

GELITECH

TWEEN-EPIISODE 4. ... -1?

IF I FITS, THEN I SHIPS

BY SHETIRA ANWAE

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IF I FITS, THEN I SHIPS

Tashie smiled as she leaned on the gallery railing and watched the helpless gummies drop into the packaging machine. One by one the glistening black bodies fell into the clear-walled encasement chamber from the hidden conveyor belt above. Within the machine, the generic, completely anonymous humanoid shapes were floated in a null gravity field, posed as if standing, with their arms passively hanging at their sides. An array of sprayers to either side cast a fine mist of colored aerogel onto the completely passive biogel bodies. Pink for the women. Blue for the men. Purple for the full featured hermaphrodites. And an airy light blue for the rest.

Once the encasement process was complete, the gummies again dropped downward, this time into the packaging machine proper. There was a light

buzzing sound as they did so, as excess aerogel was trimmed away. A flurry of powdered particulate would puff up into the encasement chamber as each of the encampments was trimmed to fit snugly into a clear plastic retail packaging tube. This powder would then be sucked away by a vacuum, while the packaged gummy was boxed for eventual shipping. Then another gummy would drop into the encasement chamber and the process would repeat, seemingly ad-infinitum.

Down at floor level, the boxed gummies would be dispensed directly onto another conveyor belt. A fully automated system would then convey them underneath the Gelarium's central biogel pool, into the shipping hall along its western side. Once there, they would be inserted into a special dispenser rack to await their shipping to some lucky buyer, or to any one of the two dozen Gelitech retail establishments located all over the world of Maria.

Despite appearances, and the usual assumptions made by the tourists for whom the gallery had been constructed, most of the Gummies being packed in the facility came from elsewhere. Virtually every unallocated gummy created in the Maria System would be sent to the Gelarium, Most of these would then be packaged for resale.

"I wonder who all these people actually were," Chyka asked softly as she stood next to the tigress. It was, of course, a rhetorical question. Unless a gummy had sold themselves, as themselves, no effort was made to keep their former identity linked to their current form. When being picked up, they were simply piled up with no regard to where they'd come from. Then they were shuffled around and piled up again as they were prepared for packaging. And then, the packaging system shuffled them around again, once at the intakes, a second time when racking the final boxed product, and then a third time when selecting gummies from the rack for each specific order.

Only the one's who'd sold themselves through VixNet were actually kept track of. Obviously, the buyer expected to get who they'd bought. They were tagged and kept separate, and run through the shipping system in special batches. The ones going through the system now, however, were totally anonymous. And that fascinated the little snow leopardess in a very compelling, albeit equally unnatural way.

"Amazing, isn't it?" Tashie replied as yet another anonymous biogel body descended into the encasement chamber. "No one knows. And no one really cares. They're just dolls. Toys. Objects. The soul inside is just a kinky bonus, like a sweet bit of caramel inside a succulent coating of dark chocolate. And you know what?"

"What?" Chyka inquired.

"One of these days," Tashie answered, turning to her companion with a broad, mischievous grin, "that's going to be us in there. Awesome, right?"

A shudder ran down Chyka's spine. The tigress was right. One of these days, it would almost certainly be their turn to be packaged up and sold off as anonymous pleasure dolls. Unless something else intervened first, of course. In a place like the Gelarium, that was always a very distinct possibility.

"Don't you wonder what it's actually like?" Tashie went on. "Trapped in a body you can't move. Not until someone makes you warm. And then even barely. Unable to speak. Unable to hear. Unable to do anything but let someone else move you and touch you and do whatever they want with you. Over and over and over and... don't you wonder?"

"Sometimes," Chyka replied. "But it's not something I really ever think about trying."

It was a lie, of course. Every time she watched someone get glistened, she thought about actually trying it. Her biogel wife wouldn't let her think otherwise. But so far, her wife had left the decision up to her, and she just wasn't ready for such an extreme change of lifestyle yet.

"Hey girls!" Gorin called out as he stepped out from the nearby lift. "Say... one o' ye lasses wanna do me a real big favor?"

"Maybe," Tashie replied with a smirk. "What is it?"

"Got one more spot on that field trip up northways I gotta fill, an fast," Gorin replied. "Somethin te do with'at project o' Doctor Mika's. Whatcha say? Either one o' ye wanna give it a go?"

Tashie shook her head. "Well, I'd love to, but I'm a bit busy for the next few days. Private

session tonight. Then I absolutely *have* to snag some tourists to join the mermaids. And then I've got that demo over at..."

"I'll go," Chyka interrupted. If there was one thing about Dr. Mika's projects, they always seemed to be quite interesting' in an odd, well-meaning, yet highly impractical way. And they rarely involved any actual peril. Except when marketing got involved. But those events seemed to be very few and far between. "I mean, as long as it's okay with the Matron. I wouldn't want to mess up the schedule or anything."

"Oh, it's fine as shiny black bum," Gorin answered with a relieved smile. "Priority one sort o' deal. Jus grab any girl n' get em goin. Honestly, though, I was gettin worried no one was gonna bite."

"Well then, you have fun, hmm?" Tashie said, patting her companion on the back before wandering off down the corridor toward the

mermaid viewing tunnels on the opposite side of the shippin hall.

"I'm sure I will," Chyka answered.

"Ready te go?" Gorin asked. "All the other girls are all packed up already, so they're jus waitin on you."

"Well, sure," Chyka replied, not quite sure what the rush was. How long had Gorin been looking for someone to join the trip? "But... uh... I don't have anything packed for a trip. How long will it be? Do I need anything specific?"

