

# **Fantasy Shorts**

by **SciFurz**

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## **Notes**

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## Defiant

'Why didn't you kill me when you could?' she asked on her knees, looking up at him.

'I have no interest in hurting you.' he said putting back his sword.

'But we're enemies!'

'Ah.'

'We're supposed to fight to the death!'

'Oh?'

She stood up. 'You're supposed to kill an enemy!'

'Says who?' he asked as he gathered his things.

'That's just how it is!'

'Well, looks like I don't follow procedure and will let cute girls live.' he said and got ready to walk away.

'But..'

'No buts, unless you offer your cute one.' he grinned.

She blushed. 'Don't you walk out on me!'

'I'm walking, but if you don't want to end the discussion you'd better start walking too.'

'Why you..' she muttered as she grabbed her own things and hurried after him. 'What kind of fighter are you!?'

He turned towards her and stroked her cheek. 'One who prefers to enjoy cute things instead of killing them.'

She blushed again and looked away. 'I'm your enemy, not cute!'

'I'll be the judge of that.' he said and whispered in her ear. 'And I prefer to enjoy you.'

She started shaking. 'You own my life if you don't kill me..'

'You own your own life. I will only take what you freely give me.' he whispered, pulling her muzzle back to him and kissed her softly. He then started walking again.

Soft sobbing made him stop though. Looking back he saw her crying softly and sighed.

'Okay.' he said, grabbed her hand and pulled her along. 'From now on you're my girlfriend slave, alright? Does that make you feel better?'

Surprised she let herself get pulled along with him. 'But..'

'No buts I said. If you can't do things on your own then I'll just take you as my personal love slave and have you stick by my side for the rest of your life. Don't want that? Then you tell me right here and now.'

Blushing hard she muttered. 'I., but I'm not human..'

'So what?' he said and she saw how his face turned red. 'You're really cute so you'll satisfy me.'

After walking for a long time in silence she dared to ask him. 'You really mean it?'

'What?'

'Me, being your slave..' she said meekly.

'Yes.'

'And I can choose not to?'

'Yes.'

She stayed silent again until they stopped at a stream.

'So? What will you do?' he asked.

She looked down and shuffled her feet. '..don't know..'

He squeezed her hand lightly. 'Honestly I want you to say you'll stay. And until you make your decision I'm not letting you go. That means bathing together now and you'll be sleeping in my arms tonight, understood?'

She nodded, feeling a bit nervous and excited at the same time.

**###**

## Persistent

She woke up from the slumber only to see the familiar face of her kidnapper. 'Not again..' she sighed.

'I'm afraid so Missy.' he said grinning. 'Struggle all you want, you're not getting away.'

She raised an eyebrow looking at him.

He watched her not struggling for a moment. 'Anyways,' he coughed. 'Unless your father pays up he's not getting you back.'

'Hm-mm.'

'I'm serious.'

'So how much this time?'

He laughed. 'I want the country!'

She laughed back. 'You're dreaming!'

'We'll see who laughs last!' he said and leaned close to her. 'In the meantime you're mine.'

She smiled deviously. 'You really think so?'

'M-mm.' he hummed and laid down on his back on the couch with his head on her lap. 'Get used to being my pillow for the rest of your life!'

She kicked up her leg. 'Like that would ever happen.'

He pinned down her legs. 'Oh, it will. When I have the country you have no choice.'

'Why would I have no choice?'

'Because I will make the country suffer unless you obey me.'

'Wait, what? You want me to obey you!?!'

He nodded. 'You'll be my pillow when I'm tired, feed me when I'm hungry, wash my back every-'

'What am I!? Your wife!?!'

He coughed looking away. 'Well..'

She raised her eyebrows in surprise. 'You're kidding...'

He fiddled his fingers.

'Not kidding..' she muttered.

She stood up suddenly, making him fall on the floor. 'What are you thinking!? We're not even the same species!'

He rubbed the back of his head, then looked up carefully at her.

'You've kidnapped me a dozen times, and now you want me to be your wife!?!'

'You're just too cute to let go.' he muttered sitting up.

She blushed. 'What are you talking about? I'm kanine, not human.'

'Don't care.'

'You..'

'You'll be my kanine wife and if anybody got a problem with that I'll fix that permanently.'

She sat back down. 'You're nuts.'

'Maybe.' he said and laid down on the couch again with his head on her.

'But ruling the country is no fun without you as queen.'

'...'

'You don't want to be queen?'

'Yes. I mean no! Not like that!'

'Then how?'

'Like, like normal!'

'Then marry me!'

'I don't love you!'

'You'll get to love me in time.'

'What!?! But you're human!'

He sat up, looking into her eyes. 'I fell in love with you, so that's no excuse.'

'You, what..?'

He stood up and rummaged with the things on the table.

'You're..?'

He took a deep breath, walked back to her and untied her. 'I expect your dad will be here soon for your rescue.'

'Wait, answer me!'

A horn sounded.

'That'll be him.' he said, took her hand and led her to the main gate.

The king arrived with a division of his best soldiers.

'I'm here to get my daughter!' he shouted.

'Daddy!' she shouted, wanted to go over to him but he didn't let go of her hand.

'King Leonard!' he said. 'I have your daughter! And I won't hand her over!'

'What do you want this time?' the king sighed.

'Your country.'

'And what do you want to do with it?'

'Rule it with the queen.'

'With my wife!?!'

'Well, the future queen actually.'

It took a moment for the meaning to sink in. 'Who's that..?'

'Your daughter obviously.'

Another moment. 'My daughter..?'

'Yes. I want to marry her.'

'You're human!'

'That's what everyone keeps reminding me of! Who cares!?''

'I do!' she said.

'A human isn't good enough for you?'

'Yes! I mean no. I mean.., you're confusing me!'

'Look, I love you, I want to be with you for the rest of my life so you have to be my queen as I rule this land so deal with it.'

She felt his hand tighten as he said that and her heartbeat quickened.

The king rubbed his beard. 'You know no-one has ever liked her that much?'

He shrugged. 'Can't help it. It just happened. I'm not going to deny it.'

He hummed in thought.

'Dad! You're not actually thinking!?''

The king coughed. 'Well, it would solve that problem...'

He pulled her against him and gently stroked her cheek. 'See? All it takes is for you to accept me.'

'But.'

'No buts, not giving up on you.'

She looked at him. 'You mean it.'

He nodded.

'I'm horrible, you know?'

He nodded again.

'And you still?'

Nodding again.

'I don't love you.'

He shrugged. 'I'll wait.'

She sighed.

'I'll woo you every moment I get until you give in. Do whatever it takes.'

'What about the country?'

'Well, have to keep it happy and running so it won't get any ideas of turning against me.'

She sat down in frustration. 'Argh!'



He turned to the king. 'I'll just keep her here until everything's settled.'

The king agreed and rode back to his castle.

She opened her mouth to say something but stayed silent.

He sat down next to her, caressing her hand. 'I can't imagine life without you. Even if you don't love me I want to see you every day.'

'Don't I get a say in it?'

'Of course it all depends on you, but I hope you'll accept me in time.'

'You'll not give up?'

'Nope.'

'Even if I make your life a misery?'

'Stay by my side, let me cuddle you and there's no misery involved.'

'You're hopeless.'

He nodded. 'True, can't help it. Don't want to change it. Only desire is to have you for my queen.'

She sighed. 'Alright, don't dare to regret it though.'

He looked at her in surprise. 'You mean it?'

She looked away shyly and nodded quickly.

He pulled her hand close and caressed it with his lips.

**###**

## Dragon Story

'It all started a couple of years ago.'

Keichi, retired dragon hunter, now hired hunter for food and protector of farmers and nature poured another cup of sake to create a dramatic pause.

'I was hired to investigate a sighting of a dragon. Usually there were attacks on people or cattle, this time though only a few people who've seen one around but there were no attacks.'

