

Never once had James wanted to impress. In spite of his projecting voice and imposing presence, the broadness of his grin and the intensity with which he fixed every man, woman and child he met, the preacher did not want to impress.

Until he did.

He spoke the words from the heart, of Jesus braving the deserts and the temptations that he found there. No longer did he need the scripture laid open for him on the lectern, for he knew how the stories were printed. He knew them personally.

It came as a surprise, then, when James faltered. The congregation felt the disturbance wholly and turned their heads to track the outlier. Standing at the back of the church, hands folded between the hills that fed into her hips, was a dark-haired woman with frightfully pale skin. Face obscured by the round sunglasses and wide-brimmed summer hat she wore, the eye drew southward, across her plump lips to the bare shoulders and the dress that trailed after her curves in the clean marks of an ink pen.

Mirthlessly, she drank in the sight of the stained glass windows and the high, vaulted ceilings with the slightest movement of her head. The walls had been whitewashed with pristine attention against the darkened stones jutting out in archways and pillars. Spans of timber reached from one side of the room to the other in crisscrossing webs that were, in all likelihood, tangled with the industries of a thousand spiders. Taking one of the seats near the very back of the room, she settled patiently.

Though the spotlight had very briefly shifted away, James wrangled it back with a large, full-bodied movement and a roar that felt weak in his own heart. "The significance has been lost. Our world *is* temptation, from the moment we open our eyes to the time we return to dust. They know how to exploit it; to commandeer you and corrupt; to turn little promises into a wine on which *they* feast, as your blood becomes ash. Remain faithful, for in His light all will be laid bare, and the demons at your door will bay no more."

A collective 'Amen' broke against the boisterous wind of his word. They dwelt in the silence before pulling back, and filing back into the bright sun of early summer. Though James searched the throng, he couldn't find the woman who had caught him off guard, and he spoke a silent prayer as he nervously fingered the cross wound around his throat. A sheen of perspiration coated his forehead, and he daubed at it with his handkerchief. The bright heat of the ancillary floodlights had been to blame.

Hours ticked past. Long after the celebrants had departed, James remained. In a quiet annex centuries younger than the impressively maintained temple, he sat alone with his thoughts. The sun had set. Beyond the scant thrum of cars beaming down the leaf-shrouded streets slightly too quickly, there was peace. It stifled.

A short sharp buzz cut him, if only for a moment, and he seized the phone reluctantly from the table. Stinging light impaled his retina before he could adjust. The cold artificial white was so unpleasant when, for as long as he cared to remember, he had bathed himself in candleflame.

The message was curt. Neither polite nor rude, immediately identifiable as his Catherine. Now, even something as simple as her asking his whereabouts - for the children's peace of mind, no less - wormed beneath his skin and made him cringe. He shut off the screen, replacing it carefully back. Then he saw the shadow.

"Lord Jesus-" he gasped with a jolt. There remained no air in his lungs to continue. The dark pulled at the woman's face in an obfuscating smile. He could make out her eyes clearly, but nothing else. He wasn't sure why.

"It's very late, Father," she said, motionless. "Do you not have kinder places to be than skulking in the dust?"

The preacher found himself, standing with a less than confident posture and pushing back his chair noisily against the flagstones. "I didn't hear you enter, my daughter! I'm... I have things to attend to." The lies came like treacle. "Is there something I can help you with?"

The woman took a flowing step forwards, seeming to carry the darkness around her shoulders like a cloak, and lay her hands on the brittle wood of the opposing seat. "Perhaps."

James moistened his lips, narrowing his eyes. With the scare passed, he believed his pulse would slow. It did not. "You... came in earlier," he said, nodding to himself, "I never forget a face."

She mumbled, "I do." Looking about the small room with hardened eyes, she seemed troubled.

*Not troubled*, James corrected himself, *irritated*. But as his internal monologue scratched those words against his frontal lobe, she seemed immediately to liven. The intensity she held him with was intoxicating.

"Is it normal for a priest to spend his evenings drinking alone in the pulpit?"

James hesitated. "This isn't the pulpit..."

Shaking her head, letting her hair fall loose to frame her tender cheeks in silky black curls, she slipped into the seat with a movement elegant enough to have been performed as a dance. She leaned forwards, elbows supporting her chin, with fixated eyes lingering half-closed upon him.

