

# **DESTINY EXPLORER**

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**A GELITECH STORY**

**BY SHETIRA ANWAE**

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**PROLOGUE**

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**A NEW BEGINNING**

A shrill warning horn shattered the early morning silence, sending countless colorful waterfowl scattering to the four winds. Churning water began to issue forth from beneath the recently restored powerhouse. A long string of antique tungsten filament lamps which had been loosely hung along the massive structure's roof began to glow. The crowd of gathered spectators cheered. After years of toil and delay, the city of Mashiva's oldest and largest source of electric power was finally back in business.

"Shame," one rather unusual spectator dryly remarked as she watched events unfold from the gargantuan concrete hydroelectric dam's lofty pedestrian walkway. "So much effort and expense wasted on an archaic anachronism that will be

obsolete in how long? Four, maybe five years at most?”

Her stony faced companion frowned as he turned his gaze from the celebration below. “I think you grossly overestimate general acceptance of the new technology.”

“I think you grossly underestimate the willingness of the average person to accept new and productive ideas on the fundamental nature of life,” the tigress noted with a playful smirk at her longtime friend and sometimes rival for the title of ‘maddest scientist’. “After all we’ve been through to get to this point, Wen... don’t tell me you’re getting cold feet?”

“No, Anshi, I’m not,” Dr. Wen Kidan replied as he turned his skeptical gaze to his questioning companion and her perpetually naive outlook on matters of business. “I’m just being realistic. The average person simply doesn’t see any benefit in allowing our products to become a part of their daily lives.”

“Well, we’re just going to have to change that, aren’t we?” Dr. Anshi Alluwa responded as she turned just in time to catch her companion caressing her modest figure with his deep green

eyes. “Just can’t help yourself, can you? And here I was thinking you weren’t a fan of the new mark nine gel.”

Dr. Kidan scowled and turned back to the celebration below. “I’m not.”

The tigress chuckled softly as she took a moment to visibly revel in the glistening, pearly white glory that sheathed her body from neck to toe. The vibrantly living substance hugged every millimeter of her smoothly curved figure, transforming her rather ordinary looks into something quite a bit more enticing to the eye. It had an energy to it. A deeply rooted power that spread out and warmed the very souls of those who lingered in its presence. A force that could make even the least curious of souls want to know what it might be like to share in the wonders of joining the ranks of those who surrendered their lives into the gel’s glorious embrace.

Biogel. A kink. A toy. A plaything for those who sought to experience physical transfiguration devoid of any apparent negative consequences. A synthetic symbiotic organism so fundamentally powerful that it rendered its wearers functionally immortal. A singular higher life form that brought

together all who wore it into the skin tight fold of its Unity. And now...

Anshi wore the latest iteration of this wondrous substance with with the carefree pride of an inventor whose successful product had been developed to the point where it could no longer be improved. And what had it all cost her? Her freedom? Her soul? Small prices to pay for such exquisite perfection!

“Why?” the tiger asked, eyeing his companion with a mix of unsettled curiosity and well founded suspicion. “Why couldn’t you just leave well enough alone?”

“You’re one to ask,” Dr. Alluwa replied with a sarcastic laugh as she turned away from the railing and a group of wandering tourists who were approaching along the otherwise deserted walkway. “But that’s beside the point, isn’t it? We both have our sins, don’t we? No point in letting them get in the way of committing a few more, right?”

“Speak for yourself,” Dr. Kidan responded with a sour snarl as he followed his companion down a short flight of steps and into a dark access tunnel.

The damp, musty smelling passage was as far removed from the bright, celebratory atmosphere

as could possibly be. Someone had clearly forgotten about the place when they'd drawn up the dam's restoration plans. Or maybe they'd deliberately left it out, hoping that its unpleasant atmosphere would discourage random interlopers from wandering off the pedestrian pathway and onto the substantial wharf that had been built into the rear face of the dam. This was the city's only available facility for the docking of large water landing aerospace vessels, and definitely not a safe place for wandering tourists.

"Maybe I just wanted to feel what it's like to be hugged by an angel," the tigress suggested as she happily pranced into the gloom, just ahead of her grumpy counterpart in an obvious attempt to regain his non-professional interest. "Or maybe I just wanted to know what it's like to be corrupted in such a deeply visceral fashion. Or maybe I've just gone stark raving mad and I'm trying to drag all the rest of you along with me."

