

The Stinky Prison

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Nurue was getting bored with the mundane routine of her work. Walking the same woods and seeing the same sights began eating away at her sanity. She was one of her walks almost in a daze when a strong wind snapped her back and her eyes landed on the hills and mountains far past the town's limits, the greenery stretched vast into the horizon and faded into the fogs and mist that built up along the hills. The reason the land remained untouched was generally due to local superstitions and out of respect for people long passed. But Tsukiri was kind enough to sum it up as "Spooky" and Kimo, unable to leave the town had only hearsay to describe the environment.

"I think a camping trip would do me some good..." Nurue sighed, her mind feeling a little clearer and her excitement already brewing.

Nurue wrapped up the rest of her tasks for this outing and hurried home with a bound in her step. Upon entering the front door, she announced her arrival home and her friends called back in kind. She was sorting the day's spoils in her office when Kimo quietly walked in to greet her properly.

"How was your day miss Nurue?" Kimo stood with the proper posture of a maid, and her voice lacked emotion as usual.

Nurue motioned to Kimo to sit on the couch. *"Better than usual."* Kimo's ears perked up at the good news.

"I think I finally found a way out of my slump." Nurue plopped down in the chaire behind her desk.

"That's wonderful miss Nurue. Is there any way that I can be of assistance?"

"Sorry but there is not much you can do this time..." Nurue felt the atmosphere shift and quickly added: *"but you can make some food! I'm going camping and will need rations while I'm away."*

"Just for you? Or are you taking Tsukiri along as well?" Kimo's tail thrashed letting Nurue know she was pleased to be able to help.

"Ah..." Nurue paused for a moment to think, thoughts of the many times she had been dragged into Tsukiri's schemes came to mind. *"Yea, I will be bringing Tsu with me."* Nurue tried to hide a grin.

Pleased with her duties Kimo took her leave and Nurue sunk back into her chair to savor a moment of peace before starting to work on preparing for the trip. *"Alright..."* she let out a breathy exhale as she stood up, her first task, convincing Tsukiri to join her.

Nurue knocked on Tsukiri's door and was called in. Tsukiri was seemingly too busy cleaning up her toys to get the door. Knowing what mind set Tsukiri would be in right now Nurue kept her requests short and vague.

"You're coming out with me tomorrow."

"Kay."

"Pack some spare clothes."

"Yep."

It was all she needed to hear and Nurue quickly left before Tsukiri had time for any deeper thought. And with that everyone went along with their normal routine for the evening, except Nurue getting to sleep a bit later than usual due to her excitement.

Nurue groaned as Kimo softly shook her awake and handed her coffee. Kimo had already moved all the bags she was bringing to the front door. Tsukiri was patiently waiting on the couch while Nurue ate a sandwich for breakfast and got dressed in her hiking clothes, a light top, shorts, boots, and a jacket more suited for protecting her body from branches than for warmth. Tsukiri took note of this and quickly fetched her own jacket to follow Nurue's more experienced lead. Nurue loaded herself up with the bulk of the bags and tent leaving Tsukiri to carry her own backpack of clothes and her other necessities. Nurue relaxed as the weight on her back balanced out what was on her chest and her tail could finally take a break. It was a quick goodbye as the two left Kimo to watch over the house, though Tsukiri made a confused expression when Kimo said: "see you tomorrow." The unease grew as they walked well past where she had previously gone exploring with Nurue before.

"h-hey..." Tsukiri was starting to struggle remembering the path home.

"Yea, Tsu?" Nurue paused in a small clearing just big enough for them to stand comfortably.

"How far are we going?"

"I don't know? Until just before the sun starts to set. Or someplace cool if we find one."

"w-WHAT!" The air went silent after Tsukiri's sudden yell.

"Oh, don't you worry, if you get scared, I might let you hold my tail." Even Nurue began to feel a little uneasy at just how quiet it was now.

"Well, thanks..." Tsukiri paused before remembering why she wanted to be home that evening. *"Ah! But I, um- I, had planned something for Kimo..."* her voice trailed off realizing her reason was quite childish.

Nurue knew from the quick switching between emotions what had happened, Tsukiri had laid a prank, or better described trap for Kimo and wanted to see the results. *"You shouldn't bully people like that Tsu."*

"You're bullying me right now!"

Nurue could only grin at her hypocrisy. *"Payback isn't bullyin'."* Nurue stuck her tongue out in jest.

Tsukiri couldn't argue, it was only fair that she goes along with Nurue's antics every so often. *"You got me."*

"Now let's keep going the path really opens up just up a head." Nurue lightly swatted Tsukiri with her tail and took the lead once more.

In just a few minutes of walking the ground beneath their feet shifted from soft dirt pebbles and leaves to stone blocks eroded over many years. The moss looked like a carpet that stretched along paths

forgotten to nature, trees lined both sides distinctly shaped clearings could be picked out amongst the trees where stone slabs blocked their growth. The sun struggled to pierce the canopy above and the humidity from the moss was creating a hanging fog that made the silence that still surrounded the two even more pronounced. The two followed the path of least resistance laid out before them and walked while making idle chatter. As they happened onto a small pond, they decided to take a break to eat some of their rations that Kimo had prepared. They each had a portion of nuts berries and crackers with cheese. It wasn't a very big meal, but it would hold them until dinner.

"I think we have gone far enough." Nurue knew that pressing on in the current conditions wouldn't do any good. The pond gave them sunlight and water, and the fog was already denser than she would have liked, risking getting lost wasn't on her agenda.

