

Nine. One of Us

Lukan loved Klaus. He loved him so much. But if there was something he really did not enjoy about being over at his house was not his little sister like Klaus had thought. No. It was something else. Something simple, and yet, Lukan did not see it coming despite knowing he should have. It was the food that they ate. Fish. Lukan hated seafood. If it came out of the water, chances were high that Lukan wasn't going to like it. Still, he didn't want to offend Klaus' family; that was one of the last things he wanted to do. Damn. What a predicament. Lukan found it hard to hide his disdain from the mustelids as he ate with them. He hoped a good conversation and a good drink would keep the thoughts of what he was downing at bay.

"So Lukan! We never really got to know each other on Halloween! Tell us about yourself!" Kuaren, Klaus' father, chimed up as the meal was continuing.

Lukan was caught off guard. "Um.. uh. What would you like to know about me?" Lukan stuttered.

"Anything really. I would like to know what has made my son take such a shine to ya!" was the broad response.

"Well, I--"

"He's gonna need something a bit more specific than that!" Kristina interrupted. "Like, is he going to school, and where. General conversation topics."

Lukan only felt a little bit more confident after the otter's mother spoke. "Well, I am not going to school right now. I graduated from Fox Mountain High last year and--" And he trailed off. Classic coon right there.

"Wait, Fox Mountain? Isn't that the one across town? Why not have gone to Lilac Grove High? It's a lot closer, and Klaus went there," Kristina scowled lightly.

Lukan shrugged. "My mom thought it best, since I am smarter than I am strong, by a long shot. Not that LGHS beat FMHS in anything other than football, anyway," he added, just to tease Klaus. Klaus looked like he was about to counter when Kandice inserted herself into the conversation.

"More please! Salmon is the bestest!" she exclaimed brightly. Lukan would beg to differ...

"Not until all of us had at least one helping themselves, dear," Kristina momentarily turned her attention to her daughter. It felt somewhat odd to Lukan, eating with someone else's family. And it felt weirder still to think that Klaus was considering him a part of this family. Again, everything was just feeling so much more different than Lukan was used to. It was like the rut that was his life was being torn to shreds right before his very eyes by the paws of not just Klaus, but the rest of his family as well.

"Aww... " Kandice looked sullen and forlorn. "Lukan still has a lot on his plate though. Is raccoon not hungry?"

Lukan jumped in his seat. Did the young girl actually figure out his dislike...!?

Then Kuaren chimed in, clearly talking to his wife. "Oh honey, I think you forgot that raccoons don't really eat fish at all. Uh-- right?"

Kristina looked disappointed. "But it's all we really have."

Lukan wanted to quell the melancholy inside the room quickly. "D-don't worry about it! I-it's alright!"

"Is my b-- friend going to hungry tonight though?" Klaus was concerned. Lukan jumped again when Klaus nearly called him his boyfriend.

"Maybe," Lukan admitted. "I-I'm sorry..." he actually was ashamed of himself though. He knew that one could not help what they like and dislike, but just thinking of how rough the otters have it and that he was actively wasting the food that they may be struggling to have made him feel horrible.

"Don't worry too much about it Lukan! It's my fault; I should have asked what you liked first..." Kristina replied. "I was the one who insisted you come over after all."

"I... will have to pay you back for this," Lukan sadly said, but he had every intention of keeping that promise.

"Don't worry about it, Lukan," Klaus echoed his mother. "In fact we owe it to you to make it right. I uh... just wish we could..." he trailed off. Lukan was growing more and more concerned for these creatures. Seriously, just how bad is their financial situation? And was this one of the reasons Klaus stayed over at Lukan's a lot? Not just because he loved him, and not just to get away from Kandice, but... but also because of this? Lukan couldn't bear the thought of them struggling so bad!

"You know what? I want to help you guys. I-in any way I can," Lukan stated simply.

"What do you mean?" Klaus prompted, wide eyed.

"With your money situation of course! I-I can't sit here and witness just how hard things are for you!" Lukan exclaimed. "A-after what happened in Bright..." And for some reason, Lukan felt himself cracking with sadness at what he was saying.

