

Twenty-Six. Inclement

Lukan watched sadly as the otter began to walk away towards the back of the theater. The otter's tail was dropped straight to the ground, his piercing grinding against the carpet. Lukan wanted to chase after him, but he knew that he couldn't. Lukan stood there, staring at the hallway that Klaus disappeared into. Could he trust the otter? The raccoon was well aware of what he said, but did he truly? And could he truly? What really was going on in that arcane mind of the otter's? Part of Lukan wanted to find out, but another part did not want him to find out at all.

"Something tells me... That you really did only suggest a movie so you could talk to Klaus. Are you absolutely certain that you and him are okay?" Sarah's voice came up to Lukan from behind.

Lukan sighed and did not even turn around to face her, preferring to look towards where the otter had disappeared from sight once again. "Honestly, I don't know. I can only that we will be."

"Do you know exactly what's going on at all?"

Lukan laughed ruefully, as he came here to do just that, but to no avail whatsoever. "That's what I need to find out. I feel like Klaus is hiding something from me. Again."

"That something that he hid before, was that why you broke up at first?" Sarah kept going. Lukan did not like that, but didn't care enough to object.

"F-for the most part. Which is why I'm so worried," Lukan bit his lip softly.

Sarah placed a hand on Lukan's shoulder. "It'll be alright."

Lukan sighed heavier than before wanting to ask her how in the hell she would know that. He knew she was only trying to encourage him, but it was horrendously ineffective because of her ignorance to what was potentially going on. Sarah has never even been told about how Will, Aero, Platt, and by extension, Nate, have all meddled in these affairs and what they've affected. She doesn't know the true nature of any of this! How could she say it would be alright?! Despite all of Lukan's heavy internal objections, he kept his muzzle firmly shut. Not only did he not want to cause any sort of scene on his mother's birthday of all days, but he still wasn't bothered enough to do so. The otter and his suspicious behavior still overruled it all.

"Do you still want to see a movie, Lukey?" Sarah asked softly.

Lukan took a deep breath, gathering all the thoughts, and mentally carried the immensely heavy load away from the core of his mind. A movie would more than likely help him keep those thoughts from coming back right away. "Yes, let's. Um... Sorry for letting your birthday turn into whatever just happened."

"Don't worry about it. You really do worry too much, Lukey. It can't be good for you," Sarah responded.

"Maybe not. But I am always given so many reasons to worry," Lukan said.

"Well, it's a huge part of being an adult," Sarah went somewhat off topic.

Lukan shook his head in disagreement. "No. It's a huge part of life in general."

Lukan still couldn't get Klaus' actions out of his head. Even after his mother's birthday and September advanced further and further, bringing with it, slowly but surely, the weather that Lukan thoroughly enjoyed back into his life. But instead of comfort, the chilly winds of autumn brought with it nothing short of excessive foreboding for Lukan. Klaus had lived up to his promise at least partially, seeing Lukan whenever Lukan visited at the theater, sometimes getting free movies courtesy of his boss. But as Lukan laughed at overly cheesy scene after hilariously over-acted or under-acted scene, Klaus stayed ominously and awkwardly silent which begged the questions in the raccoon's head again- Did Klaus actually want to be there? Not just in the theater, but with Lukan in general? Klaus held his hand. But not as tightly. Klaus said he loved him. But not as clearly. Klaus did kiss him. But it felt so much more forced. Their walks in the park were silent. Klaus seemed to walk more quickly than usual. Even though they no longer had enough of a valid reason to go to the pool across town anymore, when they did go one time, they did not share intimacy in the showers like they always did before. Even that security guard looked at them with more of a curiosity than hostility, like he noticed something's changed about them. Klaus seemed the opposite of himself and he refused to open up as to why. Lukan was determined to find out why.

October returned. It had been nearly a year since Lukan had met Klaus. Traversing through the majority of the month was all that was needed to reach that milestone. The leaves on the trees were turning yellow and orange. The wind was becoming more and more frequent, and the temperatures cooled to right where Lukan loved it most. Perfect cuddling weather if Klaus was willing to do so. But he never seemed willing to do so. Lukan still had no answers as to why this was happening or what specifically it was. It frustrated him. He still loved Klaus with all his heart, but Klaus seemed to love him with only a little bit of his.

