Chapter One

Rason Walk stood upside-down, suspended over a lake of living teeth. By that, I don't mean there was a very large beast below him and this was actually its mouth. I'm not being cute with my description, here. No, I mean there was actually a lake of living teeth. Fangs, to be precise. The only reason Rason could tell they were living were the arguments they were having with each other as they attempted to climb over each other.

"Why do we even live here, all piled together and whatnot?"

"Now's not the time for existential quandaries, Ins. We have a guest!"

"Well then, I guess we can ask our *guest* what he thinks!"

"Have you actually invited him round to dinner? He doesn't seem like he's eating enough."

"Why, thank you, I've actually dropped a few pounds" said Rason, shuffling his feet and wondering if the spell they'd set on him was going to break.

By "they", I don't mean the teeth. They were actually super nice. They truly loved having guests. Unfortunately, in their haste to have visitors, they ended up impaling the ones that were hurled from thirty feet above them. It made the whole execution process that much sadder, as all of the Inciscorians were devastated to have their company impaled on one of their heads, and not having hands, the corpse had to sit up there for several weeks until it sloughed off. It really could only have

been planned out in the most twisted and fiendish of minds, one of which Rason had been attempting to steal spell materials from. They're the "they" I was referring to.

Thankfully, though, the Insciscorians had a short memory, so they soon forgot their anguish and looked forward to the next time visitors would drop by. Their zeal for hospitality would once again overtake them when yet another poor sod would be placed on this platform and dangled face-first over the teeth. They complimented Rason as he felt the conflict between the real and magical gravities somewhere in his small intestine.

"By Ed, you have such lovely hair."

Ed was their deity. That's really all you need to know.

Rason smiled. They were so very earnest. "Thank you again, though I can't take credit for it. It's…"

"Magical," all of the surrounding Inscisorians said together, rather glumly.

"What's wrong with that?"

"Well," said the first one that had spoken to him. Her name was Cavataous. It's not going to come up again, I just thought you should know. "Everyone who comes here never has natural hair."

"Is that an issue?"

"We're fans of hair," she replied. "Seeing as we don't have any. Everyone feels like they need to doll themselves up with magic. Sometimes, we'd just like to see someone have a decent head of hair all by their own doing."

"Ah. Sorry to disappoint."

"It's alright. You get used to it."

The magical energies swirling around his feet started to make whining sounds like a puppy desperate to go outside, but their owner is struggling to get out of their easy chair. Muscles tensed, Rason waited for the moment the pitch would reach younger brother levels of whine.

A collective sigh ran through the teeth. It was happening again.

"Aww, he's gonna fall too, isn't he?"

"Yep, looks like it. Ed damn it, why do all of the guests have to be impaled?"

"I think we bring it on ourselves."

"Do you think you could all take a few steps," Could they actually take steps? Rason looked down at the bottoms of the Inscisorians. Not those bottoms. They technically didn't have those. Their feet equivalent. He couldn't make out any sort of way of pod-esque movement. "If you all just gave me a bit of room, I might not fall on your heads."

A murmur went through the gathered crowd. They'd never thought of it that way before.

"I…suppose?"

"That's change. I don't like it. Feels like we're abandoning the guest."

Rason felt the magic unlacing around his feet, one strand at a time. He kept his voice level. "Have you ever thought that you might have a few more guests if you didn't accidentally kill them?"

Another murmur. "We should at least try it. Shake things up a bit."

"The last time we shook things up a bit, we ended up in here."

"A bit of change is good for the soul- " Rason said.

"But then again, the minotaurs are nice enough to hold us up."

The upside-down Espionurge's mouth opened, then closed, like a fish unable to make up his mind at the drive-thru speaker. "The…minotaurs?"

"Oh, did no one tell you? We live on top of the minotaurs that were in this pit before us."

"PLEASED TO MEET YOU!" came a rumbling voice from below the teeth.

A sigh dribbled out of Rason's lips as he felt the magic coming apart faster now, breaking down like a macaroni card craft. "Well, then. I'll have to figure something else out, then."

He tapped his heels together. An unspooling sound came from his left foot just as the gravity magic wore out on that side. Snatching the falling tool by the very fine strand of rope, he half-dangled,

half-balanced as the upside-down started becoming the right-side up very quickly. The tiny grappling hook had two enormous bucked teeth and a limited amount of flight time. Rason tied the line around his waist just as his stomach somersaulted with his center of gravity, and he flung the hook upward.

He started falling just as the two teeth of the hook sunk into the platform above him. A jolt ran through him as it absorbed the tension of his fall, and he swayed a few feet above the Inscisorians.

Rason exhaled, the thin line creaking but not snapping under the strain. "Thank the Queen's Spindles."

"That was a close one!" remarked the closest tooth.

"MMMPHHHH!" said the grappling hook, biting into the magical floating stone for all he was worth.

There was a moment of silence broken only an inopportune cough from one of the minotaurs. It sent the sea of teeth waving as the other minotaurs attempted to get away from the cough. None of them wanted to get sick.

"So what now?" asked a Inscisorian, scratching a long-ignored itch. Did I mention they have arms? They have arms. In summary: there's a bunch of giant fangs attached minotaur horns and they all have arms. The minotaurs, too. They are not armless.

"Well," Rason said slowly, "have any of you ever thought of leaving?"

A gasp went up from both layers of sharp things.

"Leave? Good Ed on the horizon, why would we ever?" They supposed Ed lived not above or below them, but on the horizon. Ed was allegedly a pretty level god. I'm honestly not sure, I didn't get to meet him at any point.

"I BEG YOUR PARDON?" came the polite thunder underneath Rason.

"You're all standing in a giant pit for reasons unknown." Rason said, trying to squint to make eye contact with the minotaurs. There was an entire lower jaw's worth of teeth in the way, though. "Have you ever thought of just, you know, breaking out?"

Silence. Rason heard a whisper.

“HAVE TRUK-POINT CHECK THE PERIMETER. I CAN’T BELIEVE WE NEVER THOUGHT OF THIS.”

Minotaurs are not good at whispering.

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Fifteen minutes later, Rason found himself carried along by one of the minotaurs. YOUTH-SNOUT was her name. Yes, I know that’s in all capital letters. That’s how minotaurs spell it and I’m trying to be respectful of their culture.

The city around them fell into chaos as hundreds of minotaurs with hospitable teeth on their horns flooded the streets, upending fruit carts, crushing spell materials, and unwittingly destroying the only other noodle joint in town, leaving Orn-Ramental as the only survivor.

Covering his face as cabbages flew everywhere from a shot-put wagon, he tapped YOUTH-SNOUT’s arm. “Could I get off here, please?”

“CERTAINLY.”

The mintotaur gently set the Espionurge down at the ramen shop before bolting into a fine porcelainware shop. She emerged five minutes later with a small armful of new platters and a couple of teapots and teacups hanging from her horns.

By this point, Rason had gotten his noodles. He picked one up and left it by his foot for his grappling hook. A small slurp emitted from his shoe as the noodle escaped from sight.

“It’s good, right?” he said, fighting with his chopsticks. They usually used dead chopsticks, but in an attempt to be “environmentally friendly”, Orn-Ramental used living ones. They did *not* want to help with the noodles.

“MMMPHHH!” came the call from his hook.

Giving up on his chopsticks, which promptly ran away toward a street drummer, Rason reached behind his ear, pulling out his Scry-Fi comms device. He placed it on the side of the bowl. It vibrated for

a moment, and then the message started spelling out in his noodles.

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