the scented protective layer. Vekar was initially caught off guard by this, though he soon shrugged it off, catching the scent to be comforting enough to lower his guard. Grink took extra care in wiping the mixture about, making sure not to put too much in an area, as well as making sure not to wipe it off with his own body. Soon enough however, the protective layer dried on Vekar's upper half, leading to him rolling on his back so Grink applying it to his much more vulnerable underbelly, which Vekar took no joy in participating in, consistently threatening to get his father on the line incase anything leads to any undesired consequences. Grink eventually got desensitized to the remarks, keeping Vekar company as he policed his limb placements, careful not to have any of his limbs rub off the layer on one another. The layers were eventually complete and Vekar slumped over completely, bored and tired, not expecting the treatment to take so many hours.

"Hmph... To think I'd allow you to keep me so late! Had my father been home, he'd have every guard in our castle after me. Say, where is your home? I doubt you sleep at the booth as well." He scoffed. Grink sat by the dragon's head and thought about it slowly.

"Well I sometimes do, but most times it just works out. Last night, my customer slept with me to keep me warm, so that was nice of hi-"

"What? Had I known you were so pitiful, I would have spared you much more patience! Now you simply *must* come to my castle. My father already has an array of pets for me, though I can make an exception for you once he gets back." Vekar scoffed, now standing proudly as he began walking off, looking over his shoulder at Grink. The little lizard was about to leap to the opportunity before reminding himself of his goal.

"I-I can't accept that! I really, truly, honestly admire the opportunity, but I can't make such a decision so quickly! P-plus, I don't have the most experience with grooming, so I would lag behind the others of yours very quickly!" Grink rushed to force excuses from his mind. Admittedly he just wanted to keep his options open, but he wasn't sure Vekar would take an answer without solid ground. Had he spoken from the heart, he would've died for

this opportunity had Vekar been the first opportunity. To think that he met a dragon so early! Though his excitement would have to stand aside from his logical side. If he was taken in by this powerful family, the standard for work would be much higher than he'd be ready for, as well as that, the stories that he heard about Vekar's dad, Torin, horrified him. Aside from all of that, Grink would have to take frequent precautions until Vekar's scales came in completely. All in all, Vekar was certainly one of the ideal masters, but he couldn't imagine being a pet of his so quickly. He decided that it'd be best to continue keeping his options open.

“R-right... I knew you'd say that, that's why I specified making an exception for you, *obviously*. Regardless of who you serve as a master, I would feel much better with you under my roof for the night. No strings attached, I assure you.” He muttered most of the following words under his breath after 'obviously', though Grink hardly paid it any mind.

“Oh... Yeah, yeah! I'd love that, Vekar, thank you!” Grink called out, rushing to his side in excitement. Vekar seemed to take pride in the little lizard's enthusiasm, smirking to himself as he strutted off. Grink followed close behind, until Vekar decided to carry him on his back in order to hurry the process up. Within just below an hour of their leisurely walk, Vekar turned to a solid metal gate, vines placed all around as the gates opened. Vekar walked in, making sure to take his time so that Grink could see the decorations and extravagance. The paved path was massive, clearly made for the much older father that Vekar talked about without end. Eventually, Vekar walked them to his room. Along the way were much more than lizards of Grink's species, but even some werewolves and other monsters, finding a way to service the dragons in exchange for their protection. Though in the lavish and oversized room for Vekar, Grink found a small perch a distance from the bed. Vekar offered a pace in his bed, but Grink new better than to share the bed of a dragon that he just turned down as a master. Grink placed himself on a warm plated platform meant for relaxation for cold blooded, but Grink found it to be more than enough comfort for a night.