"Again?" Dr. Kidan sighed as six lanes of road traffic roared overhead. His expression became strained. He was clearly doing his best to avert his eyes from his companion's swaying hips, but the cacophony of soft rubbery squips, squeaks, and

snaps that accompanied her every movement made her enticement virtually impossible to ignore.

“Don’t sound so enthusiastic,” Dr. Alluwa laughed as the low rumble of a passing freight train added to the highway noise. “Come on. You know it’s going to be fun!”

“You and I clearly have very different ideas of what’s fun,” Dr. Kidan muttered as the tigress entered the warm, sunny glow that was cascading in from the end of the tunnel.

“You keep saying that,” Dr. Alluwa chuckled over her shoulder as she paused at the tunnel portal to let her grouchy companion catch up. “But you keep coming back, don’t you?”

“And I keep regretting it,” Dr. Kidan replied with deeply resigned sigh and a hesitant step that made it quite clear that he wasn’t at all enthused with the prospects of what was waiting for them at the wharf.

“This time’s going to be different,” Dr. Alluwa said as she stepped out into the morning sun. “The past is gone and done with. This is a whole new adventure. A whole new beginning. And if we’re successful, it’s going to make our technological

inventions *the* source of power for all the Fey'li Empire! You just wait and see!"

**ONE**

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**WHITE SAILS**

The magnificent starship seemed to have come from that brief time in the ancient past when iron hulls and canvas sails existed in an unnatural harmony forced upon them by the inefficiencies of early coal fired steam engines. Its matte black hull stretched a hundred and forty meters from stem to stern, with another twenty-four meters worth of shimmering golden bowsprit tacked on up front. Broad swaths of finely polished gold trim wrapped around the sides of the ship. More gold covered the rails that surrounded the vessel's broad wooden decks. It also framed the many porthole style windows that ran along its hull, and adorned many various sundry fittings elsewhere around the ship's exterior.

Atop the vessel were its lone mast and the grand metal 'sails' which were mounted to it. Forward of the mast were the two scoop shaped main sails,

attached by means of an articulating robotic arm. As the ship currently lay at rest, these were held in a horizontal position, giving a partial canopy to the large open deck space atop the ship's two level superstructure. Aft and attached to the base of the mast was a telescoping fore-and-aft sail. This was currently folded down into its lowermost section and seemed to serve little purpose other than to enhance the archaic sailing vessel illusion.

Despite the striking overall appearance of the ship, the feature that got the most attention from curious onlookers was its highly unusual bow. In spite of the ship's invocation of the days of steam and sail, its bow was nothing like that of a traditional vessel of the sea. The ship's golden keel soared up from the placid surface of the lake. It stretched overhead for a length of thirty meters before ending in a blunt shape that offered viewers the impression of an inverted miniature ram bow.

Embedded into the front face of this 'ram' was a sensor grid whose tubular elements emitted a vibrantly deep pink glow. This emission seemed to have an almost physical quality to it. It looked almost as if it was warping the space in front of it, creating a strange sort of refraction layer that made

the whole grid seem to throb in slow, rhythmic fashion.

Mounted in the very center of the sensor grid was a life sized, glistening black figurehead whose completely featureless face gazed blankly into the rising sun. To the casual observer, it looked like an oddly sculpted piece of cheap glossy plastic. A deliberate mockery of the finely crafted and highly realistic figureheads of old. An insult to the spirit of the mystical protector of sailors, doing its best to lead them safely through the worst that the impossibly cruel sea had to offer.

Despite its outward appearance, the strange black figure was no chunk of cheap kitsch tacked onto the prow as a misguided afterthought. It was no mystical figure striving to bring her ship's sailors safely home either. It was, in fact, an actual woman whose body has been transformed into an object made of nothing but pure, obsidian black biogel. A woman who was still very much alive, her conscious soul held eternally captive within her new and completely inanimate shape.

It was this mysterious, faceless woman who had caught the attention of a small group of dedicated shipspotters. Though it was just another day for the ship's crew, to these obsessive hobbyists, a moment

of supreme significance was about to take place. A moment that simply had to be recorded for posterity and, of course, for the online bragging rights.