"I said don't worry about it," Klaus echoed yet again, placing a webbed hand on Lukan's shoulder. "Now that I have a job, things will improve. I promise."

"But I thought--!" but Lukan stopped himself. He did not want to say what was right on his mind right in front of his family. Wait a moment. No. Klaus could not possibly mean...!

"It'll be okay," Klaus insisted. But Lukan did detect a level of uncertainty in the otter's voice, as if he himself did not actually believe what he was saying.

"But--!" Lukan tried to protest, but was stopped by Klaus bringing him into a hug, telling him again that it would be alright. Lukan had to take the otter's wordless word for it.

The raccoon had to settle for sleeping on the couch that night. The otters had no spare bed or anything of the sort. They even had to dig through some of their stuff just to find a spare blanket for him. The thing smelled of exceedingly stale otter scent. Klaus insisted he slept in the living room with Lukan, so he brought his old mattress out and laid it out in front of the couch.

Lukan couldn't help but shake a newborn suspicion he had about the otter. If the otter truly wanted to get out of Lilac Grove as soon as possible, would he try to help his family as little as possible or not at all to achieve that goal? The job may give him more hours than Lukan's, but even at that, the job won't pay very much. What was Klaus' intentions here? Despite the questions, Lukan felt it best to not ask the otter them. He definitely did not want to make the otter think he didn't trust him, but the wonder of how the otter was to make it all work it made him confused. Lukan thought of the idea of possibly trying to push his job to become full time, or at least, add more hours. Despite what Klaus and his family insisted, he still wanted to try and help them. Being too poor to live was a large reason why the Bright fiasco ever happened after all, out of his control or not. He hated the idea of anyone, especially his boyfriend, going down that path too.

What had life come to now? First there is Klaus being his boyfriend. Now there is the mysteries surrounding Aero and Will, whoever these two even were, and now there is the Richtors' financial disaster. Lukan grew increasingly worried now. Just what could life try and throw at him next?

"Argh... Why does Aero want us to meet so damn early?" Klaus grumbled as he and Lukan walked from the otter's house and to the park where they first met. It may have been late morning, but both of them were used to sleeping in later than they had that day. Lukan wasn't quite used to just how cold that morning was. Even if the air was still, Lukan actually felt a sweater was in order!

"Probably because of all our jobs?" Lukan shrugged as he shivered slightly.

"I don't even start mine yet," Klaus grumbled as they set paw into the park.

"Well, we're here. Where is he?"

"Right here," said a voice that Lukan had only heard yesterday. And with that said, the golden yellow form of a vulpine had entered their field of view. The creature was wearing a navy blue shirt, black pants, and a red scarf around his neck.

"So you're, Aero..." Klaus started.

The fox nodded. "I am. And you are the one whom Will confronted yesterday evening?"

"I-I dunno about confronted. He spoke in such a soft tone, and spoke so weirdly too," Klaus stated. "I-I want to know what the hell all that was about and how he seemed to know who I was and everything!"

Aero closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Well, I dunno if you are going to like what you are about to hear, but the reason he does know about you in particular, Klaus, is because Will is the wolf named Platt's new boyfriend."

Klaus was immediately aghast. "No fucking way. Okay first of all, there are other gays in Lilac Grove?! Inconceivable! And second of all. P-Platt's n-new..." and he stopped right there.

"It's the truth. And I don't like it at all as much as you do," Aero continued.

"Wh-why's that?" Lukan asked.

"Because of what that snep is more than likely planning to do to Platt," Aero said simply.

"Wh-what do you mean?" Klaus breathed.

Aero shook his head. "I wish I can say I know for sure. All I can say for sure is that Will plans to play some serious mind games with him, and I wouldn't be surprised if he's going to do the same to you when he can find you again."

"I don't understand," Klaus replied simply.