An unpleasant shimmer wracked his nerves. Images flooded forth as if injected by some higher power, forcing him to peer beyond the worlds and feel what she was. A creature of indeterminate age or form inhabited the beautiful shell of flesh, hungering and bloody, and wrapped around herself over and over again, thick enough to blot out the sun. No motion. No fight. They watched each other in the encroaching gloom, dying flames threatening to drown him. When blades like thick tentacles lashed at him, he closed his eyes and felt the cross burn beneath his shirt, sparking gold that slashed back, and forced her to retreat.

When he looked at her once more, nothing had changed. Her smile had faltered and her eyes seemed incredulous, but she was still the same image of unattainable allure. "You can see me."

He swallowed, scratching the back of his hand. "I-I saw *something*. My child-"

"Raven," she said. "Please call me Raven."

In spite of the trepidation, he pressed forwards, meeting her halfway. "There's nothing for you here." His voice was soft, with the slightest rumble of the late evening. "Go back where you came from."

She bit her lip, brow furrowing. The light seemed to sting in her eyes. "I'm *trying*." A ragged breath inflated her as she stood, scraping the old chair unpleasantly against the cold flagstones. She turned to leave and he watched, the tight wrap of her dress teasing with a subtle crease where her hips swelled.

Then he stood too, "R-Raven..."

She looked over her shoulder at him like a child who'd been slapped on the wrist.

"Come back tomorrow; listen to the sermon, be present... No one is truly damned, my dear." And as she flooded back into the shadows he collapsed into his chair, alone once more.

It was strange to him when, as he busied around the altar and made preparations for the coming ceremony, he felt at ease. Though she appeared among the pews without warning, her presence slicing him like an unseen blade, he wasn't afraid. Somehow, he recognised her before his earthly senses gave warning.

"You came," he said, barely looking. She was fair plainer today, modestly dressed in a simple skirt and tights. The radiant heat of her soul, he surmised, was from where his interest stemmed.

"I did," she said quietly, hands folded in front of her. Her lips seemed dry and, now lost within the majesty of the open building, she looked so small and delicate. A noise behind her caught their attention. As the first few worshippers filtered through the atrium, talking quietly among themselves, she slipped towards the darkened corner.

James considered. "Raven," he said, smiling, "come here." It thrilled when, seemingly reluctant though she was, she came forwards to stand before him. At his direction, she sat as directed in the frontmost pew, joined by a small family of a mother and two children.

Distracting though she was, the preacher was practised. He delivered his words with the professionalism of any politician, and with the power of a general. Raven sensed the love in his words; beyond dogma lay a genuine desire to do good, and he smiled subtly when the tendrils of her hunger softened and shrank.

"My daughter," he said to her finally, "would you like to help me?"

The terror on her face was a portrait. She stood regardless, suddenly wishing she had something over her shoulders. At his bidding, she took a wafer, letting it disappear inside her before sipping at the wine he offered. When she went to sit, though, he shook his head and pressed the two chalices into her hands.

Reluctant servant of the faith, she nodded with a shallow smile at each face that came before her, sipped the blood and ate the flesh, before refinding their pew. When all had finished, she reverently curtsied and sat back next to the excitable girl who wanted eagerly to talk to Father James' helper. The sight welled within him, the demoness crushed with the weight of Raven's humanity, even if only briefly.

Afternoon came once more. The parishioners gave their thanks and their prayers and went back home. Soon only Raven remained in tilted stoicism. She watched him like a bird of prey. "Do you believe *everything* you say?" she asked, intently relaxed.

James continued to wipe the vessels in silence. His rings clinked occasionally against the cold metal and, eventually relenting, he slipped them into his pocket. "I have faith," he said finally, joining her. "I have faith that, even if the obstacle seems insurmountable, a little belief goes a long way."

Warm sunlight splintered in the painted windows, projecting images of the saints upon Raven's porcelain skin. She was like a doll, he thought, to be flavoured. Quiet though it was, the slow breaking of her exhalation soothed him dearly. Now *his* mouth was dry, being so close. He *felt* the corruption behind her flesh and it writhed, as if a single slice would cause it to rupture her and split against her potential for compassion. He flinched when she rested her head against his shoulder.

"I frighten you," she said in a small sigh.

Biting back his feelings, he eased his arm out from underneath her, trailing across her shoulder blades and the valley between before wrapping her in a light hug. The displacement of her head against his chest hurt. It ached in his heart. He closed his eyes.

