

PlayGround

In Small Metacarpals Remembered Cephalopolis Summary:

For Gideon living with Harrow had never been part of the plan. What do taxidermy and fitness have in common? Nothing, really. And yet in these small moments of complete disjointed communion theyve found something a bit like a home.

Chapter 1: Humble Beginnings Chapter Text

“Nonagesimus... did you finish the last of the milk?!” Gideon knew she sounded upset, but she was devastated to realize that her post-workout chocolate milk was nothing but a sad dream.

“Well, yes. I needed some for my tea this morning and we hardly had any left. Really, you should keep better track of these things. I don't have time to go to the store today, my client is waiting for his order. If it's that much trouble you can go buy some, but if not... I guess I could get some tomorrow.”

Gideon couldn't bring herself to say anything for a few beats. Harrow wasn't usually so kind. “What are you planning?” she looked at Harrow through squinting eyes. They had been living together for a year now- after their foster parents had kicked them out. It had been hard at first- Harrow was the smart one, she figured out jobs for them and eventually found them a small apartment. Gideon on the other hand was mostly good at being strong, but in those days it had been good to have someone who could protect them.

Harrow continued her work, ignoring Gideon. This time it was a fat squirrel that the client used to feed. Harrow had spent days alone carving the mannequin. Taxidermy was NOT Gideons favorite thing. It made the apartment smell weird and musty. The acrid smell of the preservatives for hides would sometimes permeate the apartment. Harrow had started doing this in high school. In their foster home she didn't really have the space to indulge, but still, she had been diligent. They had always fought at the home, but now it was them against the world and somehow, things had changed.

“Hrmph, it's fine. I'll go to the store myself. Do you need anything else?” As she slid into her jacket she heard Harrow's voice coming from behind the desk “Could you grab yourself some dinner? I think i'll be stuck here a while...”

Gideon was confused. Harrow usually didn't care if Gideon ate... or if Gideon did anything at all, for that matter. Last year had been hard, they'd moved in together and with the new shared space came a whole new understanding of their dynamic. Harrow had more of a... gentler side, lately. Once they'd moved in Gideon realized that Harrow was much more of a caretaker than she'd thought. As it turned out, she was deeply protective of their space.

Gideon tried to think. Sometimes it was so hard to understand this small, fiery girl- One minute she was engrossed in her dead things, spending hours preserving a single ear from a small dog and then all of sudden she was berating Gideon for tracking mud into the house or leaving sweaty socks somewhere.

Gideon walked on to Magnus' bodega. The twins were there, as usual. Gideon nodded to them and winked at Jeannemary while flexing a bit. The younger girl had been keen on Gideon, and Gideon had noticed that whenever she wore a sleeveless shirt Jeannemary went bright pink. “Hey Magnus” she

gave him two finger guns and went to grab milk and a bag of salty chips from the back. While eyeing the candy she noticed a bag of chocolate covered raisins. Harrow loved those. Harrow tended to love all of the old people candies, but then again she loved any candy you could easily find in a nursing home: Werthers, bonbons, chocolate raisins. If a geriatric patient liked it odds were Harrow loved it too.

Gideon quickly grabbed a bag and went to the counter to pay. It wasn't much, and she had more than enough money to pay, but their current newfound prosperity was still new to her. She had gotten her job at the gym after the owner, a frail woman named Dulcinea, had offered her a job as a trainer. The job paid well and had a few under the table... benefits. Harrow had hated the arrangement from the start. She had called Dulcinea a "shady milf" and while Gideon couldn't really deny it - she thought Dulcinea's charm moved beyond that. But she is hot.... It didn't matter now- what really mattered is that Gideon had enough to buy her and Harrow whatever she wanted, well as far as snacks were concerned.

Gideon finished her purchases and, after a bit of a chat with Magnus, she began the walk home. The cold of the city was more than she liked at this time of year, but the comfort of knowing their comfortable, heated apartment was only a few blocks away was oddly motivational. It was strange, before Gideon had wished of nothing more than to leave the city behind. She had wanted to join the military and get stationed far, far away. It was a simple dream, but it would give her the freedom to really live. Or so she thought, anyway.

