

Trunk-N-Tail

By O. Grey

“God, you must be freezing.”

Thea looked up, closing her book on one of her fingers. A tall man, wearing black leather gloves, hovered over her place on the wooden park bench.

“Oh—Yeah, not really. I’m from New Zealand.” She furrowed her brows, waiting for him to be on his way, and returned to her reading.

His face twisted into a smile.

She watched from the corner of her eye, as he exhaled a white cloud and took down his umbrella. He sat next to her, unraveling his scarf, rubbing his hands together before he spoke.

“A Kiwi accent, wow,” he said.

Pursing her lips, she closed the book, pressing both her hands flat on its surface. Her red wool gloves, a contrast to the its black cover.

She frowned at the two crows cawing in the naked tree above them.

He tilted his head backwards and crossed his legs, smiling down at her. “What an odd little book,” he said, glancing down at the cover.

“You’ve read it?”

“Oh, no.” He shook his head. Thea couldn’t help but notice his perfectly groomed facial hair, and flawless skin. She considered the possibility of him being a psychopath.

“Oh.” Thea squirmed under his uncomfortable gaze. She gasped as he reached his hands toward her, taking the book from her lap.

“Hey! What the—” She tried to take it back, swiping at the air.

“These elephants, tail-n-tail. They just follow each other?” he said, holding it away from her, as he tapped his finger on the cover.

“It’s *trunk* and tail.” She tried reaching for the book once more. He held it above his head, with a smirk on his face.

“Who would want that kind of life, just staring into your buddy’s ass all day? And only a black background? Basic.” He turned the book in his hands, before handing it back. “I’d never read this.”

“This embrace, it signifies *friendship*,” she said, hugging the book to her chest.

“Friendship? You mean to tell me that nose-to-butt means best pals? Alright—okay. Let’s be friends, but you first,” he said, turning around to bend over.

Thea looked up to the sky, as if begging God to save her.

“You know, I know you came over here to try and ask me out. And I’m just going to tell you—”

A smile spread wide across his face as he his attention focused on something behind Thea. He rose from the wooden park bench with wide open arms.

“Phillip, baby.”

Thea turned to find small man in a black pea coat approaching them with a radiant smile. She raised her eyebrows, as she watched her flirtatious stranger greet Phillip with a kiss. They hugged and spoke for a moment before returning to the bench.

“Phil, this is my *friend*—.”

“Thea,” she said, attempting a friendly smile.

“Pleasure, Thea,” said Phillip, as he shook her hand. His coat sleeve rose on his arm, exposing a tattoo of two elephants, trunk-n-tail, on his wrist. “Mason, you never told me you had a *goddess* for a friend.” He touched one of Thea’s curls in admiration.

“Ah, yeah. That’s because we’ve only just met. Thea, was showing me her book.” Mason took the book from her again, showing it to Phil.

“I love this book! Such wonderful art, isn’t it?” Phillip said. He looked at Mason, who was rolling his eyes. “You can’t judge a book by its cover, baby.”

“I guess that’s true.” Mason peered down at Thea, a sarcastic smile on his face. “You were saying something earlier, right as Phil came. What was it?”

Her cheeks reddened, as she looked at the way Mason had his arm wrapped around little Phillip. “Oh—Nothing. I was just going to say that I had to leave.”

Phil handed Thea back the book, and nuzzled into Mason’s side.

“Oh, well, we won’t keep you. We should probably get going too, or we’ll miss the *matinée*,” said Mason.

“It was lovely to meet you, Thea,” Phillip said, as they turned and walked away hand in hand.

Thea waved, looking down at the cover of her book then back at Mason.