I wandered around the area the dragon had been seen when I came up to the lake shore and sat down for a spot of lunch. Before I even unpacked my bag I heard a faint noise. I had to find out what it was because it could be anything from animals, other people up to the dragon, I sneaked closer to a couple of boulders from where I thought the sound came from. What I heard was soft crying. I couldn't see who it was because the boulders were too big to look over and they ran from the water to a bit inland. But I could clearly hear someone crying, and it seemed to me like it was a girl in distress.

Now, you know me of course, I can't leave a girl alone when she's sad so I coughed politely and asked if the person on the other side was okay. I heard her sniff and then she said she needed to find herbs to cure a wound and the resulting fever of her mother, but she couldn't find them. I figured if there wasn't any real trouble caused by the dragon I could help the girl first. I said I had some knowledge so I'd help her find what she needed and I'd come over as I found a place to climb over the rocks. As I climbed across I wondered what kind of girl she'd be. Her voice was a little husky and it felt sweet and innocent to me.'

He sighed, downed his cup of sake and poured a new one.

'Imagine my surprise, and hers, when I stood on top of the rocks. She was sitting with her back to me, her head turned towards me with big, wet, green eyes.'

The other guests in the inn were listening curiously along with his friends whom he hadn't seen in years.

'In a way she wasn't like any other I'd seen, she had this aura of purity over her, it was like I gained a new experience I'd never would have imagined I'd get.'

His friends leaned just a little closer in anticipation while he downed the sake.

'And then I saw her surprise as she saw me in my dragon slayer outfit and the next thing she did was to fly away.'

'Wait.' one of his friends said. 'Fly away?'

'Yes, she was the very dragon I had to hunt.'

When everyone got back on their feet after they fell from their feet and chairs he poured another drink and continued.

'Yes, a dragon. Unbelievable as it was, there she was and I watched her as she flew away from me. An orange, reddish coloured dragon, only about twice my size which is the smallest I've ever seen, and I daresay also the cutest I've ever seen.'

'You gotta be kidding us.' One of the guys said. 'I've never heard of anything like that.'

The others nodded in agreement.

'Oh, I agree.' he nodded. 'I'd never seen or heard of anything like this before myself. The few dragons I had to deal with were rugged killing machines. They were running on instinct, pure animals. But I must say that I only had to kill any of them when they didn't stay away from human territory. This one though, she was nothing I had encountered before. I stood there for quite some time before I realised what had happened. And by that time it was evening so I made my camp there and just put it out of my mind for the time being and went to sleep.

In the morning I walked into the direction she flew, still thinking it must have been a mistake or a dream I had and tried to focus on the hunt. Around noon I arrived at an edge of the forest and I saw her again. She was searching in the open field in a frantic way and I could see she was having trouble finding what she needed.

I removed most of my weaponry and armour to look less threatening and coughed politely again when I moved a little closer to her.

She was startled and wanted to flee again but I shouted at her that I wouldn't harm her. I kept my distance and showed her I wasn't armed and she stayed where she was. Although she was very nervous I asked if she was looking for the herbs. She said she was, and I asked if she could tell me what kind of wound her mother had. She said it was a large cut on her leg from a sharp rock when she slipped on the mountains.

I asked her what herbs she was looking for and the ones she described are also some used for humans. I said that I know of a few more used for humans for this, but that I wasn't sure if they'd also work for dragons. If she would trust me I could show her where to get the herbs and how to use them to cure the wound and fever.

She had not much of a choice so she reluctantly followed me to the valley in the south where I knew there were the herbs to keep down the fever. When I showed her what to get and how to apply it I told her this was just for the fever. She'd need others for the wound which grew farther away so she could use this for now to make her mother more comfortable while we'd get the others in the meantime. I told her I'd wait here for her while she attended her mother.'

He leaned back in his chair. 'I know what you're thinking, why the hell would I help her? I'm not sure myself, but I had this gut feeling that it was

the right thing to do. If I would help her I would make a difference for the better.’ He downed another sake.

‘As I prepared for the night she came back, landing a little bit away and I could see she smiled softly while trying not to look at me. She told me that the fever had come down and she was grateful for my help. I told her I was glad to help and we’d go get the rest of the herbs we needed in the next couple of days. It was then that she bowed before me and told me her name, Zuchi.

I was lucky enough to shoot a deer that afternoon and I offered her some of the meat as I was roasting it for dinner. It was the first time that I’ve seen a dragon accept food so shyly, but then it was one of many firsts that I had in those days. It was also the first time I’ve seen a dragon enjoying dinner this much.’ He smiled and grabbed one of the small snack sausages on the table.

‘The next morning we headed north to get a flower from the slopes of the mountains. On the way I explained about the herbs we’d need and she picked it up quickly. She would listen to my lessons on different herbs and ways to treat common wounds and diseases and she’d ask a lot of questions about it. I must say she’s been a perfect student.

It was evening when we reached the edge of the mountains so we set up camp there. She caught a couple of wild boars and I roasted them. I must say I liked that arrangement.

It was after dinner that she asked why I was helping her, seeing I was a dragon slayer.’

He stared into endless nothing in front of him for a moment, then continued.

‘I told her I didn’t really know. For some reason my gut told me I could trust her and that helping her and her mother was the right thing to do. And that I was a sucker for the cute way she looked with those teary eyes.’ He grinned and quickly took another shot. ‘One more first for me, seeing a dragon blush.

We went to sleep and we spent the morning looking over the slopes looking for the flower, then we moved west to find the next ingredient. During the trip I told her a bit about myself, how I started becoming a slayer to protect people from the fierce attacks of dragons and other creatures. She told me her father died protecting his family from an attack from another dragon when she was little. He defeated it but his wounds were fatal. I think I embarrassed her a bit saying he’d be proud of her doing her best to cure her mother.’

He leaned forward and looked seriously. ‘And then we encountered just that.’

The audience looked expectantly at him, drinking their ale as if it were water.

‘A rogue dragon came down upon us.

It came from high up so we didn't notice it until it was too late. It brushed past Zuchi, cutting the back of her neck with its claws. She rolled on her back from the pain and the dragon tried to make another swoop at her, but then I was ready with my spear. As that dragon didn't watch carefully it dove right onto my spear when I jumped in front of Zuchi, which was also lucky for me. I tended to Zuchi's wound immediately and managed to ease the pain. I told

her the cut wasn't deep so she'd only have a minor scar.

As it was we set up camp for the night, she'd need some rest first and I got rid of the dragon's remains. But as soon as I prepared to go to sleep she asked if it was okay to sleep next to me. I was kinda surprised but she told me she felt a little scared now. I didn't mind so we laid down with my back against her side, it felt rather nice.' he nodded.

'When I woke up the next morning I found myself wrapped up in her arms and wings.' he snickered. 'Apparently I was so far away in my sleep I didn't wake up when she grabbed me in her sleep. She had a really peaceful expression on her face so I guessed the attack hadn't left her with a trauma. And then she woke up, slowly she started to realise what she had done and became so flustered I laughed out loud. She sat away pouting and after I apologised for laughing she said she often did that with her mother's tail. I patted her on the head and told her it was no big deal, then got to work on breakfast.

That day we managed to gather almost all we needed and she really cheered up. By evening we had set up camp at a river. While she would go out to hunt for food I took the opportunity to dive into the water and wash my clothes. Zuchi came back early and when she didn't see me she walked up to the river when she spotted my clothes there. Just as she stepped into the water I came up from a long dive, right in front of her. It seems she did know something about humans because she became flustered again and ran off to camp.' he laughed. 'But I must admit it was kinda embarrassing for me too.

Anyway, when it was time to sleep it seemed like she wanted to ask but didn't dare to. I just smiled at her and told her if she wanted to hold onto me for the night it was okay. I said it was the first time I has slept outside feeling warm and comfortable so I wouldn't mind another night. I think she was glad she could sleep out here just like she could at home.