"I wish I fully understood what's going on too," Aero said with a sigh. "All I know, is that Will is bad news. Don't listen to a word he says, alright? And to both of you, stay close to each other." And with that, Aero was gone. Turned tail and strode away. Leaving behind even more questions than answers, just as Lukan predicted. Klaus stood beside him, shaking slightly.

"S-so Platt's got himself a new life to potentially ruin. That's great. So I wonder. Who is worse. Him? Or whoever the hell this Will guy is?" he had fists clenched and it looked like he was about to cry.

"Klaus, please calm down. Don't think about that stuff. Think about your future. With me!" Lukan tried to cheer Klaus up. Lukan felt subconscious concern though. There was something about the way Klaus voiced his thoughts that sent chills into Lukan's tail. And on top of that, Klaus was disregarding what Aero had said about the snep being the one to harm Platt, not the other way around.

Klaus let out a sigh. "You're right Lukan, you are. But seriously, I just want to know what in the fuck is happening. And that things will be okay!"

"They will be!" Even though Lukan knew for a fact that he could not guarantee his promise, no matter how badly he wanted to as he had little to no idea what was happening either.

"Th-then let's get out of Lilac Grove sooner. As soon as possible. I don't fucking care anymore!" Klaus fretted. Was this what Platt meant when he said that the otter couldn't control his emotions? Lukan was beginning to understand...

"K-Klaus, calm down!" Lukan was so bad at this... What should he even say to console the otter? He's never had to try and calm someone down before! This inexperience... It was beginning to seriously unnerve Lukan. And this unnerving, he knew, would only make it harder. Was being in a relationship right now such a good idea? He shook his head violently. No. Don't think like that! Not now, especially!

"What should I do? Try to get out of here before these creatures hurt us, or help my family out? Oooh Lukan. This is so hard..." Klaus wheezed.

"I really don't know Klaus. I really don't," Lukan replied in a low voice. "Let's just heed what that fox said for now..."

And the otter agreed to that. Lukan was unsure of what to do, just as the otter was. There was only one thing he knew for sure, however. That not matter what happened, he would attempt to stay by the otter's side.

Days went by. Weeks too. The icy winds of December were finally upon them all. And after the mysterious meeting with the fox named of the wind, nothing of serious concern had happened to either Lukan, nor Klaus. Aero, Will, and Platt all stayed off of their radars. Klaus was more than happy to have been spared another confrontation from any of these creatures, but Lukan knew that the otter was freaking out inside. When they cuddled together, Lukan felt the otter's muscles tensing up more than ever. The otter seemed much more subdued than usual. He didn't want to leave home, be it his or Lukan's for anything other than work.

Thankfully, the otter starting his new job did seem to stave off some of his stress at least a little. Lukan saw him while he was working all the time, but Klaus' job always kept him too busy to talk to. They did, thankfully enough have breaks at around the same times as one another. But... The otter always talked about his worries regarding Aero, Will, and Platt, and about leaving Lilac Grove. They talked almost nothing about their relationship together and what they are to do together as a couple. It really put more and more dampers on Lukan's mood, almost making him angry that the situation has yet to be resolved at all, just to put the otter's mind at ease.

The otter's family was also starting to do slowly better as more money came into their home, which did help Lukan's mind be put at ease a little better. A lot of it was coming from him, though, despite their wishes. Lukan just had a feeling that Klaus was not actually helping them at all, which did upset Lukan a little bit.

And now. The day has come.

"Happy birthday Lukey!!" cried out Sarah Benka on the evening of December 15th. She brought a huge cheesecake, topped full of cherry pie filling, which was simply

Lukan's favorite food on Planet Earth. He didn't like birthday cake very much at all, and this was just the best substitute. The candles on the thing were the numbers 2 and 0. Lukan's adolescence was at a complete end now, entering a brand new decade. Klaus was there, looking nothing short of excited and happy for his boyfriend. He was applauding with the brightest smile on his face. His face was brighter than at any point all month. "I can't believe you're twenty years old now!" cried Sarah. "Why must you grow so fast!?"

Lukan was embarrassed by his mother again, but he was more fixated between Klaus' happy face, and the delectable looking treat sitting in front of him. The flames on the candles swiveled slightly.

