

### (Excerpt Chapter 4: The One Who Came After)

Imagining herself surrounded by lilacs, she and pet vanished from her room, dropped into her special field. Filled with thick lilacs as tall as her, covered her nakedness as she walked, smelling and tasting them.

In front of her, a dozen 7-foot-tall lilac knight trees awaited her arrival. Time she calmed her guests, hissing and thrashing. “Ahh, must be hungry.”

Inside a 25-foot-wide by 6-foot-tall horizontal glass cage, were three 30-foot pythons.

She giggled, as the brown spotted snake and the lime green tussled. The brown serpent one, smacked the other against the cage. The yellow one stayed curled up in the corner.

“If only you two had enough gumption to kill Daddy.”

The 30-foot pythons had grown considerably in the past 10 years. From slithering human children, frightening Towner children in the schoolyard, to grieving parents finding actual snakes in their children’s beds.

Cousins Damon, Kathy, and Jonathan could be useful, so Mirabella kept them as pets. Wanted them to torture and kill, but only the yellow serpent, Kathy complied. Practicing on unsuspecting Towner children.

“I had one of the hands catch some fish from the lake for you Kathy, since you’ve been most willing. Your cowardly cousins, on the other hand, simply scaring people is not enough,” the daughter shouted at Damon, the brown snake and Jonathan, lime green. “What do you have to say for yourselves. I am not in the mood for simpletons.”

They flickered their tongues and curled up in a corner.

Kathy moved forward, “I promised I would do what you asked, no need to bother with them. Please let them go.”

“Well, aren’t you ungrateful. I brought you fish and all you do is beg for mercy.”

Mirabella stomped her feet, “I tell you what, no fish for you. You can eat the lowly crickets I brought for the other two.”

She opened a jar of live crickets from underneath the cage and dumped it inside. Hardly enough for the three but they sucked up what they could before the live crickets got away.

The yellow python sat in the corner, allowing her cousins to share the small meal. Tears forming but unable to let them fall for she was no longer human.

Mirabella would give Kathy another chance she felt would come soon. Had to do it with caution, otherwise she’d risk being admonished by the elder woman, who came to tell her stories. Her powers were to be inconspicuous, the reason for using lilac. It was subtle.

“One day, Daddy, one day.”