

Serve Me from Storm Moon Press

Idris kicked up the dirt of the arena with his bare feet. The sand coated the skin of his soles the way the fat lines of ochre painted the rest of his body in a mockery of war paint. All of the symbolism was gone, the whorls instead used to complement each ridge of muscle and to lead the eye to the bulge of his crotch. He wore only a small loincloth. The paint was stark against the expanse of his bared, dark skin and made his eyes look more amber than brown.

The gathered nobles of the Holy Circle cheered to see him. He was painted up like one of the fetishes made by the feral tribes that inhabited the jungles of the far South. Decorated with gold braid in his hair. The Graecian obsession that everything they looked upon should be beautiful. They drank their honey wine and laughed their shrill laughs. They were pasty, limbs protected from the sun by pale powders.

Idris grinned as the gates on the far side of the arena lifted. His opponent stumbled out: a satyr. His huge, bonelike horns protruded from his head in a spiral. He was boyish about the face, but the body was all man. He was weaponless, like Idris. Painted up and prettified, like Idris. Wearing only a scrap of material, like Idris.

The arbiter rang his silver bells until the crowd hushed enough for the sound to carry.

The satyr bent forward and charged like a bull, the point of his horns first. Idris held his ground. The satyr gained momentum, feet kicking up a sandstorm as they hammered at the ground. Idris waited until the horns pricked his skin, and then he stepped aside. The satyr continued, carried by his momentum. Idris shoved him with a firm hand to his ass, adding the extra force that sent him into the barriers that ringed the arena. The wooden barriers. He was stuck, his horns buried an inch deep.

The crowd laughed at his struggle. He pressed his hands against the barrier, both palms flat. He jerked his neck in small, convulsive motions. Idris waited for the laughs to reach their crescendo, and then tore the loincloth from the satyr's body. The laughs stilted, turned to 'ahh's and catcalls. The satyr redoubled his efforts to escape at that, his great cock bouncing against his thighs. Idris examined him. He could almost hear the necks craning as the crowd did the same. There was a wiry power in the cords of the satyr's muscles, but he wasn't a warrior. He'd be bigger, harder, not prone to make such a silly mistake. A pleasure slave who had outlived his usefulness then, or one that had proven too much trouble.

Idris stroked the satyr's lower back. There was tension, and then a snap of release. The satyr pulled free. He left two deep pock marks in the wood, but his horns were unscathed.

Idris sidestepped one laughable attempt at a grab, and then another. The satyr hissed. His face was red. Idris held up the torn loincloth. The satyr grabbed that. His eyes widened when Idris yanked him forward by it. There was a sharp slap as his naked skin hit Idris' chest. The satyr released the cloth, and Idris grabbed his wrist instead. The satyr punched him in the jaw, and Idris let it land. It was as bothersome as a fly landing on his cheek.

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"You're not a warrior," Idris said, low, so the crowd wouldn't hear.

The satyr struggled, reared, kicked, and braced himself against Idris. He bobbed and dropped his head, all of his body in motion all the time, as if he was having a seizure or trying desperately to get enough leverage to gore Idris with his horns. Idris wrapped his hands around the satyr's neck. His fingers covered the entire column of his throat. Idris squeezed and the struggles stopped. He lifted the satyr off his feet. The color, even the flush of shame, drained from his face as he batted at Idris' grip.

Idris grabbed the satyr's buttock, still holding him by the throat, and spread him. He turned in a slow circle, exposing the satyr to the crowd. Tears of humiliation sprang into the satyr's eyes. Idris steeled himself to it.

-- from "The Spoils" by Anna Hedley

It was a cold, drizzly January afternoon when Samuel got the letter. He'd been waiting for months to see if he would be invited to the viscount's next lavishly appointed auction. Samuel barely noticed his housekeeper taking his umbrella and top hat. He scanned the invitation, whose contents made the dreary day seem bright as summer to him.

"I did it..." He muttered to himself, reaching up to run his hands through sandy brown hair that was mussed from the cold, biting wind.

"Am I to be preparing for someone else, then?" asked the girl as she inclined an eyebrow at her employer.

Samuel looked up with bright eyes. "Oh, I hope so, Margaret. I really do. The viscount's circles aren't easy to move in."

"I should say," she scoffed good-naturedly. "You've been worrying yourself about nothing else."

"I'll need new things. Go down into town and make an appointment with the tailor tomorrow. The auction is in a week." Samuel grinned at her as he raced upstairs to prepare some of his budget. The auction would be costly if he got what he wanted, but he'd finally been able to arrange his life to his liking. Now was the time, he believed, to invest in what he'd always desired.