Lukan figured a walk to the park would help get his mind off of everything. On his next day off, he did the unthinkable. The inconceivable for him. He did not even attempt to see the otter that day. He knew what the creature would be like. He knew that the otter wouldn't give a true damn. It's come to a point that Lukan was tempted to give up on him. Tempted to break up with him. Tempted to end it because of the otter's complete lack of compassion. He never thought it would come to this. He never thought that the overwhelming love that he had for the otter could possibly be chipped

away down to considering ending the whole thing. Was Lukan wrong to give him a second chance? Were they not meant to be? Why. That was the only word that Lukan could as in regards to both those questions were the answer to them be yes. Lukan sat on the same rock that he met Klaus on to contemplate all of it.

"Well, aren't you a sight for sore eyes! Lukan, was it?"

Lukan looked up at the source of the familiar voice. He didn't hear him coming, and considering his species, he couldn't smell him coming either. It was the golden fox, Aero Novara. "You!"

"Yeah it's me. It's been months since we've last seen each other, hasn't it?" Aero noted. "I hope things are going well for you."

Lukan sighed deeply, looking down at his paws. "I wish I could say that they were," he said sadly.

Aero frowned. "What's going on?" His large, bushy golden tail swished softly in the breeze, light as a feather.

"Well, it's Klaus," Lukan started.

"The otter? I thought you two had broken up?" Aero flattened an ear in confusion.

Lukan shook his head. "We got back together in the summer. In June. But. He's been acting so weird since August. He was avoiding me a lot for a while. When I finally got to him again, he promised to try and spend more time with me but.. That time he has spent with me sense feels like he has no passion for me anymore. Like he's forcing himself to be with me so I could be happy, but. I'm not happy. Because he isn't happy. I can tell."

Aero nodded and sighed. "I see. That's never a good sign at all, I'll be frank." Lukan felt his heart jolt when Aero said that with complete certainty. "Why exactly isn't anything I'd know about. Have you tried talking to him about it at all?"

Lukan nodded, not having the will to make eye contact with the fox, instead looking down at their paws, the tail tip just inside the peripheral vision, white as snow, fluffy like a cloud. "I tried. All he said was that he would do better and that he couldn't tell me why he was being that way. He hasn't done all that much better, spoiler alert," Lukan explained.

Aero shook his head. "That's really not good. I don't want to say this, but perhaps Klaus regrets getting back together with you?"

"How can that be when he was the one who asked us to get back together. In fact, he said he never wanted to break up with me in the first place!" Lukan gave his rebuttal, openly expressing just how confused he was over this.

Aero shrugged. "Love. It's a complex thing. More so than I think anybody realizes. Hell, I don't think I fully comprehend it. All I do know is, what Klaus is doing,

does not seem like anything anyone in a relationship should be doing. Lukan, I really do hate saying things like this, but... I think you should prepare for the worst."

And that sentence, right there, was what froze Lukan solid, sending icy chills of immobilization to paralyze and freeze every nerve, every muscle in his body, so much so he couldn't even speak coherently. "I-I never thought that I would ever have to, th-though."

Aero shook his head again. "No Lukan. No matter the situation you're facing, and no matter how good or bad it may seem, you always want to be prepared for the worst. You don't want to think or expect it's going to happen. But be prepared for it. I don't get the impression that you are."

"R-right," Lukan replied just as shakily. "H-hey!" Lukan remembered something. "Do you think Will might have something to do with this?"

"That bastard of a snow leopard? What about him would make you suspect that?" the fox turned his head curiously.

"W-well Klaus started acting all weird ever since Platt told him something about what Will had said to Platt. Klaus wouldn't tell me what it was and Klaus also said that Platt apparently still had feelings for him too," Lukan felt clumsy as he stumbled through his explanation, mind too frayed in all the wrong places to form coherence.

"Feelings for who?" Aero narrowed his eyes.

"Klaus. Platt apparently said he regretted breaking up with Klaus after something Will had told him. I thought that something was that whole emotional dispute that Will and Platt had around Valentine's Day. You remember that right?"

Aero nodded. "Yeah, I do remember that. And your idea does make sense. Honestly, I dunno what is really going on here, but it sounds like Klaus might be having a hard time deciding if it should be your or Platt he should be with. My theory is that he is hiding from both of you to try and figure out what to do without confronting either of you."

"Huh?!" Lukan felt his heart skip many beats.

"I thought this, because I spoke to Platt the other day. He said he's been wanting to talk to Klaus about something apparently important, but couldn't get to him at all," Aero went on. "I dunno what it is. But Klaus really should be talking to you both about all this. I can't imagine what this must be like. For all three of you, not just you Lukan. I can't really say anything other than all three of you needing to talk it out together, figure out what to do about all this, and then go on from there. Klaus cannot hide from his problems forever."