And then she was gone. The great, heavy door in the back of the chapel thumped as it closed, and footsteps echoed between the walls. "Hello?"

The professional creaked back to life hatefully, "Yes, I'm here - hello?"

A woman around the age of thirty - who looked considerably older - followed him to a quiet alcove sequestered above the eastern transept. He made her a coffee and they sat abreast of one another. She was tearful. His mind was elsewhere.

She talked about her life at home, how she loved her children and brought them every Sunday. But in divulging, she admitted that it was to escape her loveless household if only for a few hours. A day, if she could somehow organise it that way. Her husband didn't *hate* her; at least, she didn't think so. Rather, it was a simple case that the man she fell in love with had tarnished over the decades, surrendering to his baser need for solitude. It was difficult to listen to.

At the end, once she'd bled herself, James sought for the words that he knew he needed to speak. He was practised, knowing the perfect timbre to deliver half-truths and empty promises. Though the woman smiled and laughed through her distress, he answered Raven's question a thousand times over.

*No. I don't.*

And he was glad when, after an hour and forty minutes, she picked herself up and thankfully departed. He considered everything he'd heard and groaned audibly. Sometimes there wasn't a solution. For some people, life was just shit. And then he laughed.

Hoisting himself up, he decided that, since the sun was no longer shining, he would take the opportunity to hide away once more and perhaps record his mounting thoughts in a journal, accompanied by a strong glass of poison.

Now the lightest rays of moonglow fell from the eastern sky, warping the colours with the faintest twist of blue. The stains stretched across the stone floor like a monochrome finger reaching between the pews, and it rested its tip on the beast in the centre of the church.

It had collapsed upon the woman from the front, pinning her under its weight with its spine arched. Grotesquely canine, James could hear the dripping from its jaws and the occasional slurp where its mouth wasn't totally sealed against her torn throat. His lips parted as he felt his eyes sting and his stomach churn. He wanted to run, but it sat like a leech between himself and the only exit. He fingered his cross and begged, closing his eyes. Upon reopening them, they had adjusted, and he made out the plain-looking skirt covering the monster's rump.

Raven slowly angled toward him. She looked somehow paler in the light, now a true corpse, but the lower portion of her face had smeared with the unsightly ink of her feast. Sitting back, resting against one of the old wooden pews, she stroked the engorged bulge in her stomach and watched the preacher approach.

"What have you done?" he asked shakily, barely above a whisper.

"Fed."

The tears stung all the more and he blinked them back, forming the sign of the cross on his body. Though exsanguinated beyond the point of survival, he could see the ragged pace of the woman's breath, like a dog after being run over. There was no understanding of what had happened to her, only pain, and the ken that, very soon, she would cease to be. Animalistic and terrible.

Raven licked her lips. She tilted her head. "Why?"

"You've *killed* someone, in *my* church!" he hissed. "I have to call the police, I-I have to..."

"To what?" she asked. "Tell them that a pretty vampire is lurking in Roundhay?" She shifted onto her knees, where her sloshy, slightly overhanging stomach made her appear pregnant, and she pulled his reluctant hands into her own. "Feel."

The hairs across his body stood on end. He was physically frightened by the monstrous appearance of the girl, and of the freezing chill that ran beneath her skin like dead blood. And yet, he did as she asked. He listened to her stomach gently process her fill, and watched as the heat melted from her core. It spread throughout, a wildfire warming and colouring her flesh with new, vibrant life. She was a corpse no more. Vivacity had returned.

He slipped his fingers from hers, crouching yet closer as they found her cheeks and caressed their softness. "Dear God... you're sublime."

More blood pooled where he touched her.

A sharp breath like meat dragged across a saw's teeth broke the reverence. The woman was still alive. James exhaled, trembling as reality returned. "I don't know what to do," he said simply. "The church can't protect you, Raven. Murder can't be forgiven."

"But it can be forgotten." The look she gave him had the defiance of a teen who trusted her sense far better than that of her guardian. She unbuttoned her shirt, removing and laying it on the nearest seat. She was wonderful to watch. Bearing down upon the dying woman's toes with her backside high in the air, she swallowed with the voracity of a serpent.

