

# Taste test

Darren hated helmets. His hair was carefully combed every day to make his faux-careless mane of gold, and the helmet on his head now flattened it.

He found solace in the fact that, even with his hair ruined, he was still the hottest dude in a 100 mile radius. He had the prettiest girlfriend, too.

“Isn’t this exciting?” Karen mewled while stamping her feet in the snow by his side. He vaguely frowned at the attitude and let out a noncommittal “Sure is.” The two of them were waiting in line in front of the region’s most beloved tourist attraction—Darren usually wouldn’t bother with something so futile, but this one was special.

At the end of the long queue where everyone was fully decked out in helmets and climbing equipment, the main attraction sat with a dumb dopy grin on his massive face. Everett was famous across the planet for his miraculous size-shifting abilities; he could be rich, worshipped like a god... damn, with his size advantage, Everett could conquer the world and BE a god! But no, he chose to let tourists climb him for family-friendly fun. As if to taunt Darren, a billboard on the side of the queue assured would-be climbers that every dollar earned by scaling Mount Everett was donated to charity

Wasted. The word was making circles in Darren’s mind. Wasted, wasted, wasted! Everett’s powers were wasted on that stupid goody two shoes!

“Next!”

Darren and Karen stepped forward toward the brunette boy who was handing out instructions. He pointed towards the mapped path up the sitting behemoth, starting on the side of his thigh, climbing into his lap then straight up his puffy winter coat until they reached his scarf, which sloped down along his back to offer a makeshift slip and slide back to the ground.

“Can we explore off the marked path?” Karen asked, unexpectedly—Darren never thought highly of his girlfriend’s intellect, but that question had been burning in his mind too.

The tourist guide actually *blushed* and answered with a laugh. “Some of us get to, er, see

what the big guy has to offer, but that's better kept private." He got a tad more serious. "Seriously, don't do that. Everything left on Everett when he shrinks down shrinks with him. Trust me, you don't want to slip and end up stuck in a fold of fabric or something."

That sentence accompanied Darren as he and his girlfriend started climbing Everett's pants. As soon as they reached the lap... Darren's eyes darted back and forth, ensuring nobody was looking, and he pulled Karen by the wrist right off the marked path. She weakly protested, but Darren's lips shut her right up as he forced himself on her, making out feverishly in the baking heat of the giant.

"W-wait, we could be seen here," he panted, breaking the kiss. He indicated the entrance of Everett's pant pocket with his head. "In there. Quick."

As soon as they both disappeared into the pocket—it was large enough to hide a house, they could easily remain in there undetected, Darren realized in delight—clothes started flying.

\* \* \*

Three hours later, the two of them were exhausted, simply cuddling and enjoying this nonsensical situation, huddled in the pocket of a giant man. At least, Karen was enjoying it—Darren was simply waiting for his clutz of a girlfriend to fall asleep.

With the sleep aids he slipped in her tea earlier that day, he knew her slumber would be deep. The first snores coming out of her were loud and obnoxious, only cementing Darren's determination. He couldn't stay forever with a woman who snored like a man, after all.

Carefully, he slipped away from her grip and put on his clothes, helmet, backpack... and he filled the bag with her clothes. Even if she woke up, she wouldn't dare to come out buck naked.

Darren had a brilliant smile on his face when he completed the climbing course, reached Everett's face and slid back to the ground. He couldn't wipe it off his face for the next couple hours, which he spent lying in wait just far enough from the titan to not draw any attention to himself.

Dusk was casting an orange glow on the snow when the towering figure suddenly

disappeared, shrinking down to a regular human size. Darren hurried towards him, wearing his friendliest mask.

“Everett! Ev, buddy!” He intonated, offering his hand to the white-haired man. “I completed your course today, it was awesome! I just wanted to thank you for offering this!”

Everett seemed in equal parts surprised and delighted. He eagerly gave Darren a handshake. “Darren, right? I saw you around town. We should hang out, sometimes! I’m really glad you like my silly little thing! Thank you~”

Darren’s smile crisped just a tad at the notion that anyone could look at him and dare to overlook him, but his mind was on more important matters. Pickpocketing was a skill Darren became exceptional at—Everett didn’t notice anything when Darren’s fingers slipped in his pocket and came out clenching his tiny girlfriend.

“Yeah, I’d love that,” he replied while he shoved the now-wriggling Karen into his own pocket. “We oughta.”

The two parted quickly; Darren waited until he was just out of view before running at full speed towards his home, his heart racing. Feeling the struggling, helpless form of a tiny person against his fingertips poured genuine, heartfelt joy into Darren’s soul.

He ran through the front door and locked himself in his bedroom. Darren plunged his hand in his pocket, squeezed his fingers around Karen and pulled her out like a kid on Christmas day. He opened his hand, palm up, and the shrunken woman immediately scrambled to cover her chest and crumple herself in the center of his palm.

