

# Trophy of a Hero (Mild Version)

Gift for Eddyboy1805 and RozzyTheToon

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There was an explosion. He had turned around, but there was no time to react. Black tendrils had come up to restrain him, and a wave of darkness had engulfed him.

Ignition woke up with a start. Where was he? He tried to get up, but his spandex-clad body was held down on a white table by dark tendrils.

*Dusk!* The villain's signature tendrils were unmistakable.

The wolgon looked around frantically as his vision cleared. He was in a small laboratory-like room. Everything was white: the wall panels, the ceiling, and even the table he was restrained on. He was probably in a villain's lair somewhere. Possibly underground too, away from the prying eyes of society and the Guardian Alliance.

The Guardian Alliance. Surely they'd notice that he was missing and come rescue him. Silverfrost, the head of the Alliance, was sharp about these things. Help would have to come soon, though, because if the tendrils were anything to go by, Dusk wasn't far away.

In the meantime, he'd have to take care of himself. His arms were restrained to his sides and his feet were spaced shoulder-width apart in a neutral position. More tendrils bound his chest to the table. Damn. To use his fire powers, he needed to move his body. Bound like this, he was literally powerless.

As far as he could tell, his mask had not been tampered with. The villain hadn't exposed his identity. Not yet, anyway. Craning his neck to look around, he could see a clear panel mounted on each side of the table, forming a sort of tank. The panels were just high enough that if water was poured into it, Ignition would be fully submerged. That was not good.

"You're awake."

A deep voice sent shudders down Ignition's spine. He looked towards the source of the voice to see Dusk enter the room. Well, not quite Dusk. In his villainous escapades, Dusk wore a black skin-tight suit with neon-purple highlights, along with an eye mask that hid his facial features. Yet even without the suit, the snake's jet-black scales and sapphire-blue highlights were a dead giveaway to Ignition's keen eyes.

Ignition grunted. The snake was wearing a tailor-fitted business suit that emphasised the curves of his muscular body. Without his suit, Dusk looked normal, almost as if he were a functioning member of society. The idea of evil lurking among the innocents of society was loathsome. What wouldn't he do to round the lot of them up and throw them into jail where they belonged?

"Where am I?" the hero asked.

Dusk chuckled. “Even as prisoners, you heroes always want to do the interrogation. Sure, I’ll indulge you. I’ll answer any three questions you have.”

Ignition was taken aback. Villains rarely divulged information so freely, but then again, Dusk wasn’t your typical villain. He’d have to make the most of it.

“Where are we now?”

“Silvenus Tower, 7th street, 53rd floor. The entire building happens to be my lair.”

Hiding in plain sight. Ignition clenched his teeth.

“Next question.”

“Who are you?”

“Dusk, unless you’re asking for my actual name. In that case, I’m Sephos Valon. That was an easy question. Are you sure you want to waste your questions on trivial matters like these?”

An uneasy feeling washed over Ignition. Something was off about this entire exchange. For a villain to be giving away all his secrets to a prisoner, it meant that Sephos had no intention of letting him go. Judging by his surroundings, he guessed the villain wanted to perform some sort of experiment on him. Maybe implant a mind control device in his brain, or to turn him into a living battery with his fire powers as his core. Whatever Sephos’ plan was, he’d have to buy as much time as he could.

“What do you want from me?”

“Hmm, finally a good question.” The snake grinned smugly. “I want to keep you as a trophy. Not as Cobra Fraener, but as Ignition.”

Ignition flinched. Sephos even knew his true identity.

“That’s why I left your mask untouched. I’ll have you preserved as the hero you are.”

“What are you going to do to me?!” Ignition thrashed in his restraints. “You’ll never get away with—mfft!” A dark tendril wrapped around his mouth, gagging him.

“Your three questions are up. Did you really think you could get me to do a long monologue until your friends come? Are all heroes this naive, or is it just you?”