When we found the last of the ingredients the next day I showed her how to make a paste to apply to the wound and I wrapped a bandage with it around her neck for her own wound. I gathered everything she needed in a makeshift bag and wished her good luck and health for both of them and told her I'd hope to see her again. She stood up to take off, but then quickly bowed down and gave me a dragon's kiss. Then she took off and flew home.' he smiled and stared into his cup.

'Life was uneventful in the days after, no dragons to hunt down but a few creatures who attacked cattle, and I couldn't stop thinking about Zuchi. It was

then that I realised I missed her. I was still in the area where we first met, but I never knew where her home was. And then on an afternoon I walked into a clearing right in front of a large dragon. It was red and black, had fearsome yellow eyes and looked like it would tear me up at a moment's notice. I stood still, readied myself to run back into the trees as she turned her head, leaned closer and sniffed at me.' he leaned closer to his friends looking seriously. 'And then she asked if I was Keichi.

I said I was, she grumbled just a little, then nodded. She turned to her right and then I saw her bandaged leg. I looked up to her and she nodded again, saying she was indeed Zuchi's mother and she thanked me not only for the medicine but also for taking care of Zuchi.

I asked her how Zuchi has been and she said she'd been a bother to my surprise. When she saw the question on my face she told me that all Zuchi talked about in the last days was me. I apologised for that and told her that I missed Zuchi's company as well. She puffed and looked really close at me. "Take responsibility then." she said.'

Everyone around Keichi lifted their collective eyebrows.

'I didn't know what to respond to that but she already called out to Zuchi and a few moments later she appeared. She smiled seeing me and gave me a shy wave. Then her mother pushed her to me. "It's time you learned to stop hanging onto your mother's tail and go out into the world." she said. "I have no idea how on earth you two got together but you'll just have to manage." And then she flew away.

We stood there for a while, both lost for words when she softly asked if it was okay. I smiled to myself and asked her if she wanted to go along the river with me, I was asked to chase away a pack of wolves a few towns down south. She smiled and nodded and ever since then we've been together.' he concluded, finishing off his drink.

His friends looked at each other, then grinned. 'Bullshit.' one of them said. 'It sounds like a weird love story.' Others nodded in agreement.

'I think you've spend too much of your money on ale and wine all these years and gave yourself delusions. You don't have a dragon partner. Nobody ever heard of a tame dragon, let alone a talking one.' One of the others said.

Keichi just smiled, then something flew over his friends heads and pounced him. 'Daddy!'

His friends stared wide eyed at a girl only a few years old, wagging her tail, flapping her red wings and sporting the cutest green eyes they'd ever seen.

## The Strangest Couple

They had captured me close to the border. I was there to look for edible plants I could take back home and walked into a lizard scouting party. I tried to get away but they were just too quick. The only reason they let me live is so their chief could question me back at their village.

That's how I ended up a few days later in the middle of curious lizard folk. Children peeked at me from behind their parents, elder lizards were discussing the times they came into contact with a human. I looked around because I was just as curious about them.

We call them lizards but they don't look a lot like regular lizards. They have long necks which makes them around one head taller than man, but their shoulder height is lower. Their heads are the same size as ours, have a sharp snout and mouth with tiny sharp teeth, horns pointed back above their eyes with a few larger scales on their forehead. The medium length hair runs from their head down their long neck, sometimes along their back all the way to the tip of their long tails.

Their homes were made from branches weaved between short poles. Roof covered with large, leathery leaves. Cooking was done outside on fires under covers. At the centre of the village was a covered area with logs to sit and lean against.

The young female warrior who had caught me led me to the covered area where a couple of elder lizard sats and looked at me stroking the short grey tuft under their jaws. I bowed a little as a greeting, feeling that despite being a prisoner I'd try to stay civil.

It had an effect because I heard they kill humans who are captured. Although it makes me wonder how anyone could tell us that if they're supposed to be dead.

'Why you here?' one of the lizards asked to my surprise.

'You speak our language?' I asked.

'Yes, we learned from humans long time ago. But we still know some.'

I gave a nod. 'I'm glad to hear that.'

'Why you here?'

'Ah, I was gathering plants to see if I could get them to grow at my home for food.'

'Where home?'

I tried to remember how long it's been. 'About twenty days from the place you captured me, so twentythree days give or take.'

'Give and take what?'

'Ah.' I said nodding. 'It's an expression, meaning it could be a little more or less than.'

The elders nodded and spoke in their language amongst themselves.

'Why go so far from home?'

'If I can get the plants to grow at my home, I don't have to travel so far anymore and I can trade them for other things.'

'Are there more humans here?'

I shook my head. 'Not that I know of.'

'What plants?' the other elder asked.

'Plants to eat. Or for medicine.'

The elders went into a discussion again.

'You know lots about plants?'

'I know more than others. I just don't know if that is a lot.'

The elders nodded. One of them stood up and came up close to me.

'You will stay and be medicine man.' he said and pushed me back against the female lizard behind me. 'You will teach Shezza.'

'What?' I asked, a little distracted by the bouncy feeling against my back.

'Our medicine woman dead before she teach Shezza. Now you teach.'

'But, I only know about human use for plants, not you, ehm, your kind.'

'You know more than rest of Funia. You best man.'

'Can't you-' I started but he snorted to show that there was no discussion.

He looked at Shezza and said something that sounded like she was supposed to watch me from now on and do unpleasant things if I tried to get away. I wasn't about to test if I was right. They're fast and strong and I've seen her throw her spear to skewer prey.

She cut my bonds and nudged me to walk. She lead me to one of the huts at the centre and spread the cloth hanging in the entrance.

Inside was enough light coming from the opening between roof and wall.

There were plenty of bowls with various plant contents, stacks of cloth, different stones and bones. It felt like a witch's hut from fairy tales.

She let out something of a loud whistle. No too long after another female warrior came to us. I saw the crude bandage around her arm.

'She hurt a lot.' Shezza said. 'You heal.'

I thought her higher pitched voice was pretty pleasant. I unwrapped the bandages and looked at the wound.

'Animal bite?'

The warrior nodded.

I gestured for her to sit down next to a pot of water. With it I cleaned her wound. It didn't look like it was infected and I searched the contents of the bowls for the weed that would numb pain. Luckily there were some of the leaves I was looking for.

I crushed a few and added a little water to make a pulp. This I smeared on the wound and bandaged her properly with clean cloth.

'Chew on one when you feel pain.' I said handing her several of the same leaves. 'The hurt should stay away after a few days and the the bandage can be removed.'

She nodded and gave me a bow before leaving. I looked at Shezza and thought I saw a little smile.

'This can be used directly on wounds and be eaten to lessen pain.' I said as I handed her a leaf.

She nodded in understanding and studied it closely.

I turned to the other bowls and started sorting them into those I knew and those I didn't, then those that I knew in their usage like medicine, spices, poison, food. By the time I had finished it had become dusk.



'So..' I said feeling a bit awkward. 'Where can I, you know?'

She looked at me tilting her head.

'To relieve myself?' I asked hinting I had full bladder.

She nodded and gestured to follow her. I did and was shown a shallow pit where I could guess what was under that layer of sand. I untied the rope holding up my pants but held on to them as she stayed next to me.

'Sorry, but it feels a little weird when you stand next to me.'

'Why?'

'Well, I just can't do it while I'm being watched. Can you leave me alone for a moment?'

She shook her head. 'I will watch you so you won't run away.'

'Look, I'm not going to run away. It's too hard to do this with someone next to me.'

'It is not.' she said turning around, bending a little lifting her tail, and peed into the pit.

I looked away and sighed.

'Now you.'

Feeling I had no choice unless I wanted to pee my pants later on I turned away a little and let down my pants enough to be able to pee. I could feel her eyes upon me and tried to relax by breathing deep a couple of times. It worked after a little

while and I felt quite relieved.