Sticky slurping rhymed with her moans. Aching forward, she slipped the woman's legs deep within her body. Below the damp, curving outline of her pussy, between her thighs, James could see the bulging of feet against her belly, which were soon swamped. They curled, wrapping inwards and disappeared in a mound of taut flesh. Her gut hung against the waistband of her skirt, digging in. It looked as if it would snap, or hurt her, or...

The priest swallowed. Rising up on his knees, he edged towards the feasting demon's bum, lost in the hypnotic swaying. Down below, a definite firmness begged to be recognized. He ignored it. He wanted to touch, as grotesque a thought as that was to him. He *needed* to embrace her from behind, tug free her attire from the horrid belly that would expand against it and crush his fingers into her soft-

Raven fell back, "*MmMmMMMmph~*" as her greedy guzzling satisfied some terrible part in her. The woman flopped forward, arms draping among the demon's hair and submerging yet deeper with each mushy swallow. And then, in the final moments, before her head disappeared within hungry lips that lapped and sucked, she looked directly at James. His mouth fell.

"Help me..." she croaked in a parched whisper, before vanishing in a vicious snap. Raven made short work of the arms protruding from her jaws, sending them down to pool in her stomach with the rest of her food. She'd digest quickly, in a basin filled with her own blood, before the vampire's expert body slushed her within its intestines to be absorbed.

Raven's shapely bottom plopped down upon her ankles, squidding against her boots as she left out a hefty, gluttonous sigh. Breathless, she swallowed an errant bubble of indigestion and wiped her lips with her thumb before putting that, too, across her tongue to suck it clean. "Done."

"Done?"

"Done," she chirped, angling over her shoulder to look in his direction. Grisly, organic mechanisms grumbled within her mass voluptuously, swirling liquid howls that worked as she twisted. Reorganising her stomach's contents with a few deep rubs and a heavy pat for good measure, she settled around her food comfortably. Her noisy bowel was a vessel for terror; it made his cock ache. "All gone."

"It's not that simple," he whispered, edging forwards. At first he hovered. Then, with her permission, he pressed his hands into her belly and squeezed. Desperately massaging every inch of her body, the gurgles of her stomach lining smothering her prey and the enrapturing groans of air cycling through her gut made him feel alive. Entranced, he

squished forward against her. He wanted to compress close enough to feel her heat, borrowed from the life she had devoured, and awkwardly sat upon her lap with her softening tummy squidging around him. She looked pained, but the flushed panting ushered him onwards, floating towards her glistening, spit-trailed lips.

They connected. In spite of all her predatory instincts, he dominated her and controlled as they kissed. One hand wound through the thickets of black hair shrouding her scalp, while the other trailed low to grace the smooth pale swelling her body gorged on. Then a rush passed from her mouth to his, "*HuwoOourph...*"

He pulled back, smacking his lips against the sweet taste of her belch, and hooked the hair away from her downcast eyes.

"Excuse me," she whispered.

"Shhhhhh." He nuzzled back in, losing himself in the heat of her neck as she laid her chin on his shoulder, and they remained like that until the woman she had eaten churned away into a thick soup, and glugged her way through Raven's guts.

When next they met, he greeted her delicate pirouette with a sort of hushed melancholy. Her flesh billowed against the straps of her dress like a precious cut of meat wrapped in twine. She called silently to be touched, but the purity of her plump exterior did nothing to quell the ugliness of its source. He abstained.

For a demon, she was remarkably good with the churchgoers. She would laugh with them, hand daintily pressed against the doughy orb of her midriff, with her long fingers stroking chords that rasped in satin. It was a pretty laugh, something free of falsity; genuine and rough, he felt he knew when she was enjoying herself. And for all the sadness she came to him with on that first night, it touched him deep that - in some small way - the stranger had found her home.

"It *is* about family," James said gently as he finished up his paperwork, "community."

She swung her legs and cocked her head. "Not the sermons?"

"You can find good advice anywhere. A man down the pub might tell you it's your duty to help your fellow. But when people come *here*, and listen and engage, they're experiencing something greater."

"So why don't you spend more time with *your* family?"

James looked up at her slowly, meeting her gaze. The innocence he always pictured her with in his mind's eye was absent. It usually was when he regarded the demon in the flesh. Raven was cold, from her skin to her heart, and the comment bit just where she wanted it to.