"FINALLY!" Tsukiri was exasperated, apparently, she had been putting on a brave face but was really tired from all the walking.

"I will set up the tent and you can chill here while I wander around for a bit."

"I gotta do something to help out. What will you need when you get back?"

"Humm..." Nurue thought of a simple task that would keep Tsukiri out of trouble. *"Could you get some firewood? Just some relatively dry sticks are all we need."*

"Got it!"

The two unloaded their bags and Nurue quickly pitched the tent as the evening chill had just started to creep in. Nurue took her leave to search for any interesting plants or anything to freshen up her mind a bit more. The call of nature made itself known a few miles back, but she could finally take residence in a bush and relieve herself. She had barely finished when Tsukiri's yell broke the serenity Nurue was enjoying. Nurue hurriedly yanked up her shorts and ran back to camp to see what the commotion was about. As Nurue approached she could see Tsukiri frantically waving from the tent's window and an ominous gust whistling through the trees. The fog seemed to gather into the rough shapes of unknown creatures. A phenomenon Nurue was familiar with growing up. She knows the harsh snow of her homeland could create illusions and sometimes the lesser spirits could use it to manifest themselves for a brief moment, but having it happen with fog was new. Knowing that they were harmless Nurue breathed a sigh of relief and went to retrieve Tsukiri.

"Tsu~..." Nurue opened the tent to find Tsukiri balled up in the corner behind a backpack with just her ears poking out.

"N-n-n-NU-r-RUE!" Tsukiri saw the beasts in the fog behind Nurue and buried her head once more.

"It's alright Tsu their harmless."

"There's so many of them!"

"Here just look for a moment."

Tsukiri lifted her head to see as Nurue trashed her tail for a bit whisking away the forms back into an indistinguishable mist.

"See, all gone."

Nurue picked up Tsukiri and held her feet dangling and showed her the area like one would do for a pet. Nurue could still feel Tsukiri's heart racing against her hands even as her body relaxed. Satisfied being the hero Nurue set Tsukiri down.

"It's already starting to get dark. Let's get a fire started."

"o-okay."

Tsukiri showed Nurue her collection of sticks and retreated back to the tent. Her eyes just kept locking onto the shadows in the fog and Nurue couldn't hold her and cook at the same time. Nurue dug out the spread Kimo had prepared for their dinner to find it was a lot of barbecue beans, chili, and smores for sweets. All food that could be heated up fairly fast and eaten, Nurue with a decent amount of effort got the fire started and a pot heating up their food. Once everything was settled Tsukiri finally snuck out of the tent and joined Nurue sitting on her lap and holding her tail the heat from the fire warming her face. The fog still walked around them but with Nurue protecting her she could bare them for now. The heat ate their dinner and sat amongst the moonlight and embers simply enjoying each other's company until the heat had gone and the night cold pushed them to bed.

Tsukiri slipped into her pajama pants and Nurue chose to sleep in her clothes in case anything happened. The safety of the tent could no longer ease Tsukiri's mind as the fog distorted along the clear windows of the tent, she would not be able to sleep knowing monsters were stalking her all night. She tossed and turned for a while before *Pomfh~* Nurue's tail laid across her giving reassurance that it could wipe away the monsters like it had done before. It was only moments later that Nurue's snoring was joined by her own.

Nurue drifted between dreams as a twinge of pain in her stomach brought her halfway back to the tent. A quiet wind escaped her rear without notice but was soon joined by many more. Slowly they grew in intensity and volume, soon what was almost unnoticed was strong enough to shake the mat she was sleeping on. The air in the tent was fowl and burned Tsukiri's nose waking her up much to her displeasure. Tsukiri carefully fayed Nurue's tail aside as to not wake her and thought for a moment for a solution. Against her desire to not open the door and possibly let the fog in the air quality was dire enough to overpower her wants.

PPPHhhhhrrRRrttTTTTttt~

Nurue let one rip right onto Tsukiri's face and there was no more debating. She was coughing and gagging as she flopped over Nurue's tail trying to reach the zipper for the door. Try as she did it only seemed to get farther away from her as Nurue continued to fill the tent with fowl fumes. Tsukiri was fading fast and made one last push.

BBBBBBbbbBBRRrrRRRRrRRTTtTTtTTTTtTHHhhHHhHhhh~

The pressure on Nurue's tail caused her to have a massive outburst. Tsukiri's swipe for the zipper just missed once more as the tent expanded from the added stress. As her hand thudded to the ground she was out of commission and gave in to the sickening smell. In contrast Nurue was feeling quite well as the pain in her stomach was diminishing and she remained unbothered by her own scent.

As morning came Nurue awoke her tail still pinned down by a lifeless Tsukiri and the tent looking very different than it had last night. The stench made her eyes water, and she held her nose, quickly she

unzipped the tent door causing it to collapse inward. The supports had been blown out by the inflating and with the noxious air escaping nothing was holding it up anymore. Nurue laid Tsukiri outside as she packed up and prepared to leave, just as she was finishing up Tsukiri came too and couldn't recall anything that had happened overnight but noticed her nose was strangely sensitive. They ate some more cheese and crackers for breakfast and headed back home, Nurue having offloaded two full meals worth of food carried Tsukiri halfway back to ease that trip for her.

As they escaped the fog and returned to familiar territory Tsukiri couldn't help but still hold Nurue's tail like a safety blanket. It wasn't too long before they had returned home and were greeted by Kimo in casual clothes and looked exhausted.

"Welcome back."

"we're home."

They said out of order.