'We go sleep now.' she said looking at the sky.

'Right.' I said and we returned to the hut.

There was an area covered by furs.

'That the bed?' I asked.

She nodded.

'I guess that's it then.'

She removed the wrapping around her chest and her loincloth.

'Whoa!' I said turning away. 'What are you doing?'

'Sleep.'

'But, here?'

'Yes. Need to watch you.'

'I understand, but you can sleep in your own hut. No need to watch me here.'

'Will not let you escape.'

I shook my head. 'I won't try to escape, honestly.'

'Humans not to be trusted.' she said standing behind me. 'Down on the bed.'

I sighed and sat down. She leaned against my back tying my hands together, then tied me to one of the poles.

'Great.' I said and gave up, lying down and just wanting to get some sleep. She crawled against me wrapping one arm around me.

'You're sleeping with me?'

'Yes. I will know when you try to sneak out.'

"Forget it." I thought and just shut my eyes. 'Good night.'

When I woke up she had already untied me and was preparing some breakfast. I rubbed my face and wrists and she handed me a bowl with meat.

'Thanks.' I said and was glad to eat something again.

I took a good look at her while I had the time. She had a slightly dark green skin like most I've seen, light grey hair running all the way from her head to the tip of her long, slender tail, a tuft of the same on her ample chest, and blue eyes.

'Is there a place to wash myself?' I asked.

'River at the back of the village.'

'I'd like to do that first. I feel very dirty after all these days.'

'Then we go after eating.'

She led me to a small river and as I expected she didn't take her eyes off me. I undressed quickly and went into the water feeling glad to wash the dirt and sweat off of me. I soaked my head a couple of times and shook my head.

'Much better.' I said.

'Yes.' she said behind me.

I looked back and saw she had taken a bath as well, then looked away from her quickly. 'Are you going to be this close to me all the time?'

'Yes. Need to watch you and learn.'

'Right. Don't you have a mate to live with?'

'Shezza not ready to mate yet.'

'Ah.' I said.

I finished cleaning myself, then walked out of the water. 'I'll wait here until you're finished.' I said getting dressed. I figured I'd let her take her time and not unduly agitate her.

I just watched the village until I heard her get out of the water and come up next to me later.

'So, they wanted you to become the next medicine woman?'

She nodded. 'She teach me things when I was little. I was best choice.'

'But do you want to learn? Do you want to become a medicine woman?'

She pondered for a short while. 'Yes. Want to help tribe.'

I could see her determination. 'All right. I'll teach you what I've learned for humans, but we'll have to test if it works for funia first.'

She nodded and we went back to the hut where I started teaching her the basics of herbal medicine first.

I had her creating salves for every day use while I washed a large flat stone. I placed it on a couple of larger rocks, put up a fire underneath and waited for the stone to become hot.

'What you doing?'

'You'll see.' I said as I took out a small bag.

I rubbed a bit of the contents on a couple of pieces of meat, laid them on the stone and let it grill until it was a nice colour brown.

Shezza watched and sniffed the scent. 'Smells different. Getting hungry.'

I nodded and tested the meat. 'It's ready.' I said, cut the meat into pieces and placed them on a flat piece of stone I warmed up on top of the big stone.

'Try this.' I said handing the stone plate to her.

She sniffed, tasted one piece, then ate the rest like she hadn't eaten for days.

'Good?' I asked.

'Good!' she said licking the stone, then handing it over. 'More?' I snickered. 'As long as there's meat.' I said and put more meat on the stone.

'How?' she asked watching me using the herbs from the bag on the meat. 'Some plants give extra flavour to food. I used some of my favorites.' I noticed more funia had smelled the scent and came looking for the source. I showed them what I did and they left to come back with more meat and fish for me to prepare and grill.

While I cooked I showed how to set up a stone grill and showed the herbs I have for cooking. They were curious and eager to try out these new flavours.

Before I knew it the whole village had joined us. Everyone was eating and having a good time. I watched kids playing around, the elders being served by a couple of females, the couple of males comparing strength and the females arranging colourful feathers into their hair. It felt nice and comfortable even if I was a human prisoner here.

When the last ones had retired for the night I yawned and stretched feeling rather satisfied. I looked forward to a good night's sleep, undressed and made myself comfortable when Shezza dangled a piece of rope in front of me.

'Really?'

She nodded. 'No taking chance of you running away.'

'Still not trusting me, eh?' I said and sighed.

She tied me up again and laid down next to me.

"At least I get the soft and warm feeling against my back." I thought and fell asleep.

She was a good student and I was able to teach her what I knew about plants and food. Luckily most common remedies for humans worked for funia but I explained how to test new things by using tiny amounts at first and increasing it when there were no ill side effects.

She taught me some of the habits of funia and I got more familiar with life in this village. They weren't much different from humans but for the difference with few males compared to the amount of males.

I didn't have much to complain apart from being tied up every night despite trying to convince Shezza I wouldn't run away.

One day I wanted to explore an area of the jungle I hadn't seen yet but felt like it would provide a new discovery.

I found a new plant but there wasn't anything else we hadn't seen already. When the sun was high we decided to take a break and eat. We had taken grilled meat with us which I had prepared during breakfast. Shezza found a clearing with a thick log to sit upon. She was about to sit down when I saw a snake threatening to bite.

'Watch out!' I shouted but it was too late.

Shezza yelled out as I grabbed a firm stick and shoved the snake as far as I could. I recognised it as poisonous and knew I had to treat her right away.

She leaned against a tree squeezing her buttock to fight the pain.

'Let me see! I'll try to suck out the venom!' I said.

She looked back at me with a pained face. 'That not good!'

'I'm refuse to let you die so let me see before it's too late!' I said.

She looked away and bend over more, lifting her tail. I saw the bitemark just above her butttline on the inside. Tiny droplets of blood were visible. I didn't hesitate putting my mouth around the wound and sucked hard trying to get as much fluid o

ut of it. I squeezed below on her thigh and above on her buttock to slow down the flow of blood while I sucked and spit blood. I kept checking the area to see if it would swell up and turn a different colour but it didn't.

I felt around the wound when I suddenly heard her moan.

'Are you okay!?' I asked worried she'd get sick.

She looked back at me with a troubled expression but said nothing. Then it dawned on me and I looked at where I held my hands. While sucking the wound I must have rubbed her private parts and noticed her slightly moist slit now.

'I'm sorry!' I said and let go of her moving back.

She straightened herself and turned around feeling embarrassed.

'I didn't mean to..'

She shook her head.

'But, you still need treatment to prevent infection of the wound.' I said taking my basket, pulling out a couple of berries and showing her.

She understood and nodded.

'Thanks.' I said and started preparing the berries. 'I hate the idea of you getting an infection.'

When the salve was ready and I had ripped the cloth I had to bandages I asked her to turn around and bend again. She obliged a little reluctantly and I knelt down to treat her. I tried not to look but now I noticed her strong scent and how her sl

it was even more moist. A tension between my legs reminded me I was supposed to treat her wound and I cursed myself for get ting distracted. I applied the salve carefully, then tied a pad with the salve against the wound with bandage around her leg and waist.

'Ready.' I said.

She turned around just as I stood up and she saw the swelling in my pants just as I remembered it was there.

'Sorry!' I said turning away. 'I didn't mean to get excited.'

She wrapped her arms around me. 'Thank you.'

'No problem.'

We walked back slowly to the village where they asked what happened to her seeing the bandages. She explained and I could see some females smirking as they looked at me. I let them as I went into the hut sorting out the contents of the basket.

A little later she came in putting away her things.

'I will need to check in the morning to make sure you're healing fine.'

She nodded.

'Let's sleep.' I said undressing and sat down on the bed. 'You need rest.'

I heard her get ready and lie down on the bed.

'Aren't you going to tie me?'

'You going to make sure I'm better tomorrow?'

'Yes?'

'Then Shezza trusts you to stay.'

