Power. It was all about power.

Man’s deep desire to rule, to dominate and to devour the weaker - both metaphorically and literally speaking. This primal need had existed within men ever since they had started walking on two legs. For thousands of years, they got to live out this destructive behavior without resistance. Nothing was stopping them. Every man was the king of his own world.

However, over time things changed. Slowly but steady civilizations formed, forcing mankind to gradually adapt to an equal society where these desires were seen as crimes, punished by imprisonment or death. Slowly these primitive lusts would disappear from the everyday world and the ones who would give in to them would become outcasts of the society we built.

But these dark desires remain. Man's lust for power still lay deep within them. Secrets they would hide from everyone and bring to their grave. It was this desire of power that Seth was catering to.

He looked at the man sitting across the table. He couldn’t be more than 30 years old but the wrinkles in his face and bags under his tired eyes spoke enough of his life situation. Another victim of the boring 9 to 5 life, Seth thought. The man had probably been one of the hotter jocks in his fraternity years, but the curse of having kids early had replaced his abs with a beer gut and already put a few silver strands in his hair. Seth was familiar with this kind of client: the stressed-out father with more kids than he could handle, who had a crappy sex life with his wife, and who was working a hectic but underappreciated office job. Seth was fascinated by these customers; it was intriguing how their tired faces could hide such lust for power and domination.

“So,” The man said. “You got them?”

“Sure do.” Seth said and grabbed a box from the floor next to his chair. Placing it on the table between them, he opened it to give his client a glance.

The man’s lips cracked into a sinister smile as he eyed the group of horrified shrunken men inside the box. Every one of them had athletic physiques without any extra ounces of fat on their lean bodies. “Wow. They’re all in great shape.” He remarked. “Last time only three of four of them were. Man, the fat ones are hard to get down and they don’t have the energy to struggle much.”

Seth nodded. “With their physique they are guaranteed to tickle your gut.”

The father of three looked down at the nervous bunch below and he was almost drooling already. “I’ll take them. Boy, I’ll take them.” He hastily pulled out a thick bundle of dollar bills and started counting out the usual price.

“Hold it.” Seth interrupted. “This is a quality product. I want 300 bucks extra.”

The man looked at him irritated. “But the price is always…!”

“For the normal bunch, yes.” Seth interrupted. “If you want your usual order we got that too. But like you said, only a couple of them will be in this good shape. Here you have a complete bunch of athletes who will push themselves to their limit inside your gut. Wouldn’t that be nice?” Seth could hear the father’s breathing turn aroused by his words and he knew he was pushing the right buttons.

The client was silent for a few moments before giving his decision. “Fine. I’ll take them – If I get to try a sample.”

Seth raised a brow. “A sample?”

“I want to try one from the bunch. And I want him to be replaced by a new one. I gotta know if they’re good if I’m gonna pay that much.”

Seth thought. It felt like a waste to just give one away – usually he only did that to get new customers on the hook – yet this man was one of the better customers. He had lost count on how many tinies he had sold to him; that beer gut pushing up against the table had probably digested around 50 people by now. Seth sighed. “Why not. Help yourself out.” He gesticulated at the box.

The client grinned. “Thanks man.” He investigated the box and hovered his mighty hand above it like a claw machine ready to claim its price. The men inside were frantically running around to find any place to hide despite no such place existing. The hand descended and scooped one little guy up. The chosen one reacted quickly and was just about to jump off the palm when the client’s other hand came behind him and grabbed him in a secure grip. “Whoah, whoah! Easy fella. Don’t want you to hurt yourself.” The man said in a caring, father-like tone. He shifted his grip to hold the struggling man upside down and brought him close to his face. “Though - I can’t promise my belly will be as gentle with you.” He licked his lips before parting them and lowering the shouting guy inside. The morsel’s despaired voice was muted as the lips closed in around his waist, leaving only a pair of kicking legs outside. The man slurped them in like spaghetti and moaned as he savored the struggling snack. Seth watched his client’s cheeks bulge from side to side as he played with his food, and he even got to see the tiny man’s face one last time as he managed to push himself halfway out between the lips. The poor guy screamed for his help, but Seth just shrugged at him. He registered the tiny, agonized face before he was sucked back inside the mouth, never to be seen again. The client leaned his head back and swallowed with a squelching gulp. “Aaah.” He exhaled. “Wow. That guy is a fighter.” He bumped the spot on his chest where he could feel the descending lump. His hand slid further down until it landed on top of his protruding belly. “There we go.” He moaned while rubbing his gut and he seemed to be zoning out. Seth gave the father a moment to relish in the sensations. He used the time to replace the vacancy in the box with an equally fit guy from another stash. “So…” Seth said as he sat down again. “What will it be?”