Now that the former Imperial yacht's conversion was complete, the ship's old name was finally being removed. Within a few hours, a new name would be etched into the shining gold trim above the ship's stern shuttle hangar, and they were quite determined to be the first outsiders to see it. For the moment, however, there was nothing for them to do but stay out of the way, watch, and wait.

"Wow!" remarked a petite elf-eared ashiri as she adjusted the brown leather bag that carried her logs, camera, and other sundry shipspotting kit. "Imagine being stuck up there for, like, the rest of forever! Wouldn't that just totally suck?"

"Who do you think she might be?" a slender, gazelle horned koyoki inquired as she struggled to focus her antique film camera on the glossy black shape.

"Probably just some random chick who got her ass glistened at the Gelarium," a tigress fey'li replied as she brushed her long black hair in

preparation for a bit of video commentary. “Bet she’s having second thoughts now, huh?”

“I don’t know about that,” a bald, silver skinned sel’au responded as she adjusted the orientation of a rather rough looking, second-hand hovering camera orb. “I heard from some girls who work down at the shipyard that it came with the ship when the Empress gifted it to Gelitech.”

“Was it not Princess Meylah’s favorite yacht or something like that?” a tall, ram-horned mitanni asked as she rummaged around her black canvas backpack for a snack.

“You know what I heard?” a leopardess fey’li replied as she wrote an observation on the ship’s exquisitely smooth paint job in her fancy leather bound journal. “I heard that the girl up there is actually the Princess herself! Neat, huh?”

“That’s just a rumor,” the frustrated sel’au replied as her wobbly orb decided that upside-down was right-side up.

“Totally bunk,” the ashiri agreed as she pulled her comm out from the back pocket of her tight purple bike shorts and held it up to take a few pictures for quick posting to her personal CoreNet

profile. "I mean, why would such a rich royal pussy even agree to something like that?"

"Jeez, have you been living under a rock or something," the tigress quipped as she adjusted her breezy black pants. "Haven't you seen all the crazy shit our royal twats get up to? She was probably relieved to get offered the chance to get glistened instead of getting picked for something really nasty like that Abdication Day rowa crap."

"Offered? I sincerely doubt that the Empress would have given her any say in the matter," the mitanni commented as she took a bite from a large and quite crumbly granola bar. She brushed the stray bits from her soft tan blouse, much to the joy of the golden carp that had clustered along the wharf's edge hoping for handouts. "You know how she is. Always wanting the royal ladies to set a mindlessly obedient example for everyone to follow."

"Why is she so obsessed with getting women to transform away their reproductive qualities?" the koyoki asked as she gave up on her old camera. Instead, she followed the ashiri's example, pulling her own comm from amid the bright blue sash of her flowery green kimono. Its high tech multi-port camera could do so much more than the old SLR.

“Yeah, huh?” the ahsiri responded with a roll of her eyes. “I thought the whole resource crunch thing was, like, totally debunked.”

“It was,” the tigress noted as she unzipped her form fitting orange sport top until her soft white cleavage fluff began to show. “Totally.”

“So this whole girls-gone-neutered thing is just the Empress trying to get us all into her weird kink or something?” the leopardess as she unclipped a small pair of folding binoculars from the belt of her golden-gray pencil miniskirt. “I mean... not that I’m complaining. Just thinking about some of what I’ve seen makes me a bit... well... uh... you know.”

“Royals using the people to satisfy their darker inclinations has been a think since time immortal,” the mitanni agreed as she watched a group of black biogel clad crew members moving a batch of small crates up the gangway and into the ship’s port side docking port. “But who can possibly blame her? It is so much fun to watch so many people happily getting themselves completely screwed for life on camera, is it not?”

“Not nearly as fun as trying it out for yourself,” a softly sublime new voice purred from atop a dark blue cargo container that had been placed on the

wharf in part to block unwelcome interlopers from blundering into the work zone alongside the ship. “What do you girls say? Want to go for a ride you’ll never, ever forget?”

The petite snow leopardess lay quite lazily upon the edge of the cargo container’s roof. Her long gray ponytail dangled over the edge. Its heavy, artificial looking strands bobbed and bounced in a distinctly rubbery manner as she gazed down upon her visitors with piercing, deep purple eyes.