“Mfnnt!” Ignition retorted.

Sephos leaned in with a smirk. Bearing his fangs, he sunk it into the base of the hero’s neck. Ignition grunted in pain. The serpent was pumping some kind of toxin into his veins! He didn’t know Dusk had venomous fangs, but this was something the Guardian Alliance needed to know! He had to tell them when he got out of here.

Ignition could feel the cold liquid spread across his chest, dispersing into the rest of his body. How poisonous was Sephos' toxin? He hoped there was time for him to get an antidote. Would it leave him with enough strength to escape? He would have to assume—

"It's not poison." The snake watched his panicked expression turn into confusion. "You'll see its effects soon enough."

Mounted above Ignition was a rectangular metal frame. Sephos grabbed it and pulled it down, assisted by sliding rails on the steel mount. As it descended over the wolgon, he could see that a transparent sheet was stretched over it. The metal frame slid into the space created by the four clear panels, perfectly flushed against their smooth surfaces.

Ignition had nowhere to escape to as the sheet was pressed over him. The sheet was flexible and elastic, stretching to fit the curves of his body. There was a soft whirring sound as an unseen vacuum sucked the air out from under the sheet. Ignition could feel a second sheet wrap around his body from behind him. The tendrils restraining him retreated into the shadow dimension, leaving the hero trapped between the two sheets. The wolgon attempted to take a breath, but the clear latex sheet only pressed harder against his nose.

*Shit, shit, shit!* He couldn't breathe!

The wolgon held his breath. When it came to holding his breath, his endurance was much greater than most people. However, he couldn't hold it forever. He had to escape if he wanted to survive. Sephos wasn't going to let him go after revealing all his secrets. This was really a situation of life or death.

He tried to lift his arms, but the rubber sheets pulled them back down. He could barely move them a few inches before the elastic tension dragged them back to the table. Despite his greatest efforts, he couldn't even lift his body off the table. Time for Plan B. He dug his gloved claws into the latex sheets, trying to tear a hole into them. The sheets moved with his fingers, refusing to give the hero any leverage against their elastic surfaces.

Heat emanated from behind him, but it wasn't because of his fire ability. The table under him was heating up. As Ignition continued to thrash about, he could feel the two latex sheets fusing together. The heat was sealing him in! His struggles grew feebler as he was vacuum-packed like a fresh slab of meat.

Ignition clenched his throat. His lungs were screaming for air and he had to fight the urge to take a deep breath. Even with his endurance, he gave himself another three, maybe four more minutes before his lungs gave out. His life was on the line. He couldn't rely on help to come. The wolgon renewed his efforts in trying to escape.

He couldn't hold his breath for much longer. Instincts won over conscious effort and he gasped for air. He could exhale just fine, but as he inhaled, the latex sheet was sucked against his face. Taking another breath was a herculean effort, and it took everything within him to draw in just a small breath of air.

Sephos watched intently as the hero struggled in his latex prison, fighting for his life. He nodded. Holes along the sides of the table began pumping in a clear, viscous liquid. It lapped against the vacuum-sealed superhero, adding resistance to his squirms. It spilled over the edges of the latex sheets, engulfing Ignition beneath its viscous flow.

The wolgon frantically tried to lift his arms, no longer an attempt to escape, but as an instinctive reaction to clutch at his throat. His chest felt constricted, desperately trying to quench the fire in his lungs with a breath of fresh air. The liquid was heavy, compressing his chest beneath its weight.

*Hold on for just a while longer. Help would have to come soon.*

A part of him knew that was a lie, but he was grasping at straws. Even just a glimmer of hope could give him just a bit more perseverance. The rising liquid stopped at the height of the panels, forming a flat glossy surface above the table. Despite the hero's movements, the surface of the viscous fluid remained undisturbed, as if he was separated from the rest of the world by a pane of solid glass. The latex sheets were invisible in the fluid, giving the impression that the struggling hero was encased in a transparent block.