The man blinked. He looked down and realized he subconsciously had pulled his shirt up to rub his hairy belly. “Oh, um.” He pulled it down again and cleared his throat. “Fuck. I’ll take them. I want them all.” He counted his money again and added the extra fee. Slamming it down next to the box he pulled it up to him and glanced down at the crowd inside with a wide grin. “Your friend was delicious, guys. He’s putting up a really good fight in my stomach.” The men inside trembled at his words. “Now, I paid good money for you so I expect you all to be just as good as him.” He burped into the box before sealing the lid and trapping the foul smell with the people inside.

Seth smirked at the father’s malice and picked up the money. He counted it quickly before putting it in his pocket. “Then we’re done here.”

The client stood up and grabbed the box. “Nice to make business again. Guess we’ll meet again soon; with my appetite I know I’ll gobble these up pretty fast.” Seth just nodded in response. The man turned away, paused, then turned back to Seth again. “Um. Is there a bathroom I can use? Gotta take a leak.”

Seth’s eyes rolled down his client’s body down to his crotch. The swollen bulge tenting his pants couldn’t be more obvious. “Down the hall. To the left of the exit.”

Seth was tidying up the basement after the meeting when Frank’s door unlocked behind him and his boss stepped into the room. Frank was looking tired. He was drinking from a beer bottle and he sat down by the table with a heavy sigh. The chair creaked a little under his weight.

“You good, boss?” Seth asked, stacking the last box on in the corner.

“It’s nothing. Rough night, that’s all.” Frank responded. “Hey, throw me one will ya.” He gesticulated at the boxes. Seth opened one and fished a little guy out. “Go on, have one yourself.” Frank offered but Seth shook his head.

“I’m good. Can’t be running around at work with a boner.” He chuckled as he handed Frank the man and sat down across from his boss.

“You horny fucker.” Frank smirked before popping the little man into his mouth. “So, how did it go? Did he buy them?” He asked while swirling his snack around.

“Bought the whole bunch.” Seth grinned.

“Good, good.” Frank said. He seemed unmoved, as if he didn’t care about the financial bonus they had made. Small desperate cries escaped could still be heard from inside his mouth.

Seth shrugged. “So should we give other clients the same deal? We could make a fucking ton of cash.”

Frank gave him an intense, cold stare. He kept his eyes locked on Seth as he brought his beer to his lips and took a couple of gulps, swallowing the beer and the tiny guy along with it. “The supply isn’t always that high, Seth.” Frank said as his mouth cleared. “Besides, the higher quality product we sell the more they want from us. Just like drugs, the effect only lasts for a certain amount of time and soon they want stronger stuff. We can’t provide them with wrestlers and acrobats all the time you know.”

Seth nodded. “I guess.”

“This business is tough." Frank sighed and rubbed his tired eyes. "We have more customers than ever but it’s getting harder to find supply.”

“You’re doing a good job, boss.” Seth said. Truth to be told, he had zero insight into Frank’s work. He had no idea who the tiny men were or how they got shrunken. Either it was Frank shrinking them, or maybe someone else was shrinking them for him. Seth himself was just a dealer, the link between Frank and his customers. Frank had told him no one was supposed to know about that process except him. Seth, of course, was curious but he feared that if he did find out he would be the next one to be shrunk and eaten.

