

“Auntie Mamizou, I know it’s my birthday and all, but...”

She stopped tipping her sake gourd. “But what, dearie?”

“I’m pretty sure I can’t legally drink until I’m 21.”

“And I’m pretty sure your parents can’t legally murder until... ever.”

“Touché, carry on.”

“Sides, when I was your age I pulled way crazier stunts than just underage drinking. I was a big deal on the con artist scene!” Mamizou pulled a small wooden box out of... somewhere, Girlfriend knew by now not to ask -- and began filling it with the gourd’s contents, then handed it to Girlfriend. “I prefer a dish for sake myself, but all I brought with me is the grown-up juice box, if that’s all right with you.”

Girlfriend took the box in both hands. “Yeah, it’ll work.” She took a sip and swallowed, lurching a bit as heat built up inside her. “Whoa. That’s... weird. Super warm.”

“Good sake puts a fire in ya.” Mamizou stuck her tongue out playfully. “I thought you’d enjoy the heat, what with the...”

“Yeah, the whole ‘being a demon’ thing.” Girlfriend took another sip, bracing herself this time. The heat actually was quite nice, on further review. “It’s better once you get used to it, it’s just the first time is... weird.”

Mamizou pulled out another box, filling it with a portion for herself. “Weird’s relative, dear. Your family’s made up of demons, your auntie researches supernatural creatures, pulls things out of thin air, and may or may not secretly be a furryrumorsarestillunconfirmed...” She took a drink. “Not to mention, as an expert on the subject, I can certify this whole town’s practically a breeding ground for the supernatural!”

Girlfriend raised an eyebrow, crossing her legs in her chair. “How so?”

Mamizou laughed out loud. “You haven’t noticed? All the research into highly advanced robotics and dimensional travel? The rumored goings-on at the old corn maze? The fact that I’m pretty sure the rental store doesn’t have a single non-haunted video game? The fact that it’s 2017 and the rental store is still *open*?”

Girlfriend nodded. “Okay, yes, that last one is weird.”

“It’s my job to notice these things. And that’s not even getting into how this town has enough head diversity among the population to make the entire Egyptian pantheon jealous.

Whatever deity decided to give a guy a citrus for a face was *clearly* high off their gourd.” Mamizou shook her own sake gourd a bit for emphasis.

“Okay, yes, I see what you mean.” Girlfriend chuckled, taking another sip of sake. “This place *is* really weird. Is that why *we* live here?”

Mamizou put a hand to her chin in mock thought. “Well, in my experience, supernatural attracts supernatural. You get one monster in a neighborhood, and suddenly you’ve got a million of them. It’s like ants. Or glitter. So... yes, I’d say it’s not unlikely.”

“If that’s the case, then why don’t *you* live here?”

Mamizou took a deep breath and sighed. “I’ll be on the level, I’ve considered it a few times. But... well, you know I don’t like to stick around for too long. I wouldn’t want to study everything here and miss out on whatever’s lurking out in the places I haven’t bothered to check.” She emptied her sake box and refilled it. “But your father picked a good place -- I couldn’t have picked a better one myself.” She looked at Girlfriend’s sake box. “If you want, I can top yours off and we can toast to it.”

“Sure, why not.” Girlfriend held her cup out, accepting a smidgen more sake. “To the weirdest place around?”

Mamizou’s cup met Girlfriend’s. “To the weirdest place around.”