The next week was a blur of appointments and house cleaning, interspersed with hours spent at the bank. Samuel was the accountant for a sizable portion of the bank's records, and he kept almost no one close. He was a private man at work, preferring to delve into his accounts and numbers rather than consort with the other men, who so often had nothing other to talk about than their wives and families and investments. Once in a while, they

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would discuss a match or horse race, but little else colored their lives. Samuel, in his quiet way, craved excitement and adventure of a different nature.

When the day came, Samuel quickly lost patience with his work. After several hours of fruitlessly flipping through ledgers and invoices, he gave in and left early. He rushed home to prepare, dressing in the new tailcoat and slim-legged pants his tailor had assured him were on the cusp of fashion. He allowed Margaret to fuss over his hair and tie, counting down the minutes on the old grandfather clock in the parlor until the carriage pulled up to his door. Black lacquered cane tucked under his elbow, he got in and instructed the driver toward the manor of Viscount Edmund Kaylock.

The manor was huge, and much older than most of the homes that Samuel passed by on his way. He watched out the window nervously as he checked his pocket watch multiple times. The horses pulled to a stop among the horseless carriages, nickering softly and shying from the clockwork that ran the wheels and the drivers who sat in their seats, guiding reins that led to nothing. Samuel ducked and stepped out, a little jealous of the other illustrious clients who could afford such strange niceties. One of the footmen nodded to him with as he walked up. He was pleased to note that there was no hint of his lesser station in the man's attitude.

"Good evening, sir. Invitation please?" he asked.

Samuel smiled and reached for it, presenting it proudly. "Of course. Samuel Conroy. I was instructed to ask that you inform the viscount I've arrived?" There was a small part of his mind that thrilled at the words. He'd only thought about uttering such things when he read novels about lords and counts and other nobles.

"This is in order. This way please." The footman bowed his head for a moment before turning to lead him inside, another footman immediately taking his place.

Samuel was hard-pressed to keep his mouth closed as he walked through the manor. He'd met the viscount through the friend of a friend, who had spoken of nothing but the fantastic parties of the upper crust. The party he'd attended previously had been something he would never forget – men and women enjoying the company of well-trained servants and bodyslaves in the strange and fantastic circumstances he'd come to associate with a society that few even knew existed. His partner for that event had been a lovely boy with slim shoulders, wide blue eyes, and the most beautiful lips Samuel had ever imagined. He'd paid handsomely for the boy's contract that night, and he still brought the event to mind frequently in his fantasies. However, even those at that party had spoken longingly of the viscount's auctions and galas.

-- from "As You Wish" by Gabriel Belthir

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"Aaron! No! Please, no!" It's the bone-freezing fear, the kind that stops your heart and knots your gut, causing excruciating pain. "Please! Don't separate us, please!"

"Aidan!" He struggles for me, reaching with cuffed hands. The rustling of our chains creates a background symphony to our fear. The stinging pain of too-tight cuffs digging into my wrists does nothing to distract me from my frantic struggle. I have to do whatever I can to get to him.

"Aaron—" I break off as black sweeps over my vision, leaving behind little spots as it clears. Pain shoots across my face, and warm liquid spills from a gash on my cheek to stain my cuffed hands with blood.

"Shut up, blood-bag," one of them hisses in my face. The smell of old blood hits my nose, making me gag. A rough, probing tongue licks over my bleeding cheek, sending out new sparks of pain.

"Leave him alone! Please!" Aaron pleads with a hint of desperation. I know it will do no good. It never does.

They use my spotty state to drag me away from him—away from Aaron. I hear him, but it's like listening through a bag of cotton. The previous hits over the head intensify this latest slap, because really it's not that bad.

He's yelling for me, and others are trying to quiet him down, but it's not working. Aaron yells louder. I can't pull myself together enough to struggle for him. But I have to... Before him, I saw no reason to live, especially the life I have now. The thought of suicide had dominated my thoughts as my only option. I was going to do it. The plans had been set, and I had the perfect opportunity. That night feels so long ago, but really it's only been two months since Master brought him home. The moment my eyes landed on him, my excellent plan fell, crashing into too many pieces to repair.

I knew from the moment I laid eyes on him that I would do as much I could to prevent our Master from taking too much interest in Aaron. And causing trouble was the only method I knew to keep Master's eyes on me.

Aaron's screams bring me back to full alertness. "Stop," he pleads, "please, no!" Aaron's voice, so loud, now tapers off into almost nothing.

I know what they're doing to him. 'Blood-bags' don't have any rights. Raping a 'blood-bag' isn't something anyone is going to look twice at. We're just property. Our sole purpose in life is to serve them, to cater to them.