Seth’s phone buzzed in his pocket. He pulled it out and checked the display, expecting a message from a customer about a new order. A text message it was, but it was not from a customer. Seth’s heart skipped a beat as he saw his name. Philip. He tried to maintain his indifferent expression in front of Frank although his heart now was racing. “Hii :) How are you?” Was all his message said yet it was enough for Seth to feel a burst of emotions inside.

“Who is it?” Frank, who had been watching him check his phone, asked.

Seth gulped. He knew he had to give Frank a clear answer or he would become suspicious. Yet, his boss couldn’t find out he was seeing someone. “Just that David Kieran guy.” He lied. “You know the CEO of that big software company.” It sounded true enough. David was a real client and Seth knew he would contact him anytime soon about a new batch anyway.

“Y’know I really don’t like that guy.” Frank said. “Just a spoiled brat who inherited his father’s company. He doesn’t know anything about honest work. That fucker should be shrunk and eaten himself. I’d gladly do the world the favor.”

“Not if I eat him first.” Seth responded. They both chuckled. Seth was relieved his lie had worked. The secrecy of this job meant no relationships. Ever. Too many risks involved. That was what ultimately had led to his old colleague’s disappearance. Seth knew he wanted to leave the business and escape somewhere together with his secret girlfriend. Frank must have found out about this plan too, because suddenly both he and the girlfriend had disappeared. Although Frank never said anything about it, Seth was fully certain he had shrunk and disposed of them like he did with all the shrunken people he got his hands on. Seth moved his gaze down his boss’ body, past his beefy pecs down to the contours of his abs pushing against his tank top. It was haunting to think how a friend of his – someone he had worked with, laughed with – had been digested in there. He shuddered. As much as he admired and fantasized about Frank’s muscular body, he was terrified of the thought of ending up inside it.

Frank chugged the remainder of his drink and slammed the empty bottle down on the table. He let out a wet belch and patted his beer - and human - filled gut. “Well, time to get back to work.” He said, stood up and headed for his private door. On the way he grabbed a box of tinies from a shelf. “Cross this one from the list will ya. I deserve more than one treat.” He said before heading inside his secret room.

Seth sighed. “Will do boss. Will do.”

As Seth was left alone, he picked up his phone again. He opened Philip’s message and stared at it for a couple of seconds. He felt his heart rate speeding up again. A couple of days had passed since their first encounter, but things had been silent between them two. Secretly, Seth wished Philip wasn’t into him after all and had moved on to a new guy. It was heartbreaking to think, but he knew that it would be for the best if they didn’t continue seeing each other. It was a question between life and death.

He opened Philip’s contact profile on his phone. He had no profile picture of him, but he didn’t need one to remember his beautiful face. Just the thought of it made him feel warm inside. He didn’t want to pull Philip into his world. He didn’t deserve a life full of secrets and lurking danger. Seth hovered his thumb over the “block contact” button. All it took was one press and Philip would be safe from it all. He felt himself tremble. Images of Philip flashed in his mind and he couldn’t move his thumb. He couldn’t press the button. Fuck. He couldn’t do it. He just couldn’t. “I’m such a selfish idiot.” He thought before clicking back to the message. He was fully aware of the new life that was awaiting both him and Philip, but know what? It was worth it. He loved him.

His fingers were obeying him again as he typed out his response. “Hey sexy. I’m good, you?”

A few hours passed. Seth was standing in his bathroom, shirtless in front of the mirror. Half his face was covered in white gel and he was carefully shaving his stubble. Usually he wasn’t that careful, but he wanted to look good tonight. He finished up and washed his face. He ran some gel through his freshly washed hair, applied deodorant under his arms and finished off with a couple of sprays of cologne.

