

His dreams were always filled with warmth.

Perhaps Tranquility was soft in the heart, perhaps every pump of blood through his arteries was filled with gentleness. Perhaps every blink of his glittering mint eyes was filled with compassion, and perhaps he was that way. He harbored his fair share of cruelty in his heart, sure, but for moments like these, he was as gentle as a curved flower petal dancing in the breeze flowing over the Sanctified Meadows.

The black and white feline was startled awake by the feeling of shifting next to him, and he felt his brows furrow as his black rimmed ears rotated to pick up on what was disturbing his peaceful absent rambles, but the sunlight dappling against his eyelids made him less inclined to open them for proper investigation. He stretched, his claws unsheating at the delicate spread of his paws, and he expected to arch his back against the thrumming warmth of the presence he had felt all night, but all he was aware of was the miniscule stretch of vines beneath him.

Grumbling crossly, the mage was prompted to finally open his eyes, squinting against the sun's beams that weaved past the thick canopy. He saw the dark form of a primate sitting on the edge of the webbed vine hammock- one of many spread all throughout the expanse of the enigma that was the Unending Labyrinth. His long tail was flicking back and forth idly as his brown eyes glared at the forest floor below, filled with such disdain that Tranquility was successfully roused to full alertness.

The feline twitched his whiskers, the tear streak black markings that ran down his eyes and cheeks moving with each blink. He pushed his haunches in order to haul himself

up, the vines swaying and trembling with the movement as he expertly dug his claws in to make his way next to the seething spider monkey. He knew the other mage noticed his presence immediately, by the sudden twitch of his shoulders.

"Curiosity?" Tranquility leaned against the disgruntled primate, who in turn looked at him a bit crossly, but didn't pull away against the soft touch of the smaller mammal. "What's the matter?"

At first the mage didn't answer, and continued to scowl down at the lush vegetation outlined by abyssal shadows, and Tranquility let out a huff, breaking out into a warm purr that echoed in his chest and he moved to rub his head under Curiosity's chin, nuzzling the grumpy primate with affection. This finally got him to react, with a low grumble and a comment Tranquility didn't pick up on. The feline's stump for a tail wagged in a way akin to a canine as Curiosity wrapped his tail around him, acknowledging him at last.

"Some troops from the Rich Top Mountain Region and Clowder City decided to drop by again," Curiosity scowled, the sheer hatred visible in his eyes, making Tranquility falter a bit at such an intense look. "Sure, I don't mind, diddly do dah, do what ya want, you'll end up lost anyways, haha! But at this point I wanna rid of the whole Council and dispose of all their bodies in hilarious positions."

"Don't talk like that," Tranquility placed a paw on Curiosity's arm, frowning at the wide grin on the peeved primate's face. "It worries me."

"Don't tell me you're one with the Council? A spy?"

The teasing in his voice flew over Tranquility's head, and his pupils rapidly turned to thin slits as he backed up, squeaking urgently. "What?! No! I would never! Oh, please please *please*-!"

Before he could finish, he was suddenly swept up in the spindly arms of Curiosity, hugged tightly to his dark furred chest as the primate spun around on the hammock with ease, grinning mischevously. "I can't have spies, oh no! Now I have to get rid of ya!"

Tranquility let out a shrill yelp as Curiosity dropped down suddenly onto the vines, rolling over in what worked as a tackle. Bewildered, the feline shook his head as Curiosity straightened up and leaned over him, using a finger to tap his nose. The feline blinked slowly, his ruffled fur flattening as he realized only warmth and humor was in the primate's eyes.

He smiled gently, then.

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"Give it back!"

"Nope!"

Tranquility dropped his ball of moss that he'd been batting around for the past few moments to look over at the chaos ensuing right beside him. Mischief was being herself again, the fox's lips rising to reveal her sharp teeth in a wide grin as she glared up at the primate angrily pacing on a gnarled tree branch above. The ginger pointed and back

striped mage stuck her nose up, lavender eyes glowing with magic as the cyan cube, tinged with purple, bobbed in the air beside her.