Hesitantly, he reached across his desk to place his hand upon her thigh where she sat elevated in front of him. Thick and smooth to the touch, they felt like pudding held together in her stockings. They bunched and folded in places as they spilled from her torso. James hated himself for the way her chub turned him on. He could see it in her eyes; were she able to turn mounds of corpses into just another few pounds of fat for her arse, she'd make it happen. It was diabolical, and he loved it.

She cleared her throat, snapping him from the reverie. His attention was almost immediately locked back on her fingers playing across her stomach though. "It's... complicated, Rey."

"You're always going on about how much you love your children, and respect Catherine, and want to be there for them." Though her voice rang with the lilt of a small girl, her face didn't quite match up. Maybe it was the way she reclined back, letting her hair

dangle and the engorged swell of her breast heave into stroking distance. "But then you spend your nights here, with me."

He felt it still, the rampant flailings of frigid shades in the dark. Could it all have been a front? The dire sweetness and affection she seemed to share were tainted at all times by her assaults on the plane beyond, and it was only by reaching down into his core and his belief that he was able to retain his nerve. He clung to the golden force erupting from his heart. He hated how they reminded him of prison bars but, without them, she would surely eat him alive.

"Would you prefer me to go home then?" he asked carefully. Rising, he sat himself next to her, where he could brush against her leg, and she could lean into him. It was pleasant; in spite of the terrible atrocities she had committed with her rapacious guts, it had lent her a plump, cuddly exterior he could touch for hours... *would* touch for hours.

She lay back on the desk, falling glacially with eyes fixed on mischief. A thornbush of hair billowed around her as two fingers moved to her lips, hesitated, before gliding to rest upon her chest. One of her thighs reared up as he followed suit, pressing into and displacing her belly while she hugged tightly into him. "Not right now," she said, eyes fluttering closed. "Please stay with me."

He hugged her tight. She squished beautifully against him, and the pleasant rasping of her breath coupled with the cutely erupting hiccups she'd been plagued with gave him purpose once more. He'd hold the demon as long as she needed because, in truth, he needed it too.

His heart could have ruptured when she finally pushed away, struggling back upright. "I need to go," she sighed, glancing up at the clock behind him.

"You won't stay with me?" he chuckled. The smile felt so wrong; it felt better when she matched it.

"No, silly, I need to go... there are no toilets here."

It caught in his throat, "O-Oh!" and he quickly set about helping the woman up. He fawned like only a father could, jumping when she winced and supporting her even after she had found her feet. She looked heavily pregnant, a grim thought when he knew it was all just fat.

But she went gracefully to the door, hanging there in the frame while she eyed him one last time. A hand came down across her bum, squishing into the cheek and making it jiggle. That spongy rump of hers looked heaven to sit upon, and as it disappeared from sight he imagined what it must be like to lay his head between. "Raven?" he called.

"Hmmm?" Still smiling. She'd been waiting.

"Don't... make a habit of eating the children, okay?" Even speaking the words made him ache. He adjusted his underwear.

Trailing her nails across the gloopy prison she had for an abdomen, tearing furrows into the generous flesh, she found where she gurgled most and squeezed. Up her throat to burst messily from her painted lips, "*guh~bwhoOUuUuurp!*" echoed like an opera note in a theatre. "Forgive me, Father," she giggled, before fading away for real.

It was like that for weeks. She became an assistant of sorts, flitting about before mass to make the preparations he ordained. He'd point her this way and that just so he could purvey her body from every angle. As time passed, she looked more and more cuddly, a spider fluffing up into a teddy bear. He'd bought her two sets of clothes by that point, and the seams were once again straining to contain her. Every touch of her flesh, whether accidental or flared by permission, made him grateful. Whenever they met, he begged God for some

reason to trace along her pillowy skin, laying upon her mushy belly or between thighs that could drown.

But with all that said, James found it increasingly difficult to make excuses. The girl gorged, fattening on every disappearance; once a waif with the stature of a fairy, Raven had grown like a fertility goddess with a billowing gut and hips taking up more than three times the space. She'd given up with bras, she told him one night as she sat upon his lap, prey squirming within her gluttony, in favour of supportively wrapping her heaving chest with a thick scarf she didn't have the heart to swallow.

"Father?" came a voice that obnoxiously tore him from Raven's buttocks. "I wanted to talk to you... about Kayleigh."

James didn't need to search far for the name. In his mind's eye, he saw the body buried within the coils of tight intestine and blubbery padding. "One moment, child," he said, before, "Raven?"