"Blow out the candles! Make a wish!" Lukan's boyfriend insisted. Lukan nodded, and was prepared to blow, but his mother interjected.

"Wait! We have to sing 'Happy Birthday' to you first!" Lukan felt the color drain out of his face.

"Oh no, please don't!" he begged. "You don't have to...!" Oh God, this is so embarrassing!? Why would he possibly allow this to happen!? But they completely ignored his wishes and they both began to sing the trademark song loudly.

"Haaappy birthday--!" Lukan groaned, flattening his ears, and trying to block out the song, face going pure crimson. He kept his head down the whole time until they both finished, both beaming down at him. He dared not to even lift his head.

"Hurry and blow the candles, silly! The wax won't be so fun to have in the cake, you know," Klaus insisted, trying to pry Lukan's head off of the table.

Lukan reluctantly lifted his head up, but only to blow out the candles, already knowing a wish to mentally request. His mother and boyfriend applauded again, the former already starting to slice the cheesecake, and the latter, walking away from the table momentarily. Lukan watched, the otter's hindquarters and tail in the air. Lukan couldn't help but stare because of how much he loved those parts of his boyfriend. Not that he didn't also love the rest of him too, but... The otter returned, holding a small, gift wrapped box. Lukan's heart skipped a beat. For some reason, he wasn't quite expecting the otter to even get him anything, but then quickly realized how silly an idea like that sounded to him. His mother had already given him his present though. It was a gift card for anything of his choosing, since Lukan never asked for anything for his birthday or Christmas for that matter anymore. He truly felt that he didn't want much else in his life anymore. Of course, Klaus had proved just how wrong he was! Oh shit... speaking of Christmas and the otter, Lukan realized that he still had yet to pick out a gift for him for the upcoming holiday. ...Now was not the time for that, he knew. The otter was holding out the box for Lukan to take.

"Happy birthday," he said, sneaking a quick peck on Lukan's lips while Sarah was preoccupied trying to cut even pieces for them. He handed Lukan the box.

Lukan, wondering just what his boyfriend got him, tore into the container, opening it in no time flat. He felt his eyes widen. It was a necklace. An amulet more like, but the trinket at the end was of the same symbol as the one on Klaus' tail piercing. Except the diamond in the middle was a deep sapphire blue instead of emerald green, just like his own eyes. "O-oh Klaus..."

Klaus shrugged. "You're one of us now, Lukan. May as well prove just that," he said simply.

Lukan immediately hugged him. "I-I love it, Klaus, thank you so much." Lukan was somewhat worried that they were about to give away their little secret right there.

Klaus winked. "I'll give you another present later tonight if you want." he whispered that so seductively that it sent chills of red throughout the raccoon's entire body.

"I-I would love that," he whispered back. He pulled back, trying to put on the necklace, but failing rather spectacularly. It was impossible for Lukan to have proper hand-eye coordination if he couldn't even see his hands...!

"Here, I'll help," Klaus stepped forward, taking each end of the necklace and clipping them together. "There. Now you really are a part of my family."

"Hm? Did you say something, Klaus?" Sarah's voice came, as she finished turning the cheesecake into eight semi-even slices. Klaus shook his head. "Well, dessert is ready! Let's dig in!"

Lukan couldn't help but let out an enormous burp when he was finished with his delicious birthday "cake". He flushed red immediately when that happened. "Oh God, excuse me," he said sheepishly. The sun had gone down, signaling that the day was dying, and Lukan's birthday wasn't going to last too much longer. Not that Lukan minded. It just meant that his future with his newly changed life was going to continue.

Sarah seemed somewhat sad. "Why is it that my boy is already grown up so fast!?" she exclaimed. "Twenty years old! I'm old enough to be a grandmother!"

Lukan flinched. Oh... She was probably not going to be as such. Would that make her feel better or worse? Lukan wasn't sure.