I looked back at her at the edge of the bed. 'I guess I'm happy to hear that.' I said, then got ready to get some sleep.

The next morning I checked her wound which showed no signs of getting worse. I managed to keep my eyes on the wound but her scent was enough to get me to react while I cleaned her skin carefully.

'It's not getting worse so I think it'll heal soon enough.' I said trying not to think about the rest of her body and the sensation of having it against mine at night.

I failed of course and grabbed a basket to keep in front of me.

'I'm going to take a dip in the river.' I said and walked out.

She quickly came after me. 'You not go alone. Shezza need to guard you.'

'Didn't you trust me not to go away?'

'Maybe you leave now I'm better..'

I stood still because something felt wrong.

I looked at her. 'I'm not going to leave you.'

She smiled gently. I continued walking feeling a tad confused.

At the river I undressed and took a dive. When I came up I saw her washing herself and watched her for a while. She saw me and it seemed she smiled looking away again. I shook my head, dived once more, then washed myself and dressed while she got ready.

We walked back to the village and I noticed some females acting different than usual. It's like they were more careful of what they did. We grabbed what we needed to hunt and gather food from the hut and wanted to get out when one of the few males stood in front.

He saw Shezza, came closer, sniffed the air around her and smirked. She stepped back but he grabbed her by her wrist and wanted to pull her away. She protested and hit him but he yanked her hard making her trip and fall on the ground.

'Hey! Let her go!' I shouted feeling very angry all of a sudden.

He looked at me. 'Silent, human worm! Or I'll kill you before I mate!'

She looked at me with pleading eyes and I finally understood. The females were in heat. I didn't know if she wanted me to stay out of it for my sake, or if she wanted my help but I definitely wouldn't stay out of it.

'She's mine!'

He looked a little surprised at me as did anyone who heard me.

He laughed hard, then stared straight at me. 'You want to fight over her?'

I knew it would end up bad for me but there was no way I'd let him touch her. 'Yes.'

He let her wrist go and took a step toward me. 'Then you die and I will take her.' he said and jumped at me.

I ducked, jumped up and headbutted him in his stomach. He tripped more from surprise than hurt and I threw sand in his eyes.

I knew I had to fight dirty to have any chance of beating him.

He hissed while blinking and rubbing his eyes and I hit his snout as hard as

I could. He yelled out in pain and I pummeled him while I got the chance. He recovered quickly though and hit me square on the jaw making me fly back. He stood up and I could see he was furious.

He wiped the blood coming from his nose. 'You dead.'

I figured I would.

He came at me swinging his fists which I deflected at first but his size was too much and he hit me with all his strength several times. I wiped the blood from my face crawling on the ground. He lifted his fist ready to hit me, then Shezza hit hi

m with her spear.

He looked back at her cluthing his arm where she hit him, hissed and smacked her hard. I got furious again and jumped his back hitting his neck. He rolled over making me lose my grip, grabbed a sharp stone used for cutting from one of the cooking fires nearby and wanted to jump at me again.

A loud hiss stopped him.

One of the elders came up and looked disapproving at the scene. The male hissed at him but shut up after another sharp hiss from the elder.

He looked at me while Shezza helped me get up. 'You fight over Shezza.'

I looked at her. 'You okay?'

She nodded.

I looked at the elder. 'Yes.'

'Why?'

'I'm not going to let her get hurt if I can help it.'

'You said Shezza yours, but you no Funia. She no human.'

I felt I blushed but it would be hidden by the dirt. 'I guess I like her more.'

The elder nodded.

'You rather have him?' he asked Shezza.

She looked at me and nodded.

'Then I let you have her.' he said.

The male hissed at him. The elder hissed back but the male ran at him with the stone in his hand. The next moment he impaled himself on the spear Shezza and I had aimed at him to defend the elder.

He sagged onto the ground, his life bleeding out of him.

The elder looked at him and nodded at us. He spoke to some others and gestured to take the body away.

'He maybe more bad for future than human and funia together.'

An elder female took his arm and he smiled at her. Then they walked away together.

I sighed deep feeling very relieved and the pain demanded attention.

Shezza and I went back into the hut where I looked at her first despite her protesting that I should be looked at first.

She got hit on her cheek so I applied a little cooling cream on it. I stroked it gently and looked her in her eyes. She looked right back and without thinking I leaned closer and kissed her softly. She looked surprised at me.

'Sorry! I wanted to kiss you!' I said looking down.

'Kiss?'

I nodded. 'Something humans do when they like each other a lot.'

She pondered for a moment. 'Then Shezza want to kiss too.'

I looked up at her smiling softly, caressed her cheeks and kissed her again. She learned quickly and after a long time we had explored every kiss possible. She stroked me slowly while I searched every sensitive piece of her skin. She moaned hard while I got her to climax. After she got her breath back she turned on all fours looking seductively at me. I was about to burst and would die before refusing her invitation.

We spend the entire night exploring each other's bodies and pleasures. Feeling dead tired but completely happy in the morning I put on my pants to get out to relieve myself. I barely stepped out when I saw several females and one male sitting just a bit away looking at me.

'Ehh, good morning?'

They grinned at me.

'You strange, human.' the male said. 'You make females jealous.'

'What? How?' I asked.

'Females want to be happy as Shezza.'

'Ah.' I said. 'I see.' I pondered how to respond to that. 'We could have a talk between men after I get some sleep.' I said and went to empty my bladder.

After I got back Shezza entangled me and we slept for a long time. When we woke up in the evening we went out quickly, then she dragged me back to bed where we repeated the night before.

After waking up we got out of the hut walking hand in hand to the river, made love again, then went back to eat.

A couple of females gestured to come eat with them and we accepted. I understood enough of the way they talked to Shezza that I knew they were talking about what we had done.

In the meantime the couple of males including the elders asked me how I got a female to keep wanting to mate all this time.

Much later the young males invited the females to show them what they had learned and soon enough it was just Shezza and me at the fire looking up at the stars in the sky.

'Are you happy?' I asked holding her hand, stroking it gently with my thumb.

She nodded and we both knew we'd live our lifetime together as the strangest couple.

## Cold Encounter

Harlock watched the feline lead her black riding bird into one corner of the dimly lit castle hall and pull out her curved sword again.

Travelling the world for adventure, he had stumbled upon an abandoned castle at the same time that one of the beast species did, a feline species hostile to humans. She attacked him at once but he held her off until sudden snow and wind became too much to stay outside and he suggested to take cover inside.

'Let's continue.' she growled over the howling wind outside.

He watched the clouds turning darker outside and snow blowing through the narrow windows while he stroked his bird's cheek. 'You sure about that?'

'I'm not letting a little snow prevent me from taking down an enemy.'

He gripped his short straight sword. 'I don't think it'll be just a little snow.'

'You're just trying to save your skin.' she said while crossing the stone slab floor and raising her sword.

He planted his feet firmly on the floor. 'Yes. And maybe yours as well.'

'Hogwash!' she said and stabbed her sword at him.

He deflected it with his sword. 'Have you looked outside!? It's getting worse!'

'I'll deal with that after I kill you!' she said attacking him again.

He dodged and tried to hit the sword out of her paw. 'You're not going to survive this either!'

Her eyes burned with hatred and she kept on attacking. 'Shut up!'

His sense of danger grew from her and the noise outside. 'I mean it!'

He stumbled backward over a loose stone at her next attack. She grabbed the opportunity and was about to slash him when both their birds screeched and hurried off together down a hallway.

'What the?' she said as cracking noises come from the windows and doors.

The stone around the windows and the doors frosted over in front of their eyes.

Her eyes went wide. 'Oh shit.'

'Told you so.' he said while his face and hands grew colder from the temperature drop. 'Let's get further inside quickly.'

'Maybe you're right.' she said and moved away from the outer wall as the ice slowly covered it further.

He stood up and followed the direction the birds had taken. 'This way!'