The demon ambled towards him, midriff slushing back and forth either side of her skirt's waistband as she continued planting down hymn books in the pews.

"Your weight is catching up to you," he said in a hushed voice, much too closely to her cheek to be professional. "I'm going to have to step out... but, we talked about the service last night."

"While I was eating, I remember."

He swallowed, clenching his fist to provoke his blood elsewhere. "I want you to cover for me. Just to begin with. You can do that?"

"Mhmm," she hummed, planting a kiss on his cheek like a moist rose petal before skipping off to excitedly prepare herself. How her flesh danced with her... At the very least, the congregation was small enough now that her nerves shouldn't be too intense.

"Shall we walk?" he asked the red-haired woman as they passed by the first arrivals. She nodded and they took out among the gravestones, basking in the warm early afternoon. Bees and butterflies blew between the flowers, nestling as deep as they could within the folds; they'd never know how one-sided their relationship was.

"I'm scared," she said as they sat on one of the benches, far outlooking the church. "The police said they're investigating, but what if it's already too late?" Her voice broke on the last syllable and opened the floodgates. She was immediately in his arms, embraced by the comforting aura of the preacher.

"There, there," he cooed, staring sightlessly down the winding path. "Your daughter's inquisitive, and ingenious, and..." *Good for digestion*, he thought. Swallowing, he said, "What I mean is, she's likely caught up in some obsession that she's chased a little too far. But I'm sure she'll reappear soon."

When he was silent, they both made out the frenzied screams down the hill.

Bursting forth into the chamber, his mouth dropped when he saw her. Laying on her back, head tilted playfully towards the huge doors, an aching ball of struggling meat swamped her mass as it rested on top of her. He could hear the choking, and the writhing through viscous stomach juices, prey struggling for survival in a pit designed to contain them. Raven belched like a pig, a meaty ripple that rumbled from within her, and which pushed her beyond the point of ecstasy. How she wasn't crushed beneath her own guts, he didn't know.

The woman beside him went to shriek, but in a flash decision he wrapped his hand around her mouth and sealed the exit. "I'm sorry, child," he said, wrestling her towards the demon. The sight of a beast so glutted sickened him; not for revilement, but because in her massacre he fell in love.

He struggled between Raven's thighs, enduring the bites and the scratches. He threw his offering to the ground, kneeling upon it as he groped nervously at the underwear straining to remain in place. Between the folds and the ruffles of fabric, Raven's underside was a painting of beautiful ridges behind which she hid her most interesting parts. He ran his finger along them, slipping as deeply as he could inside her dripping cunt to coat himself with her pleasure. Even on the other side of her mountainous stomach, he heard her gasp.

He fringed the squidgy passage into her rectum, coating it in her own slippery juices, before heaving the terrified woman inside. Part of him was envious, as that red hair disappeared under so much meat, to be cuddled to death in the tight embrace. And brushing against Raven's glorious arse on the way inside was surely worth the terror of snaking through her gut. Perhaps, he thought grimly as he took off her boots and pressed her toes inwards, it would be a relief to reunite with her loved ones.

When James was certain he could do no more, he sat by Raven's head, stroking her face affectionately as they both drifted. The cries were smothered inside her as she cutely burped up the last of the air supply. The blood pooled in her digestive system, making her dizzy and sleepy, and ready to surrender to her food coma. Her fatty exterior was plump enough, and pillowy enough, that he joined her.

It was dark in the church when he awoke, beyond a strange scarlet light that illuminated the rafters and poured in through the windows. They looked different somehow, monstrous and corrupted, not at all the images of saints he knew. These all bore her likeness in strange twisting scenes of depravity.

He was afraid to move, but he stood, spinning slowly on the spot to drink the strange dream. He thought he was alone, but then he saw her at the altar, hands in her lap, and just as thin and frail as when they'd first met eyes.

"I don't understand," he muttered.

"I wouldn't have expected you to. Maybe I could have done this sooner, but I wanted your devotion."

"And you have it." He stepped closer, trembling. "You're all I've thought about for..."

"Two months," she said. "But it was half-hearted and regretful. Your protections were far too strong." She chuckled, "Until you decided to feed me." Wickedness seeped in long black chords that solidified, lifting her into the air. "You abandoned your family for me... let me in. And with the fruits laid bare, I can feast." The fangs in her head glinted as her body swelled beneath her, gorging into a thick carapace that ballooned back into a hideously large abdomen suspended on spear-like limbs that looked far too thin to carry her weight.

