

Merry Wednesday world. The idea for this story happened when I was on the way to the coffee shop this morning. I was listening to a song and it talked about everything you touch turning to gold. So naturally, it led to an author being kidnapped by aliens and forced to tell new stories all the time or die. We're almost to the end now. Only one more story left. Please Enjoy.

Leltro Strey

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Total Time: 1 hour 13 minutes

Outside the wall, they roared in anticipation, chanting his name over and over, *Leltro Strey, Leltro Strey!* Of course, that wasn't the man's real name, he'd once been just another Joe or Bob, or maybe even Ben. A simple American name that he now spent hours trying to remember every day. But it never came, he'd been Leltro Strey for too long now. *The teller of tales* was what it translated to in English. Sometimes, when he wasn't trying to remember his plain jane name of his past, he would try and figure out how many years it'd been since he'd been taken from Earth. But time was different in space and it quickly lost its meaning.

Leltro dropped his head into his hands and took long deep breaths as he stared at the baseball sized scar in his calf. This was his routine, before every show while they chanted his name from the other side of the wall, he would let his long hair fall over his hands and shoulders creating a veil from the world. And he would remember. He could still feel the burning from the spear as it tore through his leg. They all laughed when he screamed, making a joke out of him in an alien language far beyond his human comprehension.

"If you ever again you tell a tale the universe already knows, never again will you tell a tale." The things voices were deep and gurgly when they spoke English, like a man trying to speak through a throat-full of mouthwash. He'd been relaying his favorite story, *The Princess Bride*, a classic. The spear was ripped from his leg before he was carried back to his cell and left to prepare his tale for the next day.

A person wouldn't think beings who thrived off of such intelligence could possibly look so hideous. They were fat and green, with pig-like snouts and large brains that pressed up against the skull of their heads so fiercely the imprint could be seen on the scalp.

It took many years before Leltro finally felt like he understood the creatures. But it was the same night as the spear penetrated his leg that he knew exactly what they wanted from him. Beyond the wall, as his mind swam with pain, he heard another man take the stage. He began speaking and was immediately cut-off by what Leltro could only assume was the same gurgly monster that had just given him the piercing of a lifetime.

"We have a new teller of tales now, no longer do we need your unoriginal babble. Once we thought you were the greatest in the universe and fed on your words with much joy. But now all you spout is old and recycled swill, your words taste like poison in our mouths, and so you shall taste poison in your own."

Leltro listened to the words, certain he was having some sort of terrible hallucination and would soon wake up in his comfortable king-sized bed on Earth. The monsters erupted in noise on the other side of the wall and Leltro passed out.

Deep breath in, deep breath out. This was his routine, he made himself remember that night before every show. Leltro didn't know how many shows he'd performed anymore, couldn't remember how many stories he'd told. He tried to keep count for a little while as a way to keep track of time, but without ever seeing beyond his cell and the showroom, time meant less and less to him until eventually, it was nothing more than a word he used in his tales.

He thought about the irony of his predicament on occasion. When he'd been whatever Joe, Bob,

or Ben that he was on Earth—before they'd captured him—he'd been an acclaimed author of fiction. It was a joke he and his author friends had, that one day he would be hailed as the best storyteller in the entire galaxy. If only he could send a message back to them now, maybe a picture of the best storyteller not only in the galaxy, but it would seem the entire universe. He wondered if they would be jealous. After all, the monster's that now chanted his name did nothing but search the deep expanse of space for better story tellers. And he could tell by the silver in his hair that he'd been the best for some time now. *Be careful what you wish for*, he thought to himself.

Leltro heard the familiar footsteps dragging their way down the hall and he lifted his head out of his hands. Showtime was upon him once again. He stood from his cot and walked to the doorway of his cell. To the naked eye, it appeared to be nothing more than an empty, doorless arch. Leltro had found out the hard way that if one tried to walk through, however, it was lights out until they woke you up for the next show. He could still remember the guards laughing as they prodded him awake and to his feet, and he thought maybe he'd tell an angry story at the show today.

The monster's oversized head appeared in the doorway and he heard the light *whoosh* that meant it was safe to exit.

"Leltro Strey, will it be today, that you give me a preview, of what it is you have to say?" It was the same question he'd been getting from the rhyming guard since his first show. Leltro kept his eyes forward and answered the monster with complete silence, the same answer he'd been giving him since the first show. After all, there were no words to be wasted on the way to the stage. If he was to be the best in the universe, if he was to keep his life, he needed every word in his body to spin thin air into gold.