Perhaps even more rubbery than her hair was the piquant odor of warm latex rubber. This boldly defied the eastward morning breeze, instead finding its way downward to hover in a cloud around the startled objects of the snow leopardess’ attention. The overt scent carried along with it a carefully curated selection of more subtle and insidious olfactory stimulants. Pheromones of the sort that were certain to arouse certain erotic senses, reduce even the more strongly held inhibitions, and even blunt the sharp edge of the most deeply ingrained survival instincts. There was little anyone could do to resist their intense power, let alone prevent their own bodies from responding in kind.

To the eyes of the startled shipspotters, the little snow leopardess looked like they’d just woken her

up from a long and pleasant nap with their noisy banter. Though her face was smiling, the glistening, pearly-white gel that coated her from neck to toe seemed far less welcoming of their disturbance. Dark tendrils seethed beneath its milky surface, all up and down her left side. Here and there the corruption broke through onto the surface, forming glossy obsidian patches that moved about in a deeply unsettling fashion.

In truth, Chyka Riyalli hadn't actually been napping atop the container. She had so many better things to do than waste the morning sunning herself like some bare bodied mortal. There were so many little projects to look after. So many new toys to experiment with. So many new playthings to store away for later study and enjoyment.

All the same, even Gelitech's fabled 'Librarian' couldn't let such a perfect opportunity slip through her glistening biogel coated fingers, no matter how much she might have preferred spending the morning thinking up new and conceptually twisted things for her willing captives to experience for the sake of science. If ever there were six women totally deserving to be added to her collection, then these were certainly them. Curious. Intellectual. Physically fit. Attractive, even. And, perhaps just as

importantly, deeply skeptical about anything she might dare to propose.

“I don’t think...” the koyaki finally responded after a few long moments of awkward silence.

“Perfect!” Chyka replied with a smile so palatably inviting that even the most chaste of souls would have found it difficult not to feel attracted to her. She was an angel, after all. A very dark sort of angel, but an angel nonetheless. “Don’t think about it. That’s where the trouble always starts. Just say yes. It’ll be fun. Really fun. Trust me. You’ll love it!”

“Do you really think that is going to work on us?” the mitanni inquired with a roll of her big brown eyes. “What do you think that we are? Sheep?”

“Certainly not,” Chyka replied with no small effort to keep herself from laughing aloud at the mitanni’s highly amusing lack of self-awareness. “No. What I see here are six adventurous ladies who love big boats so much that they’d just jump at any chance to run off into space to see ships the likes of which no shipspotter has ever seen before.”

“As if,” the ashiri snorted with audible contempt at the little snow leopardess’ dubious attempt at flattery.

“Well, I mean, what kind of ships are you talking about here?” the leopardess asked as she closed her journal and put it into her blue canvas purse. The twitching of her nose made it quite clear that the potent pheromones were already starting to have the desired effect. “Because it’s going have to be something pretty incredible to get me to even consider thinking about thinking about it.”

“Yeah,” the sel’au agreed with an odd look that suggested that the pheromones were having a rather different effect on her. She seemed a bit put off. Unsettled, even.

“And don’t tell us it’s jump-sail skiffs,” the koyoki scowled as she tucked her comm back into the sash of her kimono. She didn’t seem affected by the pheromones at all. That was no real surprise, of course. Predator descendant pheromones tended to have far less effect on prey descendant species, if any at all. “I am *not* falling for that scam a second time.”

Chyka couldn’t help but chuckle. Promises of encounters with jump-sail skiffs were the space travel equivalent of the old ghost hunting crap that was, for some strange reason, still quite popular on the net. Anyone with a brain in their head knew that jump-sail skiffs didn’t exist. Except the ones

that did. No one had ever actually seen one, but they had seen the ghostly impressions left by ancient vessels who'd encountered some horrible transdimensional catastrophe in days long since passed. Ghost ships, as real as such a thing could possibly be, but not really something that could be deliberately found.

"No one in their right mind goes looking for jump-sails," the biogel coated snow leopardess said as she slid her legs over the edge of the cargo container, creating an involuntary symphony of little rubbery noises as she moved. "They may find them anyway, but that's another story entirely, isn't it? What I'm thinking of is something a bit more interesting. What would you girls think of the chance to be the first shipspotters to record, say, a real, *modern* von'kir collector?"