She followed him and they took their birds, who stood at the end of the hallway, deeper into the castle after lighting up a couple of torches. They went down several stairwells and into a library and closed any door behind them.

'I think we can stay here.' he said looking around the musty place. 'We should be far enough from the outside, and we can light up the fireplace.'

She helped him pile up old firewood in the small fireplace and lit it. He checked all doors and found a small hallway leading to a kitchen.

'There's water,' he said after returning to the library and held up two dusty



bottles and iron cups. 'and this!'

She narrowed her eyes. 'You're trying to get me drunk?'

He sat down on the tattered rug in front of the fireplace, removed the cork with his knife, and sniffed at the bottle. 'Would I get anything out of it?'

She huffed. 'No!'

He wiped the cups. 'Then, no. If you get drunk it's your own fault.' he said and filled the cups. 'Your choice.' He drank half of his cup and sighed loudly. 'Good wine.'

She sat down opposite of him, took her cup, sniffed it, and sipped. She thought it was good too but she refused to say anything.

He looked around at the wooden shelves filled with different sized books and wooden, iron, and stone figurines of people and animals. 'I wonder what happened for them to abandon this castle.'

'Battle, famine?' she said removing her leather armour and red tunic to dry them near the fire.

He could now see she had a black, grey and white striped pattern all over her firm body and not just her tail.

She glared at him. 'What are you looking at?'

He snapped out of staring at her face and cold grey-blue eyes. 'Ah, sorry, you look great.'

She opened her mouth for a moment, then closed it taking out another red tunic from the bags she had taken off of her bird. 'Like your opinion matters.' she said as she put on the tunic.

'Yeah, I guess not.' he said and poured himself more wine. He shivered suddenly. 'It's getting colder.' He stood up and opened the main doors to check the hallway outside, only to find more ice building up further down.

'Oh hell!' he said closing the doors quickly. 'We're going to freeze to death!'

She looked up at him. 'What do you mean?'

He hurried over to the fireplace and added more wood. 'Ice is coming down the hallway! It must be crazy outside!'

His yellow-red bird screeched softly in the corner next to the fireplace where he had left her. The black bird answered, went to her, and they laid down close together.

'I think they have the right idea.' he said as he pulled out a dark grey blanket from his own bag. 'Do you have a blanket or something?'

'Yeah, why?'

He pulled up another rug in front of the birds and grabbed the wine and his cup. 'We'd better crawl together to keep warm.'

She leaned away. 'I'm not getting close to you!'

'I know you hate me but if you want to survive we'll have to set our pride aside for now. Unless you want them to find our dead bodies together after this is over.' he said and pointed at the doors. Ice crawled through the cracks.

'Damn!' she said and knew she had no choice, even if she did have a good fur coat. She took her blanket from her pack, sat down next to him against the birds, and they pulled their blankets tight around themselves. 'Try anything and you're dead.'

He chuckled. 'I'm too cold to try anything that would get me kicked away

from your warmth.'

She huffed. 'Funny.'

They drank and watched the ice expand a little more around the doors but the heat from the fireplace kept it from going further inside.

'Harlock.' he said.

She glanced sideways at him. 'What?'

'My name. I'm Harlock.'

She kept silent.

'So, either your name can't be spoken by humans, or you want me to make one up for you.'

She still kept silent.

He hummed for a moment looking up. 'So, what do you think about the name-'

'Rori.'

He smiled. 'Nice.'

She looked away. 'Stop trying to be friendly.'

'Why? Might as well get along since there's nothing else to do right now.'

'You're my enemy!'

He hummed again. 'I'd rather not be.'

She sighed deep. 'We just can't live together in peace. We're too different to get along.'

He thought about it for a while. 'Only in the way we look though. And if all your females look as good as you I just know there will be plenty of men wanting to get along. Not to mention our women liking though guys.'

She frowned. 'You're disgusting.'

He grinned. 'I'd like to think I appreciate beauty.'

She rolled her eyes. 'How many of your women have you tricked with your snake tongue?'

He counted on his fingers and she knew she was right about him. 'None actually.' he said.

'Wha!?! Then what were you counting for!?!'

He grinned. 'Just kidding with you.'

She huffed and looked away again. 'Sure. I'll bet you said the same thing to others too.'

He looked up at the ceiling with cobwebs. 'Been travelling since I was young, never stayed somewhere long enough.'

She hummed low. 'And you never?'

'I want to be with the right girl forever. But I know none who would join me in my travels.' He sighed. 'Guess I'll grow old alone.'

He slipped out from under the blankets after a few moments to put more logs on the fire.

'Is there still something to drink?' she asked.

He checked the bottles. 'Empty. I'll have another look in the kitchen.'

She looked at the sparkling white surface of the library doors. 'But the ice?'

'I'll be quick. I'd like to have more wine myself.' he said and opened the door to the small hallway. 'Looks like the ice hasn't reached here yet.'

He came back after a while carrying several dusty bottles. 'I brought everything I could find. This should keep us warm for a while.' he said, put

down the bottles next to her, closed the door, and crawled back under the blankets.

She noticed his white fingers. 'Are you okay?'

He nodded and tried to get the cork out of the first bottle with trembling hands. 'I'll be fine. Just need to warm up.' He managed to get the cork out and shakily filled their cups. 'Cheers.'

She drank some while his arm trembled against her, then sighed. She put her cup away, took as well to his to his surprise, and silenced his intended question by rubbing his hands between her warm paws. He stared dumbfounded at her.

She looked away. 'I don't want it to be said I won our fight because you lost your fingers or got sick. That's all.'

He gave her a warm smile. 'Thanks.' he said and she moved further against his side.

When the warmth returned to his fingers he clutched them between her short, thicker fingers. 'You have really soft fur.'

She kept silent and listened to the crackle of the fire, howling of the wind through the chimney, and the breathing of the birds. She couldn't help but feel comfortable in the warmth under the blankets with him despite him being human and cursed him for being nice to her and complicating things. Enemies weren't supposed to be nice. Not even the males from her kind were this nice.

'I'm getting hungry.' he said after a while. 'I've got dried meat if you want some.'

She looked up. 'You're willing to share your food with me?'

'I can't eat and not give you any. I'd be ashamed to be that rude.'

Another act of kindness she wasn't used to and didn't want to accept just like that. 'Leave it.' she said and let go of his hands. 'I'll prepare the hares I caught this morning.'

He watched her clean four hares and bury them in the ashes of the fireplace to roast them.

'Now we wait.' she said as she crawled back next to him.

He smiled cheerfully at her. 'Looking forward to have some of your cooking.'

'You should stop flirting with me.' she said looking at the arched ceiling.

He grinned a little in embarrassment. 'Sorry. I didn't mean to flirt. I meant what I said.'

She frowned. 'Yeah, you say that to anything female I'll bet.' He looked down and guilt came over her. 'Sorry. I just don't take compliments well.'

He smiled softly. 'I guess I'm the wrong company for you then.'

She sighed and took his hand. 'Yeah, you are.'

They drank some more before she checked the hares.

'Ready.' she said and cut some pieces of the roast.

'This is good.' he said while they were eating. He cleaned the bones thoroughly. 'Unless it's too much of a compliment. I'm just not any good at catching hares.'

She grinned at his happy face. 'Shut up and eat.'

After their meal he stretched and yawned. 'I'm going to sleep now if you don't mind.'

'You trust me not to kill you while you sleep?'

He nodded. 'I trust you.'

She frowned as he had no reason to do so. 'You're too naive.'

He closed his eyes. 'Probably. But I'll regret that less than the other way around.'

A sigh escaped her again. 'Fine. I'll get some sleep too. Then we can still keep warm together.'

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When she woke up again she found him wrapped up in her arms and couldn't believe she actually had been comfortable enough to get close to someone else. Wondering if he somehow used a trick to make her do this she studied his face for a sign he faked his sleep. His innocent goofy smile amused her though and she stroked his black hair. He woke up for a moment, blinked at her with his grey eyes, then crawled closer against her to continue sleeping.