Things hadn't worked out that way, of course. Between Harrowhark's foolish plans and getting kicked out of the foster home, she felt sometimes like life had cheated her. And yet, looking up at the small flat where she and Harrow lived, she felt warm again.

She walked up the stairs and smelled something delicious in the hallway. One of the neighbors must be cooking, because the smell of garlic was completely permeating the air. At least that was what she thought until she opened her door to find the source of the smell. The sweet and savory scent of meat, garlic, and herbs hit her full force.

"What the hell is this?!" she demanded, watching Harrow fumble around in the kitchen.

"Oh!" Harrow yelped as she dropped the knife she had been so carefully holding "Griddle! Don't do that! Can't you enter the house like a normal human being, or do you have to yell at every occasion?"

"Oh, sorry," said Gideon as she took on a much less affected tone of voice "I meant to say, excuse me Dearest all knowing Harrowhark Nonagesimus, what in the ever loving fuck are you doing? You never cook."

"Look, if your only complaint is going to be that I 'never cook' then I suggest you put the milk away and go sit down at the table. I... have something for you."

Gideon was wracking her brain trying to comprehend what was happening- is Harrow blushing? Why does it smell so good? Why am I getting a gift- what the hell is happening?

Gideon sat at the table as Harrow shoved a wrapped box her way. It wasn't too large, but it must've been heavy because Harrow, in all her flimsy delicacy, couldn't move it very well at all.

"Look Gideon," Harrow fixed her hard gaze directly into Gideon's eyes and now it was suddenly Gideon's turn to suppress a blush riding up her neck. "We've been here for one whole year today and, well..." she sighed deeply "Well I honestly couldn't have done any of this without you." Harrow's tone

was curt and matter-of-fact. "I am not... well, I am not good at speaking like this, so you'll have to forgive me. But the truth is that having you by my side for the past year has been... Well, it has been comforting. I wanted to show my appreciation. Since I suppose it's the anniversary of our..." She paused, looking for the words, then quickly blurted out "Of when we moved here."

Fuck. Of course Gideon had forgotten

"I uh, i got you chocolates at the store." she spat out, trying to find a way to properly say Thank your or this kind gift, it turns out, I truly care about you, I'm just terrible with dates and had forgotten that people have anniversaries and I honestly had no idea you even cared enough about all this to even remember, but I am honestly glad you did, but I also feel terrible because if anything, I should have done more.and..." Gideon's mind raced over all the things she wanted to say in that instant.

Gideon had a way with words, the biggest problem is that those words were usually insults. After a second she sighed and pulled out the candy.

"The truth is Harrow, I had forgotten-"

"Oh I know that Gideon. Goodness, if I expected you to remember every date on the calendar we'd never get anything done around here. This... well..." Gideon could now very clearly see crimson enveloping Harrow's face. "You've been kind enough to be the one taking care of so much at home. I wanted to, well, I wanted to make you something and let you rest for once. I made a stew and bought a bottle of wine and I just hoped..." her voice trailed off as if she couldn't quite figure out what to say.

Gideon for one couldn't really stand that any more. She'd never seen Harrow so emotional and could only take so much sweetness before she got diabetes. She stood up and with two quick strides closed the distance between them and hugged her. Leaning into their hug she whispered into Harrow's ear:

"Thank you."

After an indeterminate amount of time Gideon mechanically stood back, straightened her back and turned to the box on the floor. "So, what's this?" picking the box up she realized it was quite heavy How the hell did Nonagesimus carry this anyway? Gideon opened the box to find a set of dumbbells, each neatly nestled into a simple carrier. They were adjustable and the extra weights were tucked to the side. "This is amazing!" Gideon almost went for another hug but remembered the first and stopped herself- for both their sakes.

"Yes, well, I thought maybe if you had some equipment here you wouldn't have to go to that ratty gym all the time."

"Do i detect a hint of jealousy in your voice Nonagesimus?"

Harrow squinted at Gideon and returned to the kitchen "I've no need for such stupid emotions, now clear the table, the stew is ready."

For Gideon this had never been the plan, but somehow, even without a plan, she'd found home.

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