For Karen, the experience was much less exhilarating and much more confusing. Her mind was still foggy from the drugs, and she could hardly believe what she was seeing. Seeing a giant Everett around was a daily occurrence, but the giant before her was Darren—her Darren—someone who should never be that large. Particularly unsettling were her now-giant boyfriend’s eyes. They stared at her with an intensity that Karen had never felt even when they were having sex.

“Darren...?” She pleaded. “What’s happening?” Karen’s question went unanswered, but Darren’s smile grew. “... Babe...?”

Without answering, the titanic blond hovered his other hand above the palm and, with

frightening speed, it struck. The index finger bulldozed through Karen's defenses, forcefully moving her pin-sized arms out of the way and pushing her on her back until the fingertip was squeezing her torso against the palm. Darren's skin was impeccable and routinely moisturized, so Karen experienced the paradox of being smothered by what felt like two memory foam mattresses compressing her with great force.

Karen was shrieking, not just in pain and fear, but also a primal horror that accompanied the movements of the finger on her body. It was moving, exploring her, playing with her... It felt like Darren was robbing her of something fundamental she did not even know existed. Her humanity.

Each "No!" that Darren wilfully ignored was like a stake driven in Karen's soul. No amount of struggling could push back against the overpowered fingers, which started to pick up the tiny girl and roll her, feeling her all over.

Karen was ugly crying when Darren finally dropped her. She did not land in his upturned palm as she expected, but on top of a massive desk. She would have ran, but there was no escape. The only way out was... down. A fall that would kill her without doubt. So, she stood there, shivering and sobbing, while her giant boyfriend retrieved a sheet of printer paper and a clinking box out of a drawer.

"Step on it," Darren ordered, pointing at the paper he placed next to the shrunken girl. She hesitated but complied.

Karen's eyes had been fixated on the box, terrified of what might come out.

"Awww, don't be like that. There's no need to be scared," Darren said. "It's just a little surprise for you~" The blond's tone was more like his usual self, friendly if not jovial, and for a moment Karen contemplated the idea that this whole thing might have been a terrible misunderstanding. Darren would take a nice, pretty gift for her out of that box and he would grow her back to normal very soon... right?

The box, as she realized as soon as it clanked open, contained sewing supplies.

"Wh-what are you doing...? Babe, please, don't..." Karen whimpered, but Darren was not even paying any attention to her. He was humming a tune to himself, looking very content.

She took a few steps backwards at the sight of the very sharp needles and pins in the box,

which all looked like metal stakes and spears from her new vantage point. Darren sprang into action suddenly, he raised a hand in the air and immediately slammed down a fist that barely missed the shrunken gal. The impact sent her careening with an unmodulated scream of terror. The punch was so strong that pencil holders and trinkets across the desktop all shifted loudly, showing that Karen would not have survived being underneath.

“Stay on the paper.”

Karen gave exaggerated nods, not willing to anger her captor again. Darren went back to his sewing supplies and retrieved a spool of thin pink thread. Karen obeyed, horrified, as the giant told her to extend her arms above her head. All of her instincts screamed to duck out when Darren started wrapping the pink thread around her conjoined arms, but what escape route did she have? The thunder clap of that fist meeting wood was still vibrating through her tiny bones.

Darren made a knot and pulled it tight, to the point Karen cried out. “Please stop! It hurts!” The thread was like rope to her, and she could feel the burn of it all over her wrists and forearms.

“It does?” Darren froze and looked at Karen with a vaguely surprised expression. “Uh...” He tightened the knot with a forceful tug, forcing Karen’s shoulders in an unnatural angle to allow the tight grip painfully forcing her arms together. She collapsed—she never really experienced real pain before, but that would change very fast.

While she wasn’t paying attention, Darren’s hand approached, holding a metal needle. Darren was swift and precise, the needle pierced across her thigh in one decisive stab. She screamed. Blood poured freely as soon as the needle was pulled out, and Karen was left with no option but to crawl, try to get away by any means.

“Stay on the paper.”

Darren simply grabbed the end of the pink thread and tugged, painfully dragging the tiny girl across a couple inches and leaving a trail of blood behind her.

“I don’t want messy stains all over the place. Where are your manners?”

Karen wanted to run, even if it tore off her arms, but Darren wouldn’t let her have such freedom. He effortlessly took her off the “ground” entirely by pulling on the thread some

more. When the full weight of her body rested on what was essentially a noose tightly wrapped around her wrists, Karen started to understand why humans are never meant to be *dangling* from anything.

It felt like a fire burning all of her nerves across her arms and into her shoulders, where her body was overexerted to the point of breaking. She could hear as much as she could feel her arms protesting, but any wriggle of her lower body only increased the pressure on her arms. Her wrists might never recover, she thought in a bout of anxiety for the upcoming hospital stay. She would *surely* get out of there and need a hospital, of course?