She frowned. 'Hey, what do you think you're doing!?'

He hummed softly and rubbed his cheek in the side of her neck. 'Warm and soft. Want to sleep forever like this.' he whispered.

'Oh, you wish!' she said and pushed him out from under the blankets.

He woke up at once and looked around in a daze. 'What happened?'

She pulled the blanket against her chest. 'I knew you were a pervert!'

He looked puzzled at her. 'What? Why? What did I do?'

Her lower lip trembled as she looked away. 'Taking advantage of me when I let my guard down to feel me up.'

His eyes went wide. 'Huh? I did? I'm sorry! I had no idea I did that! It's inexcusable and I'll accept my punishment!' he said and bowed on his knees.

She laughed and he looked up at her wide grin. 'Just messing with you.

Told you you're too naive.'

'Damned.' he said with a deep sigh and sat up. 'Now who's taking advantage of whom? And I trusted you.'

She grinned deviously and put her face up to his. 'That will teach you to get close to an enemy.'

His face turned red in embarrassment and he looked away. 'Fine. I get it, I get it.'

'Anyway, looks like the cold storm has died down.' she said and pointed at the main doors. 'The ice is gone.'

They went over to the doors and carefully opened them. There was still ice in the hallway but they noticed the temperature was less cold than before.

A natural urge made itself known to him. 'Let's check outside and see if there's somewhere to find some relief.'

She agreed and they went back the way they came in, cracking open every ice covered door on the way and were glad to find a latrine on the way.

He gestured at the door. 'Ladies first.'

She stepped back and tucked in her tail. 'You just want to smell my scent after I'm done, pervert.'

His jaw slacked. 'What!? No!'

'Just messing with you again.' she said and grinned deviously again.

'Sometimes it's just too easy.'

He frowned at her. 'I hate you.'

She gave his cheek a pat. 'Good.' she said and went in.

When they reached the large hall upstairs it looked like part of an ice palace. The light reflected everywhere on the walls, floor, and ceiling and had turned the dreary stone space into a sparkly crystal cave.

'Pretty.' she said as she gazed around.

He smiled. 'Yes.'

They cut the ice from the doors and opened them with some force. The light outside was bright and they had to shield their eyes to get used to it.

'Everything's turned white.' she said.

'Yeah. Amazing.' he said looking around the white garden.

The outer walls, the trees, the castle itself was white and the sky was a clear blue.

'At least the sun is shining again.' she said enjoying the warmth.

'Whatever happened, looks like it has ended.'

'Then we can continue what we were doing.'

'Ah.' he remembered. 'I was hoping we could skip that.'

She pulled out her sword. 'It was only a temporary truce.'

'Yes, but weren't we getting along? You must know I'm no threat to you.'

She held the tip of her sword under his chin. 'Fight me.'

'No!'

'I will slice you if you don't.'

'I don't want to fight you and accidentally hurt you!'

'So what?'

He grabbed the tip of her sword in his hand. 'You may think it's stupid but I care about you!'

She smiled. 'Yeah, I noticed.' she said, put her sword away, then turned to enter the castle again. 'I guess you're interesting enough to travel around the world with.'

He stared after her. 'Wait, you want to? You're not messing with me again?'

She shrugged. 'Who knows? You'll just have to find out.'

He sighed and followed her. 'I guess I got what I wished for.'

## New Adventures

Feeling groggy Melina woke up and tensed her whole body a couple of times to chase away the feeling. She went to relieve herself between the soft appendages of the out plant, cleaned herself going through the brush plant, checked the water reservoir and grabbed a net to go out and pick new fruit.

With a few thrusts from her fins she swam quickly around the smaller bushes surrounding her home. Today she wanted the blue bittersweet fruit from the aptly named bubble bush. It drifted further off but she always felt it was worth the trip.

When she saw she was close she heard soft singing. She slowed down for a bit to listen. It wasn't exactly singing nor whistling but now she recognised the sounds coming from the large sweepers visiting the area ever so often. She flicked her fins and tail excited to see and hear them again.

The herd swam along the larger bushes catching flocks of insects in their baleen. She watched the light grey animals swim lazily around, the fins along the length of their body waving into their wide tails. She felt her stomach reminding her of why she came here and swam toward the nearest bubble bush.

The large bush had plenty of fresh blue spheres of juicy goodness and she started picking those that were ripe enough to eat. She'd give each a light squeeze with her fingers to test them, then added them to the net. She had moved deeper into the bush when she had gathered enough and moved out between the branches when she bumped into something furry letting out a yelp.

A sharp face turned towards her. 'You really surprised me!' She smiled apologetic. 'Sorry, I hadn't noticed someone else was here.' He moved aside so she could come forward. 'I guess it's partly my own fault. I was focused on the herd.'

'You were?'

He nodded. 'I'm doing a study on them.' he said and showed the journal he was holding. 'I've been following them for a while now, studying how they live and migrate around space. When I'm done I hope to be recognised as an expert on them.'

She saw his brown eyes shine as he told her this. 'So you're just traveling everywhere too?'

'Yes. Going from place to place seeing new things almost all the time. Meeting different tribes along the way.'

'Sounds interesting.'

'It is. Although I can only take so much stuff with me, making me miss the comforts of home sometimes. Only when they stay for a while like now I can take some rest and do nothing.'

'How do you know they'll stay here now?'

He pointed at a couple at the centre of the herd. 'See them? Watch closely.'

She followed the direction of his arm and found the couple. 'What should I see?'

He smiled. 'You'll find out.'

She watched the couple staying put for a moment, then saw a little grey hump appear behind the front sweeper. It disappeared but another moment later a young sweeper appeared below the adults.

'A little one!'

'Born not too long ago.' he said watching her flip her fins excitedly. 'It can't swim for long periods so they often take a break.'

'Wow. I've never seen one before. Only adults.'

She kept an eye on the young one swimming around its parents until her stomach and fins twitched telling her to fill it.

She felt a little awkward as he stifled his laughter.

'Sorry. That was cute.' he said. 'But it's a good idea. I could use a bite myself.'

'Would you like to come and eat at my place? I bet you don't get to eat very well while travelling.'

'I'd love to, if it's not bothering you.'

She shook her head. 'Follow me.' she said and glided out of the bush.

She looked back and saw him spread two big wings lighter in colour than his brown fur. With one swoop he caught up with her.

'I don't have to worry about you keeping up with either me nor them.'

He laughed a little. 'I wouldn't have started migrating with them if I couldn't easily follow them in the first place.'

He looked at how she rotated and bend her body as they moved between the bushes. 'Then again I feel I can't quite dance as gracefully as you can.'

She smiled softly. 'That's just in our nature.'

Her round home made from slender branches weaved together came into view and she gestured to it. 'That's my home.'

'Nice. And big. Living with your family?'

Her eyes turned a little sad. 'My parents died a while ago, so I'm alone here.'

'Sorry to hear that.'

'It's okay.'

'Never thought about moving to one of the clusters nearby?'

'I don't feel comfortable there.'

'I see.' he said and followed her inside.

She hooked her net next to others filled with other fruits, leaves and packages of seeds and dried small animals.

'You can perch at the wall there if you want to.'

'Thanks.' He moved to the thick branch and wrapped his claws around it.

She started selecting ingredients and chopped them up.

'Anything I can help with?'

'No need. It's a simple recipe I learned from my mother.'

Not long after she handed him a leaf package. 'I hope you like it. It's one of my favorites.'

'I'm sure I will.' he said and took a bite out of it. 'Mmm..' he said chewing and nodding. 'This is good.'

She took her own. 'There are seeds here which go very well with the local meat.' she said and started eating hers.

They finished with several bubble fruits and relaxed.

'I got to learn this. Would make the food much better on the trip.'