Chyka knew her targets. She knew them well. She had been a night librarian at the Mashiva Mariners' University, after all. It was a school full of space-heads obsessed with strange alien ships and technology who's most inquired upon midnight topics related to the ancient powers and their often quite strange methods of interstellar conveyance. Surely this group of similarly obsessed ladies would find the chance to personally encounter such a

vessel a lure more powerful than even the most viscerally enticing of her pheromones.

“The von’kir died off ages ago,” the tigress responded, shaking her head with visible annoyance as the sunlight began to shift in a manner that was quite unfavorable for videography. “Everyone knows that!”

“Actually, everyone knows there is a real, honest-to-goodness von’kir living right here in Mashiva,” the mitanni remarked with a knowing look and a sly little sideways glance at the little snow leopardess. It was clear that she knew exactly what sort of biological game was taking place. She wasn’t going to object to the game, of course. Sheep never objected. Neither did mitanni.

“The creature runs a spa of sorts in Northwestie,” the mitanni continued, taking a deep breath between sentences. Clearly she was enjoying the disinhibiting effects of the pheromones. Given how much the average mitanni loved to steep themselves in equally potent fey’li ‘nip, that was no real surprise. “She does unspeakable things to the bodies of those who surrender to her. You really should watch the videos. They are quite... deeply stimulating, if you know what I really do mean. And I really do mean.”

“Ooh! I heard of that one!” the ashiri exclaimed as she tucked her comm back from whence it came. “She puts a collar on you and then she uses her crazy alien magic to melt all your cares away. And, you know, most of your body. And brains. And looks. I mean, have you seen those things when she’s done with them? Talk about nasty!”

“How did she even get here?” the sel’au asked with one eyebrow raised. “Don’t the von’kir live on the other side of the galaxy?”

“Well, that’s the mystery, isn’t it?” Chyka mused as she playfully pranced past her skeptical quarry, thickening the invisible pheromone cloud in the process.

In all honestly, the little snow leopardess didn’t actually much care for her ability to generate truly unholy quantities of highly manipulative, biogel enhanced pheromones. It was far to indirect for her increasingly showy sensibilities. And it was far to close to crossing that one line that even Gelitech’s new powerhouse of glossy living rubber temptation refused to cross.

It was one thing to entice a skeptical soul into doing something that they generally wouldn’t. It was entirely another thing to compel them to do it.

How much pheromonal inducement did it take before she crossed that forbidden line? And how could she possibly keep herself from compelling some members of a group with quantities of pheromones that only had a mild effect on her primary target?

Legalities aside, it was simply no fun at all to have people mindlessly surrender themselves because their own bodies refused to offer their minds any real choice in the matter. The fun was in the work of enticement. In convincing perfectly average people into willingly agreeing to do things that average people normally regarded as being completely unthinkable. Things that would alter their bodies. Their minds. Drastically. Sometimes quite disgustingly. And generally very, very permanently.

“I mean, a ship that can cross the galaxy in a reasonable time?” Chyka continued, toning back on her pheromonal emissions as she turned to face her small audience with a thoughtful yet enthusiastic expression on her face. “I can’t wait to actually see it! I wonder if I can convince them to let me see the inside of it too. Wouldn’t that be something? Can you even begin to imagine it?”

“You know what they’re going to want as payment in exchange for that? They’re going to want that shiny ass of yours,” the tigress laughed as she turned sideways and gestured to her own pleasingly round posterior. “Won’t that look funny, huh? All shiny and gooey and shriveled up like a raisin!”

“Small price to pay,” Chyka replied with a shrug and a mischievous wink at the mitanni. If anyone was going to play her game to the end it was the sheep. And once the sheep decided to play, the rest were sure to follow. They just wouldn’t be able to help themselves. “Small price to get the chance to post videos of the workings of a real von’kir collector on your CoreNet profiles too. Just think of what that’d do to your follower count!”

“It would certainly have quite the positive effect,” the mitanni replied, crossing her arms as she offered the little snow leopardess a playfully uncertain look. “Though it would also have quite the finality to it, would it not? I cannot imagine that I would be allowed to film unless I was to surrender myself for similar treatment.”

