

The Witches Bound: Humbaba

Lahari, the Witch of Humbaba, was having a bad day.

First, her morning parathas were bland. Then she'd accidentally thrown the wrong chef out the window because she thought he was responsible, which meant that she had to command her majordomo to find *two* new ones. Which was embarrassing, and Lahari had worked hard to reach a position where anyone who laughed at her could be summarily executed. Then that asshole Genma had, for some damned reason, thought that Lahari was the one who'd blown up their capital when Lahari *knew* it had been Khestri, and had stormed through the city's defenses at the head of an army of skeletons and overloaded the miniature sun that Lahari had been using to power all of her palace's mystical amenities, killing hundreds of servants and her entire force of elite chimerized soldiers, which was going to take *months* to deal with and was just plain rude, before vanishing into the night.

And as if all of that weren't enough, somehow a troop of armored knights and sorcerous support had portaled into the smoking ruins of Lahari's palace while the Witch was busy trying to assess casualties and raise some temporary walls, piled onto her, and portaled away with them to an unknown location. Which meant that as soon as her arcana recovered she were going to have to yell a lot, and kill a lot of people, and her day was already really. Fucking. Full.

Lahari was currently in a pit. Specifically, she were kneeling in a five-foot deep square stone pit that was only slightly wider than her shoulders. Normally, the witch would have towered above it; over six and a half feet tall and rippling with muscles, Lahari liked to tower. But she had been bound tightly down by dark leather straps, forcing her arms back and tying her wrists and ankles together. More leather criss-crossed her body, holding them despite her strain, and a knotted leather gag had been forced into her mouth. More straps went above and below her small breasts, giving them a hint of definition, and pulled her legs wide to expose her crotch to the air, while also rooting deep into the scattered rocks that filled the bottom of the box. The burns that had covered her skin were almost healed, leaving dark scars on Lahari's golden-brown skin that were already fading, and her shaggy black hair had been cropped even shorter than usual by the blaze.

The pit was in an indoor garden, with glass ceilings and the quiet trill of birdsong; a small brook ran next to it. It was revoltingly cute. A large door on one end opened, and a tall man in Templar armor strode in. He looked down at the prisoner, nodding to the chaplains already present. "Are we prepared?" he asked.

"Yes, Divine Commander."

“Good.” Erasmus Brahimi, Divine Commander of the Northern Company, shifted his attention to Lahari. Her golden eyes blazed with fury and the desire to tear him apart, and he gave them a mocking bow. “It is an honor to have your company, Witch of Humbaba. Thank you for serving as a distraction for the Witch of Asag for us. She has been weakened, and now it is your turn.”

Lahari scoffed through her gag. This fool was fighting *two* witches at once? Wait. Were *these* the people who had convinced Genma to attack her?

“I could give you the entire routine, but I’ll be brief. You’ve bound a spirit of stone and might within yourself. It is repelled by rushing water, which is capable of washing away your arcana. So we have created this beautiful prison, just for you.”

Lahari’s eyes widened, and she roared into the gag. The Templars knew about the water. Someone had betrayed her. Someone was *going to pay*.

Erasmus nodded, and a Templar turned a wheel set behind Lahari, just out of view. As he did, a series of pipes in the wall folded out, and clear water began to pour out of a tiny bronze pipe directly over Lahari’s head. The witch howled and bucked in her restraints, as the cold water splashed over her face and cascaded down her body. As it did, what she had taken for leather was touched by water, greening and expanding into luminous strips of living algae that tightened her grip on Lahari. The witch gasped as the bonds pressed down on her lungs and stomach, pulling her arms and legs even more tightly together and erasing any progress that she might have made. Worst of all, the gag in her mouth began squirming to life, brackish tendrils languorously exploring the edges of her throat. The tendrils began to tighten, creating a long knob inside Lahari’s mouth that forced her jaw wide and sucked the saliva from them, quivering as she tried to force it out with her tongue.