Klaus was tugging on his arm. Lukan knew what that meant. He stood up from the table, looking at Klaus, and then the direction of his room. Sarah knew there wasn't much left to do for the rest of that day, now that it was over. He had asked for a more quiet birthday for this year. Embarrassing Happy Birthday aside, Lukan had gotten his wish. Sarah only nodded in understanding as she began to pack away what was left of the dessert, of then Klaus yanked Lukan towards his room.

Lukan giggled softly, noting that the otter was wasting no time whatsoever in dressing them both down. Klaus implied that the necklace wasn't his "real" present.

And yet... They had done this sort of thing every couple days. How COULD this be Lukan's real present. But then it had hit him. The otter himself, was his present.

They were without their clothing in very little time. It could have been a record. It probably was, but all Lukan wanted to focus on was the otter's soft, warm, and bare body against his. He never grew tired of such a feeling. The feeling of his paws on the otter. The otter returning the favor. The sweet kisses they shared. It was all a simple bliss that unbeknownst to Lukan, he never knew he wanted. Lukan felt more and more comfortable with Klaus than ever before. "K-Klaus? M-mind if I...?" he trailed off, looking right in between Klaus' legs, right at the obelisk.

Klaus blushed noticeably. "A-absolutely, Lukan. Do anything you want with me. I am yours, after all," he said softly, stroking the raccoon softly where he loved it.

Lukan nodded, reflecting a bright red face back at Klaus as he gripped him. Held the cylindrical shape right in his paw, where the essence of the otter's very being was stored. Oh how Lukan wanted to make it a part of him now, as Klaus had done so many times to him. Lukan felt that the courage to do so was right in his grasp. He was only subconsciously aware of the distance between his own muzzle and Klaus' edge decreasing. When they touched, Lukan felt a familiar lightning bolt of energy zap his face, and then accelerate through the rest of his body. It was soft, warm. But what did he expect. The otter's scent was so strong. It only made Lukan wish for more. His muzzle parted wider, granting the rocket access for liftoff. The warm cylindrical shape was wider than Lukan had previously imagined. Suddenly Lukan was very wary of his sharp teeth and potentially bringing harm to the otter. But the otter only sighed his approval, letting Lukan do as he wished. Lukan slid deeper, only vaguely trying to pretend he was stuffing a banana into his face. Lukan remembered doing that a seldom couple times as a cub. Thinking now about how dirty that actually was, made Lukan giggle to himself internally. Why was he thinking about such things when he was doing something beyond inappropriate with his otter boyfriend? Every time Lukan questioned himself, only half his mind ever snaps back to what he was doing. Is that where the confusion comes from? Although Lukan was a tad confused. Confused as to what he should order his mouth to do next? He truly hoped he could please his otter as payment for all he's done, but Lukan was woefully aware that his inexperience may prevent that from happening at least easily.

Lukan decided to slide his head back and forth along Klaus, just as their own paws had done to accomplish the goals they had. Lukan felt it an instinct to wrap his lips over his teeth to at least attempt to keep them off of the otter. Those were the only parts of his muzzle that he prohibited. Klaus would most certainly appreciate that. Lukan could hear his approval now, sounding like the moans they exchanged every other night.

The otter's scent was intoxicating Lukan again. Like one of the most powerful drugs ever conceived. It made Lukan desire nothing other than to continue exactly what he was doing. Lukan closed his eyes slowly as he continued bobbing. He gave soft licks, just for good measure and ordered his mouth to mimic a weak vacuum. The sounds the otter was making was almost as powerfully entrancing as his scent was.

Suddenly the otter's blissful sounds stopped, even as Lukan kept going. What? Why? Was Lukan no longer doing a good job as he was fretful he wouldn't? The otter lurched upwards, gasping aloud. "L-Lukan..." And then Lukan understood that it wasn't him. Lukan tried to look where Klaus was, but couldn't without hurting him. He slowly retracted himself, because the otter's well being was first on his mind, even if there was something afoot. Once free, Lukan swiveled his head and almost felt his stomach drop right into his tail.

Right there in the doorway to his room, was Sarah Benka.