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"Please!" I try one last time, but as I expected, my cry falls on deaf ears. They don't care about me any more than an exterminator would a rat. Our only value is whatever price they paid for us.

One of them grips my upper arm with enough force to leave marks. It'll go perfect with the rest of them. He throws me into the back of a portable cage. My side slams against the bars, the impact so hard, a rib cracks under the pressure. Shooting little slices of pain line my insides, making it hard to breathe. I gasp, trying to pull enough air into my lungs, but ultimately I only make things worse. The pain splinters across my side to wedge in my spine.

The one I've called Master for almost a year laughs. "You will enjoy your new master, slave. You may think of me as an innocent child in comparison to him." He laughs again, this time at my gawking expression of utter disbelief.

Master is cruel and unkind. He often doesn't feed us for days after using one of us. Beating or rough treatment is the norm, and if my new master is worse than him... I don't know what I'll do.

I've heard there are some nice masters who even let their slaves free of the chains, allow them to roam the house and grounds, and in rare cases, the master will take the slave as a lover—a life mate. The rumor is a nice fairy tale, a cute happily-ever-after, but I know it's a lie. If these creatures have taught me anything, it's that they are vicious and heartless. They only care about themselves and moving up the political ladder.

-- from "Life Is Unforgiving" by Lor Rose

It was a stupid plan. Stupid, reckless, and doomed to fail. Yuta only went along because he had no choice. The last time he'd had a choice over anything important in his life had been in high school, when he'd dropped out to join Abe's gang. They'd wanted him because Yuta was tall and tough looking; they didn't know that he hated violence and had the heart of a kitten. They also didn't know how much his father beat him, how Yuta never fought back, or else they might have figured out that Yuta wasn't the muscle they thought. By the time that became all too clear, it had already been established, courtesy of the Tokyo underworld, that Abe's gang would never be the full-fledged yakuza that it aspired to be. They went the other way and embraced themselves as punks who were 'too cool' to bow down to the old system. They kept Yuta because they had to. People weren't exactly knocking down the door to join.

I wonder who will fill my place?

A stupid plan. They would drive up to the warehouse of a yakuza boss, steal his goods, and sell them. No one would ever know who'd done it. Yuta's job was to break in and then load the boxes into the back of the truck. When he was done, they would all drive away.

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Some of the plan worked great. Yuta managed to break in pretty quickly. Unfortunately, the gang had picked the worst of all nights to break into the warehouse: poker night. That meant Takashima, the boss's number one man and the bane of anyone who crossed the gang, was there. Men who suffered under Takashima bore the scars for the rest of their lives, if not on their flesh, then on their souls. Yuta heard the truck take off, and knew he was screwed.

Yuta was brought before Takashima and forced to his knees. It didn't take much convincing. Takashima looked down on Yuta from his chair, his legs spread. Yuta couldn't help but notice the bulge between them, so out of proportion to the rest of Takashima's lean frame.

"Your friends left you," Takashima said. "You want to give me their names?"

"I can't," Yuta said.

Assholes or not, they were the only family he had. Takashima motioned for one of his men to throw him a beer, and for a moment Yuta had a chance to really look at him. He was beautiful, in a brutal way. His eyes were narrow, but alert, and his cheekbones were high. He was shorter than Yuta, but Yuta was terrified of him. Of what Takashima would do to him.

"You broke up my card game," Takashima said. He sounded bored. "You know I like to watch poker."

The story was that Takashima loved to watch poker, but never played or took part in any game of chance. Allegedly, the games held were all in good fun, and very little money changed hands.

"Was this your idea?" Takashima asked.

"No."

Yuta could admit that much; it might even save his life.

"Fuck," Takashima said to his men. "You guys didn't even get the ring-leader. What am I supposed to do with this?"

One of the men shrugged. "Kill him?"

"Maybe." Takashima looked back at Yuta, who kept his eyes down. "Seems like a waste of a bullet."

Maybe he just wanted to humiliate him, Yuta thought. Takashima would let him go after he'd beat him up a little.

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"You guys leave," Takashima said. "Wait for me by the car."

Yuta's blood froze. Takashima wanted to be alone with him, and he had already announced that Yuta wasn't worth a bullet. Yuta closed his eyes and wished to wake up in his roach-infested apartment, where he would find out this was all a dream.

"They're gone," Takashima said. "Time to make a decision. You broke into my boss's warehouse and ruined my poker game. You won't tell me who the guys in the truck are. What do you think I should do about that?"

"I don't know."

"Good boy." Yuta could swear he saw Takashima smile. "I hate when people beg for their lives right away. I should at least get to hurt them first."

-- from "Takashima's Pet" by Fox Lee