"Dunna worry bout that," Gorin replied with a sly smirk. "The only thing needin packin right now is that bum o' yours."

"What do you mean?" Chyka inquired. "Is it just a day trip? Isn't it kind of late for that?"

Gorin chuckled. "Dun ye worry bout a thing," he said, gesturing toward the white circle on the floor where demonstration gummies were sometimes inserted into the packing system for the viewing pleasure of the Gelarium's many visiting tourists. "Jus stand right there in the demo ring and ye'll be on yer way way in a jiffy!"

Chyka frowned. "You're going to box me up and mail me someplace, aren't you?"

"Sure am!" Gorin laughed. "Dun ye worry bout it. It'll be lots o' fun."

Chyka sighed and resigned herself to yet another awkward experience at the hands of her excessively mischievous coworkers. At least Goring wasn't likely to be conniving her into doing something that had the potential for permanent physical effects. He was just too nice and honest for that. That was why he was the head of the shipping department, and not a model working on the floor. Too many cuddles and

conversation, and not a gummy to show for it. Or anything else for that matter. Then again, his cuddles *were* the best kind of cuddles. That was why all the girls liked him so much.

"If you say so," Chyka said with a flick of her long, silvery hair. "As long as I'm not getting glistened before I'm getting packaged."

"Oh, hells no!" Gorin replied. "Dun think fer one moment I'mma let that bum o' yers get gummied! Like ye way too much fer that, lass. Way too much."

"Alright then," Chyka answered with a soft smile. "Are you sure I'm going to fit in a gummy tube though? They're kind of small."

"So are you, lass," Gorin responded with a chuckle. "Ye'll fit jus fine."

"Fine," Chyka replied with another sigh. "If I fits, I ships. Is that how it goes?"

"That it does, lass," Gorin laughed. "Go on now. An' have fun, will ye?"

"I'll try," Chyka replied as she stepped into the white circle. "I'll try."

The little snow leopardess yelped as she was suddenly and unceremoniously sucked straight up through an opening in the ceiling and into the space above the gallery. She twisted and tumbled in a null gravity field, manipulated by unseen forces until she was forced down onto the stiff, rubbery conveyor belt, flat on her back. Her feet faced in the direction of the belt's travel. Beyond them, almost touching her, was the shiny black head of a gummy. And beyond that was another. And then another.

Above Chyka's head were the feet of a very obviously male gummy. There were more gummies beyond him. She tried to sit up a bit, to see how far back the conveyor tunnel traveled, but a force field was holding her firmly in place. She

could do nothing but lay there and wait for her turn in what she presumed to be the very same packing machine that she and Tashie had just been watching.

What have I gotten myself into this time? Chyka asked herself in silence as the gummy furthest below her feet fell into the encasement chamber with a soft *shoop!* The more she thought about it, the more she wondered why anyone might think it necessary to run her through the packing machine instead of having her take the train. The latter was surely faster, and almost certainly far less expensive. It didn't make one bit of sense to her. What purpose could there possibly be?

Before she knew it, the gummy right below the little snow leopardess' feet had fallen down into the encasement chamber. From the gallery, the system had seemed to take its time with each gummy. Inside the conveyor tunnel, waiting for her turn, the whole process seemed to be going

quite a bit faster. At least that was how it seemed to the machine's helpless little captive.

Chyka could hear the soft hiss of the aerogel sprayers now. The buzz of the machine as it cut away the gummy's excess coating of foam. The sound of it thumping down into its plastic tube. The hum of the labels being printed and applied. And the cardboardy crinkle as the box was formed and sealed around it. And then...

Chyka took a deep breath as she started to slide over the end of the conveyor and drop into the encasement chamber. To her considerable surprise, the biogel around her neck liquefied and spread over her head in a protective coating, as it was wont to do whenever she was facing some imminent physical peril. It filled her nose, ears and mouth as it took over her providing oxygen to her lungs. Her senses heightened, and she could see all around herself, all at once. For a brief moment, it was highly disorienting. She felt a bit dizzy. Then the aerogel began to spray.

For some strange reason, the nearly transparent gel was totally opaque to the little snow leopardess' biogel-altered visual perception. It clung to her glistening black body and found its way into every little space and crevice. Though it held her firmly in the same passive pose as it did the gummies, it also felt soft and strangely cozy, in a rather kinky sort of way. And, somehow, it was making her feel very, very sleepy.

Before Chyka could quite process whether or not she actually liked being held so firmly within the aerogel encasement, she could feel herself falling. Down she went, through the buzzing trimmers and into her plastic tube. She felt the final thump, and the whole aerogel mass wavered and jiggled in a surprisingly soothing fashion.

So... *weird*, the little snow leopardess thought to herself as she struggled to stay awake. It was weird indeed, but there was no denying that it was

also quite comfy. It was certainly quite likable. For now, at least.

Chyka could feel her prison jostle a bit, no doubt as the machine wrapped a cardboard shipping box around her, and filled the empty space with packing bubbles. Then could feel herself moving to one side, no doubt out of the machine, and onto the first leg of her trip to... wherever it was she was being sent to. Then she could feel herself getting woozy. A grayness washed through her mind, as the real world gave way to dreams. Dreams of glistening black mermaids, dancing in the sky as the clouds gave way to a black sun. A black sun that was slowly turning purple. Bright, luminous purple, and infinity beyond.

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TO BE CONTINUED...