Curiosity lashed his tail like a whip, and Tranquility let out a small yowl of alarm as he launched himself towards Mischief. The fox met his force with her own, the two rolling over in a heap of bristling fur with the cube darting around in circles above them. Mischief swatted him angrily with her paws while Curiosity nipped at her ears with his sharp teeth.

The monkey seemed to become the victor, however, as Mischief yelped from sudden pain. Her ear was just barely bleeding, but it was still injured, enough for Curiosity to gain his artifact back from the other mage's thievery. He growled lowly, the sound making Mischief glare and lash her ginger tail as she stood to her paws. Tranquility just rolled his eyes, the tussling a common occurrence between the two clashing mages.

Curiosity puffed his chest out and instead moved over to Tranquility, who gently purred to greet him. The primate smirked lightly and pat the feline on the head, who in turn stuck out his tongue playfully.

"Feeling any better about the troop drama?" Tranquility pressed against the warm form of the monkey, who seemed a bit taken aback by the question judging by the sudden widen of his eyes. He coughed, his eyes glowing cyan from the magic of the cube, and he shifted, wrapping his tail tightly around the white and black form beside him.

"Oh, thattt silly business. I'm taking care of it soon, don't worry your cute little

head."

"Taking care of-?"

"Oh, shoot! Isn't it time to grab you some lunch?"

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Tranquility sighed softly as he made his way over the next valley, his paw pads gently cradled by the summer time grass, which was usually dry but unusually soft due to an uncharastic rainstorm just last night. The stars glittering high in the sky made him smile, as he fell back on his haunches on top of the rise to enjoy the clear view, devoid of trees or any other obscuring views.

He hummed softly, crouching down and tucking his paws underneath him as he allowed his thoughts to drift to a certain spider monkey...

He smiled bashfully, his face heating up as he snuggled into his black chest fur. He remembered the scene just before he left- the shadow mage materializing on his jingly, sharp umber jester outfit and giving him a playful squeeze before saying he had to go deal with something.

Tranquility wasn't used to such warm thoughts involving others, and he struggled to understand the sudden heat beneath his pelt that arose and tingled along his back every time Curiosity lay beside him, draping his tail over him in a snuggle, and when the primate played around him in the jungle of their abode. Curiosity was just so...different. So playful and cunning and...gosh, to the Stars above, he loved everything about him.

Giggling to himself, Tranquility rolled on his back like a lovestruck kitten seeing a young Noble for the first time- or...or general citizen, Nobles were the enemy. He covered his face with his paws, smiling sheepishly to himself as he looked forward to snuggling against Curiosity tonight.

He always found himself sleeping perfectly when the primate was pressed against him, providing warmth and comfort for his slumber.

Gosh he-

A sudden distant scream caught the feline mage's attention, and he blinked open his eyes, twitching his ears as he rolled back onto his paws and looked alertly towards the source of the echoing wail. He saw...something in the distance...a bright flash of cyan and the silhouettes of many creatures, seemingly attacking the cyan glowing attacker.

Tranquility's ears flattened as he recognized the magic he was seeing over the crest of another valley.

Curiosity.

What was he doing? Why was he causing a scene? Didn't he know that could lead him into danger. With a nervous twitch of his whiskers, he began pelting down the valley, using his mint tinged magic to recycle his energy and keep his small form darting over the dips of the earth without faltering or tiring. If anything, he wanted to make sure the primate was okay- he wouldn't know what to do if he found him bleeding all over the ground, thick blood clumping in the grass and dirt.

Tranquility swallowed thickly, and burst over the rise where Curiosity was fighting. But by the time he got there, the blood that soaked his dark pelt wasn't all his own.

The feline gasped as he skidded to a halt, eyes widening at the sight of a multitude of dead animals- foxes, lynxes, hawks, raccoons...but mostly cats, all sprawled out and dead from magic burns and bites inflicted by the furious spider monkey. Curiosity himself was panting, his jester outfit and fur completely splattered upon.

"What did you do?!" Tranquility shrieked, rushing over to one of the dead cats and trembling as Curiosity moved his attention over to him.

"What do ya mean?"

"You...you killed them!" Tranquility whipped towards Curiosity, alarmed to see the look on his face. "Do you know how much attention that brings to yourself?"

