

## BETWEEN HOBART AND ENID

by Amanda Salisbury

Hobart was to become a gorilla. A beautiful silverback gorilla cast in glorious bronze. But he was not one yet.

He saw nearly his whole evolution. The maker began with the gleam of Hobart's left eye, his favorite part of himself. The maker worked outward with the scritch-scratch of her pencil, and it wasn't until his ears took to the paper that he overheard his own name and the maker's: Enid.

Enid sketched and solidified Hobart over the course of several days. She drew his eyes and ears open, his mouth shut, and his heart full. She left plenty of space in his head for wisdom and imagination, and he liked to imagine that Enid patterned his heart after her own.

Hers were the only hands he knew. Hers was the only face that came into view in those early days. He couldn't say whether Enid was beautiful but knew without doubt that she was good. Hobart saw it in the way she tended his every line. The way

she covered him after every session to protect him. The way she smiled down at him each new session.

Hobart might have been content to live out his days on that paper, but for Enid leaving him. Once his limbs and fur and toes and face took their just-right shapes, Enid slipped Hobart's paper into a clear protective sleeve and began to work her magic on someone else. Someone with spindly legs, no arms, and an extraordinary neck emerged from the next sheet of paper. Hobart could only watch and listen.

One new session, the lights flicked on and Enid sang a tune. Hobart met the end of his endurance as an onlooker. No matter how he strained, he couldn't open his mouth. He couldn't shout to her, couldn't capture her attention at all. Pressure built in his barrel chest until little stars lit in his vision, and still Hobart failed to utter one single sound. He had long since lost track of the movements of Enid's pencil. At the end of the session, he didn't try to catch her eye. Hobart couldn't help but feel that trying wouldn't matter. As the lights flicked off, he resigned himself to his isolation and wished he could shed some of his emotion. If only his heart felt less full of all the wrong things.

By the time Enid slipped Hobart from his protective sheet again, he barely connected with the world anymore. Light hurt his unfocused eyes. Sensory overload

bore down on his every stroke. Why wouldn't she let him rest? Slowly, Hobart shifted from detached oblivion to alert curiosity.

In her ears, Enid wore strings that dangled down toward her workspace. She rocked her shoulders in strange gyrations as she wore these strings and broke out in song. She smiled straight at Hobart. Then she pulled a wet lump of clay in front of her on the workspace. Hobart watched from the safe aridity of his page clipped above the table, but he could scarcely believe his eyes.

Enid's hands, always so cool and dry, now dripped with water as she pinched off a bit of clay and rolled it between her palms. She danced through the clay. Snatches of song broke free and drops of clayed water flew as Enid threw her hands into sudden action. Her fingers moved like music to shape first a face, then a barrel chest. Hobart's heart swelled against the constraints of his paper. He recognized himself taking form. The experience put him in mind of the chrysalis Enid had kept in a clear box soon after his drawing. The thick blob turned to an intricate, translucent shell. By the time the hidden secret's colors bled through, Hobart understood the metamorphosis possible deep in his graphite.

Hobart's consciousness floated between clip and workspace for days beyond counting. Each session, Enid flicked on the lights, stuck strings in her ears, watered her hands, and massaged the clay until, finally, it looked just like Hobart.

Unlike his pencil drawing, clay-Hobart could neither see nor hear until Enid declared him complete. She sat on her stool, her feet hooked around its legs, and

leaned back so far Hobart worried. Then she jumped up and danced all around the room. Hobart's two points of view allowed him to share twice her joy, which exploded when she yanked the strings from both ears and device. Music washed the room with energy. Hobart very nearly moved, and he would never forget that moment.

When lights dimmed after that session, Hobart ruminated over his lonely days in the clear protective sleeve. To his utter exhilaration, Enid returned the very next day and began to create a life-sized model of him. She gently lifted clay-Hobart to a place of honor from which to watch his own progress. Often, she glanced toward him with that electric smile of hers.

Quite as soon as Enid finished the huge model, she built a form around him, shutting off big Hobart from every sense. He could not feel Enid's careful hands. Gone were her bursts of song. Darkness surrounded him, filled him up. He couldn't fathom why she would make him and then imprison him like this. It was worse than cruel.

Hobart's connected consciousness saw the horror unfolding from his vantages on the clip and the clay shelf. Still his lungs were insufficient to force his feelings into the air. His inner voice shrank with his heart. The prison cured and Hobart lost faith in Enid's love. Meanwhile, the maker turned to other projects, other creations. Then Hobart slept.

He slept while Enid removed the cured form from big Hobart. He slept while she prepared her next steps. He slept while she sang and danced, and he had no idea what might come next.