Lukan sighed, knowing that the otter will try anyways. "He's going to give his damndest to do so, I just know it. So tracking him down, getting Platt and all of us together, and keeping a conversation going is going to be damn near impossible."

"Well, next time you guys manage to get together, get him to come to the park. I'll tell Platt that you and Klaus will be there. How does that sound?"

Lukan nodded, voice shaking more. "Y-yeah. That sounds like a good idea."

"How about 10:30 on the night of the 4th? I believe that is the day after tomorrow," Aero offered.

Lukan nodded. "Klaus and I will be off by then, yes."

"I want to help you guys as much as I can, but this is something personally believe all of you should sort out amongst yourselves. I will not be there, alright?" Aero seemed to be able to see into Lukan's mind as the raccoon privately hoped that Aero would be there to lend out his guidance too all of them.

Lukan conceded and nodded. "Okay, we'll take care of it. I hope."

Aero placed a hand on Lukan's shoulder. "If you were Klaus, what would you say is the right move for you to make?"

Lukan sighed. "I'd stay with the person I already made a new commitment to. I let go of the other guy; I was supposed to move on. It shouldn't be an issue!" Lukan replied as honestly as he could.

"Are you saying that because this is what you believe, or because you want Klaus?" When Lukan didn't answer at all, Aero went on. "Like I said, love is a scarily complex subject that I don't think anyone is ever going to fully understand. Just give some thought. I have faith that the right decision will be made. I'll see you around, Lukan." Aero released the raccoon's shoulder before walking past him towards the end of the park, leaving Lukan sitting on the rock where all of it began.

October 3rd went by like a slog. Lukan had work that day, but even that failed to suppress what was on his mind. He still had to get the otter's attention to get him to the park the following night, but he wasn't certain he was going to succeed at all due to the otter's evasions against the raccoon. Despite the otter saying he'd do better, it still felt to Lukan that the otter was still avoiding him at least a little bit even if not as overtly so. He knew getting to the raccoon was going to be difficult to do.

So when the time finally turned to a number in his favor, Lukan swiftly clocked out and kept his focus on his mission. Even with the otter trying to avoid all of his problems, Lukan was determined to make him face them, because Klaus ignoring them was igniting problems for Lukan and Platt as well, it seemed. Lukan kept his gaze firmly fixed on the building he knew his mustelid was inside of. He was going to get the otter to the park with him the following night, one way or another, so he could finally put to rest all of these confusing, conflicting, and contradictory feelings out of his head for good.

The deer was not at the theater this time, more than likely assuming that Lukan was not going to need his help anymore. Lukan couldn't believe it, however-- The otter

was inside the lobby this time, examining the candy counter. He was holding a clipboard, his back facing Lukan. Lukan, as quietly as he could, strode up to the otter, and placed a hand on his shoulder. There was no beating around the bush today. Not anymore. This had to be taken care of. "Hey Klaus. I need to talk to you."

Surprise, surprise, the otter was acting evasive and used an excuse. "I'm working right now, Lukan. Fen wants me to do the inventory for all our snacks and candy and shit right now."

Lukan was not backing down. "I just need to tell you something. I need you to come with me to the park tomorrow night after your shift is finished, alright?" Lukan spoke softly, swiftly, and without sparing any hesitation.

Klaus cocked his head to one side and scowled. "Why? Does the raccoon want to do something while we are there?" Klaus changed his tone to that of someone trying to seduce another.

"What?!" Lukan breathed, almost incredulous. No. Stupid coon. No getting distracted now. "Just please come. It's really important that you do!"

Klaus looked both concerned and disappointed. "Okay, okay, I'll come. Only because my plans tomorrow night were cancelled on me a little bit ago."

Plans? What plans?! Lukan wanted to burst the question right out of his muzzle, but his focus on the mission, which seemed to have been completed successfully kept his muzzle shut. He shook the thought away from his mind before he could be allowed to think of it more. "Thank you Klaus. And please, just be there at 10:30 alright? I have been burned by you not showing up when you said you would once; I don't need that again. Especially this time."

"What's going on Lukan? You seem to have a lot on your mind," Klaus seemed even more thoroughly worried.

Lukan sighed. "These days, I have a lot on my mind. I'll see you tomorrow Klaus. Remember! 10:30!"

October the 4th was an even bigger slog than the day before it. Lukan found himself looking at the clock and growling at it angrily approximately two hundred times per hour, wanting it to go faster. He could swear the minute hand actually moved backwards at one point. Lukan even began to theorize that perhaps getting frustrated with time strongly enough was how one was going to ever figure out going back in time. Whatever would work to go forward in time, however, was what Lukan was desperately craving at that moment.

