

THE NAMING OF A MAW

By

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1000 words.

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Original work for entry into the Riot Creative Contest, 2017.

Warmth. The rippling sensation of melting rock. The clicks of teeth on stone. Knowledge that his siblings are carving beside him spread elation throughout the maw. The organic hive of Icathia owes its convoluted shape to the efforts of the maw species. Endlessly consuming the land of this twisted world to form ever greater complexity. This particular maw stepped back to admire his work. The solid walls offered little resistance against their caustic spittle. The skin of the nesting grounds had already begun to claim the exposed rock. The luminescent blanket of pulsing flesh inching forward with distracting, crawling movements. The curious maw failed to notice a sibling barrel towards him.

Clash. Bite. Yelp!

They began to play. More quickly joined the fray and the cavern filled with the sound of wrestling pups. Immune to their own acidic releases, such scuffles were a part of the litter's waking cycle. An ear-piercing snap erupted from the wall, silencing their game. Exotic light ripped through an unworldly fissure and flooded the cavern with stinging purity.

A deep rumble shook the minds of the creatures, "Good."

The telepathy emanated a mental pressure that threatened to crush the consciousness of all it touched, establishing without doubt that this was the *Father* of Icathia.

"Another path to Runeterra. Uncovered and raw. Feast on that world. GO!"

A hunger exploded within the maws. The intensity nearly drove them into a cannibalistic frenzy. The litter poured into the burning light of the fissure, until only one maw remained. His instincts screamed at him to remain, it knew this violent rupture only offered death.

"GO!"

The *Father's* voice boomed again, but with an anger that gave flight to the straggler. The hesitant maw leapt into the nightmare, engulfed by the cries of his dying siblings.

Through the light and acidic remains, he crawled. The fissure weakened as each maw sequentially offered their life in a sacrificial explosion. Desperation leached into the madness that once burned so strongly. He finally broke free of the claustrophobic passageway and the frightened maw collapsed onto a cold floor of an alien world. Runeterra.

Light. Exposed. Hide!

The maw struggled to adjust his many eyes to the brightness. He dashed towards the nearest covering of foliage, for it held the briefest offering of relief. Then came the arrival of an overwhelming cacophony on his senses. Odd sounds, complex smells, an evil light floating above. It was too much. This open place lacked the warmth he craved. It lacked his tunnels and siblings. The maw resorted to what he did best: it ate. He tore in everything until the hated sun fell; only relaxing with the soothing cover of darkness.

This world held such ravishing flavours, so much to feast upon! The maw knew his siblings would also desire this food. With innocent excitement, he bounded towards the dark fissure before halting at the crack between worlds.

Alone. Cold. Drooping his head, the maw curled into a ball and waited.

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“It must be somewhere around here.”

A strange voice woke the maw. That evil light was rising again. What is that sound? The meaning of words were lost on the Icahian, but it filled him with the same nauseous feeling that

gripped him before crawling into the fissure. He retreated to the foliage, the only place in this world where he had felt safe, and watched.

It didn't take long for the group of humans to arrive. These thin ugly things are nothing like his litter. They look so frail, and yet, so delicious. The maw's fear turned to curiosity as he watched the handful of sorcerers gasp at the sight of fissure.

They scratched markings into the ground and initiated a chant. The maw watched in fascination, unable to comprehend their actions, and quietly swayed with the ritual's rhythm. The iridescent rupture began to close. Slowly at first, but then with frightening speed. The maw finally understood the intent of these things. He cannot let it happen. He must keep it open! He flung out of the brush, emotions of fear and rage driving him towards these skinny monsters. The humans cried out while the maw bit and scratched and spat.

These things WERE fragile, AND delicious! A confidence grew as his rampage continued. The first to run were the last to fall. No matter how fast their legs carried them, they could not escape the caustic rain that erupted from his belly. The maw turned toward the fissure, towards home.

Closed. Alone. He released a howl and desperately began to dig.

The smell of home is fading.

His siblings are lost.

He is lost.

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In his darkest moment of grief, the familiar scent returned. Home!

The Icathian bounded towards it, leaping through the foreign jungle landscape. Close. It's close. So very close. He charged with glee as the scent grew stronger. Breaking through a curtain of vines, he collided with that he was chasing.

A mass of tentacles swarmed around him. The singular eye of a koz bore down upon the maw.

“Unforeseen anomaly. A lowly maw interrupt the work of Vel'koz?”

The maw stared joyfully towards his newfound friend. Unafraid. He leaned over to one side, examining the burning husks behind Vel'koz. It smelled like those skinny monsters from before, but even more appetizing! The maw let his mouth appendage hang in approving hunger while he panted. The koz shuddered in disdain.

“Impressive. To survive the transition between realities. Must analyze.”

A beam of agonising energy flooded through the maw. The magenta light pierced the makeup of his being. Deconstructing, rewriting, and finally ending.

“Simplistic cognitive abilities discovered. Unprecedented for a maw. Now further enhanced. Do you now comprehend?”

The maw gazed upwards with a new understanding of the world. The structure of words now formed reason in his mind. In a guttural cough, he spoke:

“Yes! So hungry!”

“Aren't we all.”

“You Vel'koz. I am?”

“The first cognizant maw. Congratulations.”

“Cog. Maw? Kog'maw! Let's play. So hungry!”

“Wonderful...”

END