“I would so watch that,” the leopardess chuckled.

“What more can you tell me about this von’kir collector?” the mitanni inquired with a raised eyebrow. “Is it really special enough for me to risk my body to document? As much as I would very much like to witness your transformation into a walking, gibbering little prune of a creature, I must know more. Tell me everything you know and I will perhaps consider it.”

“Oh, come now! Be a sport and play the game,” Chyka cooed enticingly. If there was anything that got a mitanni girl feeling adventurous, it was the intimation that she wasn’t. “What’s the fun if it all gets spoiled before it even starts?”

“You have a fair point,” the mitanni replied, shrugging her shoulders in bemused resignation.

“No she doesn’t,” the tigress objected. “She just wants to get all of our asses shriveled up and sent of to Goddess knows where so she can post videos herself.”

“Well... I don’t know,” the leopardess murmured, biting her lower lip as her body began to add its own pheromones into the mix. “I mean... what’s... what’s in it for me. Besides the whole posting nasty vids on the net thing.”

“Well, for starters, you’ll get to choose from a selection of various tasks to perform aboard ship while we travel between destinations,” Chyka answered with just enough of the truth to not technically be lying. “And did I mention you’ll be getting paid? I’ll bet no one has ever offered to pay you to shipspot before, have they? Five hundred credits a week plus shore expenses, room, and board.”

“Do we have to wear that... goo?” the koyoki asked as she eyed the little snow leopardess and her bizarre coating with considerable suspicion. She was beginning to look a bit blush in the face. No doubt the pheromones were starting to have an effect even upon her. That or she was trying her best to hide the fact she was starting to feel a bit of social pressure to go along with her far less inhibited companions. “It looks so... unpleasant.”

“Only if you want to,” Chyka replied with flirty wink. “Biogel is everywhere aboard the ship, but you don’t have to wear it. It comes in more than one variety too, mind you. Most girls prefer the plain obsidian black. It’s less... active, if you catch my drift.”

“Yuck,” the ashiri muttered as she too began to blush. “Getting sexed up by goo and, like, spending

all day in your own juices and... that's... that's just gross."

"It's also quite popular on the net," Chyka answered with a grin. "You want followers, getting a suit of perfectly polished biogel is definitely the way to go. You want even more, try a body mod. Maybe go inflato? Come on. It's getting to be summer. You just know deep down that you're all curious to know what putting on an inflatosuit feels like!"

"I definitely do not," the sel'au responded with a sour look and a shake of her head. "And there's nothing you can do to convince me otherwise."

"Well, I tried," Chyka laughed. "But there's so many more options that I'm sure something will pique your interest eventually. But I've gone off on a bit of a tangent, haven't I?"

"You most certainly have," the mitanni replied with a smirk. "And you will pardon my skepticism, but I must wonder if all this promise of seeing a real von'kir collector is just a ploy to recruit our bodies to be converted into products for sale."

"Oh, definitely not," Chyka assured the mitanni with a soft smile. "I'm just... well. Perhaps I'm just getting a bit too ahead of things. There are plenty

of things to do while we travel between sources of alien experience and technology that we wish to study. They're all purely optional, depending on the role you sign up for."

"I am extremely unconvinced," the koyoki declared with a frown.

"Well... you won't really know unless you try it, right?" Chyka said as she gestured toward the gangway. "So... what do you girls say? Wait. No. You know what? Don't answer. Let's get you where you want to be first, hmm? You want to see the renaming, right? Take pictures. Vids. Post to the net. That kind of stuff. So how about I get you a front row seat and then we can talk about it once its all done? How does that sound?"

"Well, I can't really say no to an offer like that, can I?" the leopardess remarked as she looked around at her shipspotting companions. "What about you girls?"

"Agreed," the mitanni concurred.

"I guess I'm in," the ashiri nodded.

"Yeah," the tigress agreed. "Sounds like a fair deal."

“I’m sure there’s a catch,” the sel’au noted. “But still... how can I possible argue?”

“I don’t know,” the koyoki murmured. “I mean, there’s no commitment, but... well, if you’re all going, then I will too.”

“Great!” Chyka exclaimed with delight. “Follow me!”

**TWO**

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**CURIOUS TAILS**

**COMING SOON...**