Her faith in her own survival waned as she kept ascending higher and higher, now overlooking the room from a height above Darren's head. She had been kept perfectly aligned with the paper below, where the blood from her wound was pooling, but now she was moved horizontally. A single look below told her why.

Opening right underneath her like the gates of hell was Darren's mouth. The tongue snaked out, curled expectantly. Karen paled, and she knew. She knew there would not be a hospital. There would never be a hospital ever again.

Two tree trunk-like fingers surrounded Karen and squeezed with unexpected strength. The woman could do nothing but take waves upon waves of pain and fear. The squeeze did not last long—just like squeezing a bag of juice to make the contents squirt out, Darren had pressed the blood out of her. She could see it seeping and dissipating into the monster's drool.

Darren briefly closed his mouth, swished it around in his mouth and hum with satisfaction.

"...why.... why..." Karen was reduced to quiet sobbing, but Darren seemed to hear her nonetheless.

"Taste test. I wouldn't put just anything in my mouth." Darren talked so matter of factly that Karen barely realized that he didn't answer her question. She did not need to ask whether she passed said taste test. The mouth below her opened wider than before, and it was salivating.

Salivating. In expectation of her taste.

There are parts of the brain, unused by humans for generations, that react to the sight of a

gaping maw. A predator eating you. You are prey, helpless, soon to be gone. It is inevitable. Someone greater than you chose you to die, and you must accept it. She was frozen in shock as she was lowered into the mouth and onto the tongue.

The lips closed and darkness engulfed everything. The sloshing saliva muffled other noises, and she could feel the damp, sauna-warm, minty air of the mouth drenching every bit of her that saliva didn't coat. Her tears were lost in the humidity.

Then the tongue started moving, pushing her like a rag doll. She had no strength left to fight back, so Darren freely suckled on her, smothering her between tongue and palate, just enjoying himself for a couple of minutes. When it slowed down, however, Karen realized she would rather keep being tormented in a mouth than... what awaited her below.

Saliva pooled, the tongue arched back and throat muscles contracted; nothing that the shrunken girl could do could impede the swallow. She was sucked into the black hole of Darren's gullet, traveled along his adam's apple, and hell truly started.

For Darren, it was a delightful moment, as easy as swallowing a pill, he did not even need water to help. The flavor was lovely, but it was the knowledge of what he did that truly made Darren enjoy the snack. The knowledge of what she was about the experience, and what she was about to become. Perhaps for the first time in their relationship, Darren felt genuine appreciation for what his girlfriend brought to the table.

Ex-girlfriend, he mentally corrected himself, and he laughed. A happy, almost childish belly laugh.

He got to his feet and ran a hand in his hair. He crumpled the paper covered in Karen's blood, along with the needle he used to stab her, and he headed out. He walked down the street to the communal bin and tossed the evidence in. He was walking back home when a man called his name from down the street.

"Darren! Darren? You're Darren, yes?" The man was jogging sloppily towards him. Darren felt a flash of rage, but when the man reached him, he was all smiles and offering his arm to support the winded man.

"I'm fine, I'm fine! I-I'm actually Karen's dad-" Darren's nostrils flared up and his look hardened. "-and she hasn't picked up her phone in hours." Of course, Darren had turned

off the phone, removed the pieces that linked him to it and tossed it in a river. "Have you heard from her?"

"Nope. I'm sorry sir, I haven't heard a thing."

"Oh..." The man seemed to deflate. "If you hear anything, let me know okay?"

Darren nodded and helped the man along with a sympathetic smile. As soon as the man was far enough, Darren turned his back on him and walked straight home.

He let out a burp, looked around and was glad to notice that nobody was there to witness it, then he chuckled. It tasted just like her on the way up too.

The perfect crime, again. Agatha Christie had it all wrong, and Darren was proud to have figured it out. All he had to do was to go home and act like normal. He would have to pretend to mourn, so that was slightly annoying. But there was a certain pleasure in hearing people mull over and over about his victims. It was voyeuristic, but thrilling.

"Who was that, darling?"

Darren was surprised to hear his mother calling out for him, but he took it in stride. He was a concerned boyfriend doing the right thing, after all. "Karen's dad. He doesn't know where she is."

His mother seemed uncomfortable. It was not the first mysterious disappearance in the neighbourhood. "Well, I hope this is nothing serious..."

"Don't worry mom. I'll text her, I'm sure she'll turn up soon!" Darren had no difficulty sounding optimistic, he was genuinely feeling exhilarated.

He went to his room and sent the texts he would have if he were really worried about his lover's disappearance. His best estimation of what might seem right to the police, at least.

But when he was alone in the deep silence of his room, he closed his eyes and he smiled sweetly at the gurgling sounds from his stomach.

[The end]