'I would like to see what kind of tasty things there are out there.'

He pondered for a moment. 'Well, why don't you? Come with me and who knows what we'll experience. Besides, I wouldn't mind having someone around who can make better meals than me.' he said grinning.

'Really? I could come along?'

'If you don't mind living with a herd.'

She rubbed her frontal fins. 'I don't know. Leaving my home?'

'Think about it. You can always return and in time the herd will come back here anyway, so you can always leave it at that.'

'Won't I get in the way or slow you down?'

He flexed his wings and grinned. 'If you get tired you'll just have to hold me tight.'

She giggled. 'You sure you want to have a cold blood against you for so long?'

He smiled at her. 'Wouldn't mind that either.'

'Sure.' she said looking away. 'Another species joke.'

She felt one wing wrapping around her and he stroked his fingers along hers. 'I really wouldn't mind having you for company.' he whispered.

She felt his warm touch and her back fins shuddered.

'I have to get back to my study now. Think about it and if you want to, just come before the herd moves on.'

He gave her a gently nuzzle and she watched him fly away.

The herd was ready to leave again. He could see it in their behaviour and he started packing up his things. He ate another bubble fruit and wished she could come with him. He flexed his wings and flew around fast to relieve his frustration.

When he felt the muscles in his body he relaxed and glided back to the bush where he had left his things. He rounded it and found her nestled next to his bags.

She smiled as he perched in front of her. 'I guess I'd like to try this little adventure.'

He took her fingers in his. 'I'm glad you do.'

The sweepers song changed.

'Just in time.' he said and hooked a belt around his waist, attaching his bags to it. 'This song means they're going.'

She grabbed her own bag. 'I'm ready.'

He clutched his fingers in her free ones and together they followed the herd slowly.



## Mother Nature

I loved the light and sound show. The clouds flashed in the night followed by the low thunder, lightning showed up occasionally. The temperature was warm and there was no rain so I laid down on the back of my car to look up at the flashing sky.

I thought about how old people always talked about the way mother nature expressed herself.

'I understand.' I said softly. 'I'm one of the humans.'

The lightning had started right above me and it didn't seem to move anywhere. Usually it drifted over my area and that was it. This time it felt like it had a purpose to stay here.

'I'd like to comfort you if you'd like someone to vent your frustration to. Even in your anger you are beautiful.'

I took a sip from my beer. 'Then again, maybe I'm not the right person for you, having an environmentally bad car.' I said, stroking the side of my youngtimer car. 'But this friendly monster makes me feel good. And I try to only use what I really need.'

The lightning show continued and I looked left and right at the lonely road. During one flash I saw a figure standing on it in the distance.

I wasn't sure what I saw, but a second flash confirmed it. A figure stood in the middle of the road.

I kept my eye on it. With every flash it moved closer towards me.

I felt a drop of water on me.

There was no change in thunder but rain drops fell down around me.

I looked down the road again, seeing the figure a little closer now.

'Hang on.' I said.

I walked back inside, finishing off my beer, taking a couple of peppermints, then went back outside to the road.

The first flash showed her at the same spot.

I held out my hand. 'I'm here if you need me.'

With every flash she came closer and rain came down harder.

My heart ran overtime while the figure came closer.

I had a little difficulty watching the figure with the rain covering my glasses and face but slowly I saw a woman coming towards me, skin the colour of desert sand, hair the colour of snow, eyes blue as a tropical ocean. Her green and brown dress looked like it flowed down her curves.

'If you are who I think you might be, then you really are as beautiful as they say.'

She came closer until she stood only an arm's length away from me.

I saw the anger, resentment, fear, and confusion in her eyes.

'I'm sorry.' I said. 'We're a stupid species and I wish we wouldn't hurt you so much, but some of us do love you.'

She moved closer to me.

'If you want to, I'm here to receive your anger.' I said, looking deep into her eyes. 'Just give humanity a chance to grow up.'

I didn't care if I lived an alcoholic illusion or not, I felt something needed someone to care for it.

She looked at me, then embraced me, a little to my surprise. She felt warm, firm but soft enough, her smell slightly sweeter than a forest's air and I wished I'd never ever had to let her go.

When I woke up I could only remember her smell and touch and the intense desire to be with her as I looked at the pillow next to mine. I heated up the water for tea and went outside into my back yard, looking up at the morning sun in a clear sky.

'I hope I made you feel better. And that you will return even if you don't need comfort.' I said, then went back inside, preparing to go to work.

## Perspective

I fell for her the moment my master brought her home.

Her legs, curved so deliciously perfect in light brown colour and slender, her back so soft, I had never stood so straight ever before.

Master had brought others into the house before, but despite them being quite dull or lacking graceful features, I never wanted to see the fate that befell them at master's hands each time.

You see, master had a problem with drinking. It's not that he intended to break them, he wasn't consciously a bad man, but ever since she had left him he wasn't the same anymore. She, his ex-wife who he had been married to for six years, left him scarred when she cheated on him. He couldn't handle it and started drinking a lot to feel better.

It didn't take long before he lashed out in a violent drunken stupor and took it out on the first one, throwing her across the room into the wall. He did cry for what he had done, but the damage was done, I'd never see her again after he took her out the door.

He didn't mend his ways though, he kept drinking, getting fatter and while the next one lasted longer, he treated her rough, going down on her with his full weight until one day, it became too much and she too broke down.

A few more came and went until the day he brought her in. It seemed he came upon her by luck, having been discarded by her previous master that day. She looked so fragile, I was instantly aroused and afraid for her.

I could see the suffering on the hands of my master in her future, but I could only stand here and watch my master go down on her with his fat ass and hear the moaning as she tried to handle his weight.

I cried inside as I saw him entangle his hairy legs with her smooth curved ones, but the desire to be able to do the same kept me aroused through her ordeal.

I had the hope he would treat her better because he tried to cut back on drinking and seemed to like her looks and tried to treat her more carefully than the others, but one evening something had happened to make him open the bottle of cheap liquor the second he walked in.

I had been looking at her all day, it being a sunny day and the warm rays of the sun caressing those lovely curvy legs and back as they penetrated the window blinds. I could stand here and watch her beauty forever when the dream was torn apart by his cursing. He tossed his coat at my feet and went for the bottle left on the table the night before. He didn't even bother to get a clean glass and used the one right in front of him.

He grumbled the name of his ex, gulping down the contents of his glass and filling it up right away. His pants and shirt went the way of the corner and he paid her no heed as he got down on her, the sudden moan sending chills down myself. He emptied his glass again, tossing and turning on her and I could see her beautiful legs buckle under his weight at any minute. I tried to ignore what happened, but I couldn't prevent standing straighter from her sounds. It kept the clear image of her curves and my weakness at

the front of my mind and I never felt so ashamed as in that moment. I had to keep watching what he did to her as I stood there, unable to move. He suddenly stood up, threw another glass down his throat, cursed his ex and tossed her violently on the floor, giving her a hard kick against her back and one of her legs. The cracking sound was something I'd never forget.

He watched her lying on the floor, knelt down to look at what he had done and sighed deeply. 'Damned..' he grumbled. 'Not again..'

He got up, grabbed his pants and shirt, dressed himself and picked her up from the floor, carrying her broken body to me.

'I really need to buy stronger chairs.' he said, taking his casual coat from one of my hooks. 'Like this coat stand.'

## **Alive**

I met her a year ago at the library where she told stories to her cousins and other refugee children.

She told me her late mother taught her to find happiness so she could spread it further.

I asked 'Why not write your stories for all children to read then?' and gave her my old laptop.

I didn't get to see her the next day because she and her family were sent to another town, but I just saw her first published book with an acknowledgment to 'the sweet old man that gave her a new happy start'.

**###**

## **End notes**

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-book. If you have any thoughts about it, leave a review on your favourite site or leave a comment on any of the free online sites where I dwell.

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