Punk music was blasting from the speakers in the living room to get him into the right mood, and the noise was enough to block out the small cries coming from the box standing on the edge of the sink next to him. The tiny men inside were forced to watch the spectacular but horrifying view of him and his bare torso from below, all knowing that one of them soon would find himself inside that tight stomach of his. The giant hadn’t bothered about them while getting prepared but as his grey eyes fell upon them, they knew it was time.

Seth reached down, not for the tinies, but for a small jar next to the box. He opened the lid and poured two pills out into his hand. He popped them into his mouth and swallowed them dry, grimacing slightly at the taste. As he felt them pop into his belly his attention moved to the tiny inhabitants of the box. “There we go boys.” He told them. “Just took a pill to postpone my digestion for one or two hours or so. Whoever’s coming with me tonight will be staying around for a while.” He smirked. “So who will it be? Any volunteers?” The tiny boys were huddled up in a corner, all even more terrified at the idea of being inside his belly for such a long time. Seth just chuckled. “Oh well. Guess I gotta choose someone myself.” He reached into the box and grabbed a random guy from the group. It proved to be a good pick; his athletic body looked strong and durable enough. Seth licked his lips in front of his squirming form, anticipating both his taste and struggles. “Now, just so you know,” He told his soon-to-be snack, “I’m not having sex until a bit later so could you like, you know, save your struggles until then? I think you’ll notice when to start.” He winked at the devastated little man and opened his mouth to throw him inside, but he paused. “Oh, one more thing. We’re having dinner first so could you try to not drown in the food? I’ll try to eat small bites and not drink too much. Okay?” In all the tiny man’s horror he looked amusingly confused at the request and Seth couldn’t help but giggle at him. “Oh well, just do your best in there. Here goes!” He opened his mouth, extended his tongue and dropped the screaming man inside. He spent a few seconds savoring his little body. The man’s little punches on his tongue proved those muscles sure had some strength in them. Not as powerful as my tongue though, Seth thought, as he pushed the screaming snack back into his esophagus and swallowed. He felt the lump squirm all the way down inside him before getting sucked into his stomach. He looked at his belly in the mirror reflection and rubbed it with a hand. “Enjoy your stay little man.” He said, smirking. He felt the tiny guy start punching on the walls in there, small aggressive pokes that did zero harm. “Hey didn’t I tell you to wait? Oh well. Just save some of it for later will ya.” He shrugged and gave his stomach a nice pat. He hid the box of tinies in the secret hiding place under the cabinet and put on his button-up shirt that he even had ironed for this occasion. Looking at himself in the mirror one last time he had to admit he looked really sexy. “Showtime.”

The confidence Seth had expressed back home seemed to have vanished as he found himself in front of Philip's door. “Philip Sauveterre” the sign on it said. His full name sounded just as fancy as this apartment complex was. Just the hallway that he was standing in was decorated with carpets, curtains and even flowerpots. A bit different from Seth’s own hallways that was mainly… Concrete. He looked at the doorbell nervously. His heart was racing and he felt the butterflies in his stomach. Or maybe it was just the tiny guy still struggling for escape. He brought a shaky hand to the button and pressed it. He could hear the serene signal inside. Then, footsteps approaching. His heart skipped a beat as the door opened. There he was. The most beautiful person he had seen. With his hazel eyes and curly golden hair.

“Bonsoir.” Philip said with a beaming smile.

“Bon… Uh.” Seth mumbled, having no French skills whatsoever. “Evening.”

Philip giggled. Without a word the two men stepped up to each other and locked lips in a long kiss. Seth didn’t know for how long they stood there in the hallway, but he loved every second of it. He could feel the scent of delicious food inside the apartment; Philip had promised him French cooking. His stomach growled at the lovely aroma. The tiny guy inside it must have been scared petrified at the sound as his struggles vanished for a little while. But Seth’s belly remained empty of stomach juices. The fun was yet to start.

Giving him a wide smile, Philip grabbed Seth’s hand and pulled him into his apartment. The two men were going to have a wonderful night. And the third man, the one inside Seth's belly, was going to have a pretty terrible night.