Erasmus smiled, noticing Lahari’s horrified rage. “The seaweed won’t kill you,” he assured them. “It will feed on your sweat and keep the water around you pure, filter your breath and feed oxygen into your lungs, and pull nutrients from the water pouring over you to keep you alive. This breed can live for centuries, although usually their hosts can’t last nearly so long. With your impressive physique, I think you’ll go the distance.” Lahari tried to roar defiance, but between the air being squeezed out of them and the seaweed gagging her throat, all that she could manage was a quiet choking sound. Erasmus noticed this, and gave a self-satisfied nod that made the witch want to punch him through a wall.

The water was still pouring over them, and in response, the seaweed on Lahari’s face was expanding outwards. Lahari struggled as it covered her nose, stretching around to press tightly against the bottom half of her face. As water cascaded over the seaweed, it felt as though Lahari was drowning, but Erasmus had spoken the truth; the seaweed blocked out the water, sending fresh oxygen down into Lahari’s lungs. The sensation of

drowning and breathing at the same time was almost unbearable, and the witch screamed threats that were reduced to garbled moans as her bonds continued to tighten.

Eventually, the water was up to Lahari's neck. It began to burble out of the pit, slipping through a grate and down a trench prepared for the occasion. The seaweed bonds around the witch were tight, glowing faintly in the water as it forced her modest breasts out and teased the edges of her cunt, ready to slick away any waste or arousal. Lahari was already feeling light-headed, and the ongoing deprivation and light touch was awakening a fire inside that she'd never been aware of before.

"We're nearly finished," Erasmus said. The Templar had left to organize a few things, leaving soldiers to watch over the witch, but had returned as the water reached its final level. A pair of soldiers came up behind him with buckets, which they carefully lowered into the water. "We won't always be able to keep soldiers on watch in here, so we thought it would be nice to give you some company."

Lahari glowered up at him, then turned her attention to the bucket. It was almost impossible to see what was going on through the water splashing over her eyes, and it was taking all of her concentration not to collapse into a screaming mess from the sensation of the water pressing into her nose and mouth through the seaweed, but with some effort, she was able to see tiny, brightly-colored shapes flitting through the water. A few moments later, Lahari felt a small, scratching sensation near her left breast. It was joined by two more, and the witch twitched as a ticklish feeling washed over them.

Erasmus, seeing her trying not to react, smiled. "These fish swim with larger creatures, cleaning their bodies and feeding on the bits. They will make homes in the seaweed covering you, and help to keep you clean and healthy. They're quite hungry right now, but I'm sure you can handle it."

More fish were clustering around Lahari now, each one finding a spot of skin and nibbling gently on it. Individually they were ticklish. As a cluster, they were unbearable. Lahari tried to focus on the important things. Revenge. Burning this garden to ash. Bathing in the blood of the Templars. But every thought was washed away in a fresh rush of water, or overwhelmed by tiny pinpricks of ticklishness dancing across her ribs and squirming between her toes. It was all too much. She began to scream wordless threats, eyes bulging as she pulled on her restraints and tried everything in her power to dislodge the fish. Her lungs were crushed tight, burning with the need for more air than the seaweed was delivering, and the waterfall cascading around her head kept them from even making eye contact with her tormentors. Muffled, gasping croaks echoed through the chamber as Lahari raged helplessly.

The bulge in her mouth extended, and Lahari felt the seaweed forming a longer, tangled knob that pressed into the back of her throat. Something wet and slimy began to form, squirting down past her mouth and into her stomach. The witch's sounds cut off as she

gagged on the foul-tasting slime. “Feeding time,” Erasmus said cheerfully. “We wouldn’t want you to be *uncomfortable*.”

He turned to go, raising his voice to be heard. “Your arcana will spread through the water in this garden, giving life to a variety of mystical herbs. We will be able to use them to craft new potions and unguents, to help us in our quest. I’d like you to rest easy, knowing that every moment of your torment is bringing tangible benefits to your captors.”

Lahari’s only response was a tiny, horrible gasp through the seaweed. She didn’t have enough air left to roar. She didn’t have enough energy left to do more than wriggle hopelessly. She could see the shapes of Templars gathering to watch them, to see her shame and failure, as ticklish sensations echoed through her body, and to vaguely and vainly hope that the Templars had made a mistake. This couldn’t be the rest of eternity. Then the fish returned to feeding, and even that much thought was too much. Lahari’s life dissolved into nothing but the will to escape, helplessly restrained in her picturesque lake.