He felt his feet first. Heat struggled to wake him from a fitful rest, and he failed to understand his new phase. Hot weight spread like a fine caress up his enormous body. Caught between sleep and waking, Hobart philosophized on the weight of gravity. When he had been an idea in Enid's mind, he had floated freely. The nebulous nature of minuscule graphite shavings on thinly-sliced wood carried so little gravity, Hobart had known without knowing that he could fly away at a moment's notice. Clay had given him a first taste of weight endlessly changing under his maker's hands. Two iterations later and Hobart didn't recognize himself, only his increasing gravity.

Sleep gave way to consciousness, and Hobart remembered himself. He scattered into his pencil drawing, his clay model, and any other Hobarts he could find. The room sat cold and silent. His connected consciousness reached for any other place he might be.

At once he felt seared into existence. Fire filled in his nooks. Hobart drifted further than ever from his pencil drawing. His life moved a millimeter at a time as light emanated from every molecule. Yet he remained strangely constrained. This was not a light that revealed or guided or rallied others. His was a hidden light.

Time stretched on all sides, dripping and rolling across space. As it ran, so did Hobart's heat. At last, he stood still, cold, outside time.

Hobart dared settle his consciousness into this once-burning version. He saw equipment around him but no maker. His new eyes found nothing exciting for time unknown, but he continued searching. As his sight came to rest on Enid, he wondered if he might be dreaming, though she did something so odd, he forced himself to broader awareness.

Enid wore no strings and did not smile or dance. Instead, she quietly built a massive wooden crate around Hobart, sealing his face last. A loud machine lifted boxed-Hobart and stuttered forward. Sunlight striped his dark skin for a time, until his box tottered onto a truck. Darkness fell with the rolling thunder of the truck's door.

The road failed to rock him. But some small sway ferried Hobart's thoughts. The smallest bubble of hope formed deep in his soul. Hope that he might return to the workshop. Hope that Enid would be waiting for him there. The bubble blew wide when fresh air and voices rushed in underneath the thunderous truck door. His box scraped to the exit. He beeped and lowered to a halt before stiff arms bore his box forward, sailing him through night.

The first wrench of nails from the crate set Hobart on edge. The box came down in back first; he knew because of the breeze to his metallic back. Losing his crate unsteadied Hobart. He couldn't predict what might happen next.

Myriad scents itched Hobart's nose, and a high, round moon shone over his bronze skin. He turned his sight to the external in time to witness humans scampering here and there. Broad green straps tugged at him, drawing him to a patch of earth. After the straps fell away, Hobart took in his new surroundings. He stood on a small circle of dirt. From its scent proximity, Hobart guessed that a single flowering tree towered behind him. Concrete surrounded his island as far as he could see.

Guarded by silvery poles joined in a thick satin ribbon, Hobart wondered whose benefit the cordon was: his or the humans'. He looked beyond the people to a flowering shrub until the onlookers converged to block his view. Inwardly, Hobart felt himself groan, though his mouth stayed solidly shut. He thought, *why can't these humans go away?* The delicate pink petals deserved his full attention.

Hobart strained to lift his line of sight. Then a figure threaded to the front of the crowd, jumped the ribbon, and ran straight to Hobart. She kissed him on his nose. Hobart could have sworn his body temperature elevated, though Enid only buffed his gleaming skin and chattered to the crowd about her process.

The party cranked up music. Delicious smells wafted from trays of food. A news station brought a camera to capture the fun. Enid never moved outside the ribbon circle until the mass of people dispersed and the zoo director came to usher her to the gate.

Hobart yearned to reach out for her. He wondered when she would return to him but wanted her to turn back right then.

She looked only onward.

Exotic sounds pierced the night as if complaining about the raucous partiers invading their time of peace. The former smells of human food and laughing people dissolved into musky scents of animals, soil, and excrement. Hobart had no outward voice and no scent, to his knowledge. His only thought the rest of the night was whether he could fit into this place.

By morning, his heart felt heavy with doubt and fear.

Shadows distorted Hobart's morning view. Nothing looked the same as last night. Workers in green shirts and brown pants strayed in and out of his view. No one spoke to Hobart or glanced his direction. It seemed the celebration had fully ended.

As the sun climbed over treetops and Hobart began to warm under its rays, he contemplated this new life. The flowering shrub and the creeping ants could be his companions. He didn't need a human. Not really.

He counted ants as they wound over concrete to a small hill on his island until a shriek broke his concentration. Hobart barely looked up in time to see a girl, about four years old, skidding under the green ribbon and rushing to his side. She fought for purchase and scaled his sculptured leg and back. In victory, the girl sat atop Hobart and cheered.

At that moment, Hobart's consciousness split and he could see both his flowering shrub, with the girl's mother pacing fretfully nearby, and his maker, Enid, sketching a new gleam in a new eye. His heart swelled to bursting and found the meaning of home, the amazing design of purpose. And Hobart delighted.

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