The demon half-spider towered several times above him, and as he marvelled on her new form he realised that those lights were her chords. Winding ropes filled the vault in a tangle of messy webs, and as he backed away towards the door, she raced up them at a frightening speed to pursue belly-up. Sounds of silk tearing under her weight seared under his skin and he felt her breathing upon it as he ran. So close, and so much larger, he had no hope - even had she not barricaded them inside with a patchwork of webbing.

She heaved him up into the rafters, yanking him past the bound husks of her former prey, all nestled in her domain as flies. Even now, her rampant vitality intoxicated, as she wrapped him over and over with masterful movements from her legs and the generous bleeding of silk from her rump.

A gasp as he flashed back to reality. He couldn't breathe underneath her. Hours had passed and her gut had processed her meal; it all weighed down upon his face where she sat, rocking gently. James begged her to let him up, mumbled that she was crushing his ribs

with her fat arse, but he was met only with a meaty *pPphrrphlrt* as she eased the small discomfort.

He closed his eyes and found himself once more in the embrace of the spider, held with his head against the gently growling curve of her human stomach. She pressed it there with her fingers, enjoying the hungry vibrations and sharing them with her food before he was torn away, and her spider's abdomen angled itself. He heard it stick slightly as it opened for him right at the tip, and he tried to scream as he was stuffed inside.

That momentary relief for his physical form lost itself in the luxury of her face, of cheeks paled in the moonlight and of lips stained like blood in the night. Her eyes were almost sad.

"The corpses," he gasped, motioning upwards and seeing nothing. The rafters were empty.

"My meals," she said simply, "captured within the net I made, letting me swallow their souls at leisure. There's no light at the end of the tunnel..." A laugh. "Only *me*." Her mouth opened, trailing saliva and glistening sharply with teeth, before engulfing him and dragging him down towards the rest of the mass.

Flashing desperately between realities, he found his mind could generate no reprieve. When he surrendered to the physical, he trapped himself within the sweltering, gurgly tomb of Raven's stomach, half-emptied of digested meat, but still full enough with mushy chyme and disintegrating bones to make him sick. The plump ridges of her stomach's lining were at constant risk of collapsing and smothering him.

Yet when he hid within his mind, the spider gorged. She stuffed him within her bulbous arse where he found even less space to move and think. Her exoskeleton clenched tight around her fat, smothering him quickly within a body he had no hope of escaping, even if he *wasn't* trussed up in webbing.

Neither truth was better than the other. Neither hurt less. When he finally digested, morphed beyond recognition into a part of his devourer, and into useless waste she would rid herself of, he cursed himself. For all his regret and shame, he couldn't pull his mind away from Raven long enough to so much as imagine the faces of his family one last time.

"Oh my God," she groaned as the sunlight hit her eyelids. She tried to struggle upright, but her abs lacked the strength to squish all that fat down enough. The demon couldn't remember how many she'd eaten, nor the process of eating them. She'd frenzied again, an upsettingly regular occurrence.

Licentious mounds of meat spilt across her frame, bubbling dutifully as it chugged to deal with her mistakes. She felt nauseous and pained. "No toilets," she reminded herself with a sickly belch. Sequestering herself in a quiet corner, doing her best to ease out safe farts until she was ready, she braced herself against one of the walls and spread her thighs. With her bum pushed out as far as possible, she gasped agonizingly as the greasy wet coils of digested filth poured out from her.

The unpleasant, scattering pile built ridiculously until she cried out and her bum burned. It served her right, she knew, but she'd hoped that she'd be able to walk properly afterwards anyway. Very little differentiated her prey. It was one conglomerate littered with bits of hair and the odd undigested scrap of clothing. She had no intention of sifting for jewellery. She already had what she came for.

Wiping herself thoroughly and bathing like an overfed bird with the water in the font, Raven clothed her generous frame and sifted through James' private room for addresses, notes and anything else she might have had use for. Bumbling around in the tiny room

highlighted just how fat the enterprise had made her, and she was embarrassed in that peculiarly horny way.

All the same, she decided that a few nightly jogs wouldn't go amiss before she continued the coup against his blood.