"Oh, yes, defend the Council troops sent to kill us," the spider monkey scowled, wiping blood off his cheek with a brisk flick of his hand. "I was only ensuring they don't come back to mess with us."

"You didn't have to kill them!"

"Why so defensive?!" Curiosity was visibly rattled, and he glared with sudden distaste at the feline. "Do you want them to end you miserably?"

"I'm only looking out for your safety!"

Tranquility felt his throat clench and his heart speed up frantically as Curiosity began to growl at him, a loud warning that he had no place to judge or scold his actions. The feline lowered his head, swallowing and tucking his stump of a tail down in apology. He didn't want the primate mad at him- he just wanted to make sure he didn't make himself too flashy. He was worried it might one day kill the monkey mage.

The two silently began to make their way back to the Unending Labyrinth, and Tranquility was distantly surprised the monkey just didn't materialize himself away- he was perfectly able. He looked up at the spider monkey, who shot him a look that was half-apologetic, half peeved.

When the two got back to the safety of the thick jungle, Tranquility decided it was time to speak up.

"You didn't have to kill them. Just giving them a good bite or two is enough."

Curiosity immediately turned to him, his eyes glowing cyan as he wiped blood off of his cube. "Drop it."

"You need to stop resorting to death!" Tranquility boldly stood up, even though he felt like shying away from how intense Curiosity's gaze was.

"Are you judging me?"

"Yes! I'm sorry! But I'm so, so worried for you!" Tranquility's voice cracked as he felt tears welling up in his eyes. "If you keep doing this, you'll be so hunted by the Council, the whole land of Media will be hunting for you!"



Curiosity began to snarl, and his tail began lashing. But he didn't say anything.

"You know, you're portraying yourself as a *monster*! I love you Curiosity! I love you! And I want you to be okay! I don't want to wake up to you gone." The feline sniffled and wiped his gathering tears away. His throat stung with bile, and he began to shake. "I know the real you. You're not a monster."

But Curiosity seemed to have not heard the rest. At the first mention of being called a monster, fury lit in his gaze like a kindling fire. He began to shake and clench his teeth so hard his jaw visibly shook, and he used his hand to flick up his cube, suddenly slamming it down into the earth too close to Tranquility's liking. The feline gasped and jumped back, eyes wide in alarm.

"A monster, huh?! I'll show you mercy, if that's what you so desperately want!"

As he rose his hand again, Tranquility gasped in emotional pain and whipped around, deciding to book it. His paws practically flew over the ground as he struggled to make sharp corners past the trees, knowing with a deep ache in his chest Curiosity had been aiming to inflict pain upon him. Hot tears slid down his cheeks and clumped the fur, and they came harder followed by loud sobs as he heard Curiosity chasing him.

He hadn't meant to push it too far!

Where was the spider monkey that snuggled him every night? Tackled him and rolled in the grass with him? The calm and collected, playful-

He felt a sudden slam into his back, and he let out a loud screech as he collapsed

to the ground, scratching his cheek on a withering thorn tendril. He could already feel the hot blood sliding from the wound, as he gasped at the cyan glow he saw in the corner of his eye. He looked up at the seething form of Curiosity in fear, and betrayal.

Curiosity had hurt him.

The primate let out a loud breath of air, his apparently short temper getting the best of him.

"I'll show you *mercy*."

And with that, the last thing he saw was Curiosity's angry expression.

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Curiosity felt himself shake as cyan tears slid down his face.

He knew, when he heard that loud crack upon impact on Tranquility's head, that he had messed up.

So badly.

"T...Tranquility? Oh, to the Stars, I'm so sorry I-" He was in denial as he desperately nudged the cat, who was still warm yet lifeless, the stench of coppery blood floating from his limp body. He couldn't...he...he killed-

"You..." Curiosity jerked at the voice, and past his tears blurring his vision he could see Mischief, her eyes wide with shock and ears flattened.

He didn't even try to explain as she slowly backed away, and began running

through the jungle with loud snaps of twigs.

He didn't even try to stop her.

Curiosity stood there, covered in Tranquility's blood before...before he screamed in absolute anguish.