Lights from the tabletop and the ceiling turned on, casting a purple-blue light all over him. Ignition instinctively closed his eyes to shield his eyes from the stinging glare. He didn't know what was happening, but one thing was clear: he needed to escape. Sephos had left the room, leaving the wolgon to his fate. If he could get out of this predicament before the serpent came back, he could find a way out of the building and escape.

As he tried to break free of the latex, he came to a terrible realisation: the liquid was getting thicker as time went by. The purple-blue light was UV-curing the fluid, which must be liquid resin. He was getting encased in a block of resin! Time was running out. If he didn't get out of this, he'd be permanently sealed in.

He could no longer hold his breath. The wolgon let out a gasp, but his next breath was impossible. The resin was curing around his body, leaving no space for his chest to rise. Not that there was any air to be inhaled either; all the air had been sucked out of his latex prison. His body was not taking this well. Fighting for survival, his body's natural instincts took over. His muscles were tensed as he tried to thrash around. His chest was convulsing in the little space it had left, trying in vain to breathe in air that wasn't there.

*Surely this was the end for him.*

His pained expression softened as he gradually slipped away. The tension in his chest eased up. A fuzzy haze enveloped his mind, giving his thoughts a foggy quality as his vision faded away. The resin around him hardened into a solid block, encasing him permanently like a fly in amber.

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Ignition woke up to distorted glimmers of lights above him. Was this the afterlife? He tried to move, but found it impossible. It was as if an invisible force was holding him down. Something hard like...

*Resin?*

That meant he was still alive! But how? Sephos must've done something to him. The venom. The venom that Sephos injected must've somehow kept him alive. The unyielding resin still constricted his chest, but he didn't need to breathe. Instead, there was just an aching in his chest, caused by his instinctive urges to fill his lungs with air. Quelling his discomfort, he looked around.

The lights above him were from ceiling lights. He could make out people in the peripheral of his vision, but he couldn't turn his head to look at them clearly. There were faint vibrations around him, as if things were being moved about. From the modern-looking ceiling tiles and the arrangement of people, Ignition guessed that he was in a conference room. But that would mean he's...the table? Sephos must've incorporated his resin block into a conference table.

Ignition let out a soft, inaudible whimper. Sephos had turned him into an object. A mere keepsake. A heroic trophy, still donned in his fiery red costume. No. No, no, no! This could not be happening. He felt helpless and vulnerable, having been frozen and put on display for everyone to see him in his humiliation.

He could make out the black-scaled snake hovering around the corner of his vision. Another figure caught his eye. A familiar white-furred snow leopard was sitting to his side! Silverfrost, the leader of the Guardian Alliance! Silverfrost was here to save him. He moved his eyes, trying to signal to the snow leopard that he wasn't a prop. That he was very much alive and in need of rescue.

The snow leopard looked straight into his eyes, and the wolgon could see a moment of realisation in his eyes. The feline gave him an inconspicuous smirk.

*Wait, was Silverfrost on Dusk's side? Was he not here to rescue him?*

That...that can't be right. This could not be true! If Silverfrost was on the side of evil, then who would come rescue him? Perhaps someone from the Alliance could—wait. Silverfrost was the head of the Alliance. Everything, from its information to the patrol routes, was controlled by him. With just a command, he could direct the attention of the alliance away from whatever Dusk was planning.

He had to warn his friends back at the Alliance! If this went on, Egnos would soon fall under the control of villains, if that hasn't already happened. But he was stuck here with no way to tell anyone of his grave discovery. He couldn't save himself, much less the city. How could he even be considered a hero now that he had been turned into an object for display?

Despair washed over him. This...this had to be a nightmare. If this was true, then he'd much rather be dead. But even death was no longer an option for him. Sephos—his enemy—had used his venom to keep him alive. Now, he would be a frozen trophy for the rest of his life.

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~ End ~