Lukan found himself pacing his apartment. He found himself pacing around the park. He found himself circling and then pacing the neighborhood that encompassed his home and the park. The sun seemed to remain stationary in the sky. The raccoon

knew he ought to do something with the time that he was allowed to have, but his focus on dealing with Klaus and Platt stuck to his mind far too much for him to do so.

Lukan paced, rinsed, and repeated more times than he was able to count. The sun only seemed to inch closer to the western horizon by a mere planck length with each hundred thousand times he repeated his steps. Figures. Any other time, and time would be so much faster than even light!

But eventually, and Lukan was certain the entire universe quadrupled in age by that point, but eventually, the dusk came and went. Twilight killed what was left of the sunlight, and night took over. It would not be too long bestomping around the same block a million more times, growing increasingly more impatient. There would come a day where Lukan would feel regret for wasting an entire day like this, but for that day, he didn't give a damn.

Until, finally, when he rounded the hundred trillionth corner for the hundred quintillionth time.. "Lukan?"

Lukan saw the figure of Klaus Richtors, illuminated by lamps inside the park. He was standing not far from the rock where they first met. "Oh thank god! You actually came!" Lukan ran up to meet him and felt his legs nearly collapse as soon as he did. Lukan failed to realize just how long he had been on his paws until that moment and immediately regretted that.

"You didn't think I would?" Klaus scowled at him again.

"You've made me doubt you a lot lately, Klaus," Lukan replied in a sad, low voice.

"What do you mean, Lukan?" Klaus took a step closer to Lukan, but before Lukan could say a word, he heard the pawsteps heading in their direction. Lukan already knew who it was before he showed up. Klaus was incredulous and aghast when the silver wolf appeared from their left, the same direction that Lukan first saw them both come from just under a year ago. "P-Platt!? But I thought--?!" Klaus stopped himself and instead let out a grunt to finish the sentence.

"K-Klaus?! What--? Raccoon! Did you have something to do with this?!" Platt looked at Lukan demandingly, his sapphire eyes gleaming in the artificial light.

"You know, maybe I did, with a little help from a certain fox," Lukan replied unsteadily. Despite his voice, Lukan knew where to go with his words. Nevertheless, he chose them carefully. "I wanted all three of us together to talk about Klaus and why he's been avoiding the both of us lately. I want answers Klaus. And I am not letting any of us leave here until I get them."

"Ohh so this is what this is about," Platt kept his gaze on Klaus. His expression was as unreadable as it ever was. "I would like to know why as well."

Klaus looked between them both, looking as though he was going to break down any second. "I-I thought you would know! Fine! I'll come out and say it if it'll

make you happy! I can't decide whether I want either one of you to be my boyfriend! There you happy now?!"

"That's what I thought..." Platt said, regretfully. "Alright. I know I can't make this decision for you, Klaus, and I am sorry for being the one to make it so hard. But now that I know just how that twisted snep actually feels, I can't help but just... miss you. A lot. You know?"

Klaus sighed. "I know Platt. I came to Lilac Grove for you after all. B-but Lukan still has his claim on me. And I can't just let him go after what he and I had been through either. I just don't know what to do!"

"We could um... I dunno." Lukan stopped himself at such an absurd idea.

"What?" Platt turned his ice gaze onto Lukan's stormy eyes.

"M-maybe all three of us could just... go. Poly?" Lukan felt his tongue tingle harshly at the mention of that word. It was something he had never even considered until that moment. He wasn't sure if such a thing could work, but if it did, it would dispel this entire love triangle for good.

"I-I dunno Lukan. It just sounds like a bad idea," Klaus noted softly.

"I don't like it either," Platt chimed in. "I know what you're trying to go for, but I do not think it'll work, raccoon."

"H-how do you know?!" Lukan exclaimed. But despite that, neither wolf, nor otter gave him any sort of answer. "So what do you suggest we do about this then?"

Klaus sighed. "I'll stay with you, Lukan. It's only right, that I do. I love both of you so much, so dearly, that I am tempted to try and have both of you. But I just can't. It wouldn't feel right."

"I-I see.." Lukan saw them. The gemstones in Platt's eyes shattering, and then liquifying into tears. "I understand. I hope both of you stay happy with each other. It is my fault for not realizing what I had until it was gone. Goodbye." Platt walked away so slowly that it gave time that day a run for its money. Platt's silvery tail was on the ground, lifeless as he padded away.

Lukan did not look at Klaus. Klaus did not look at Lukan. But Lukan was the one who spoke. "Klaus. Are you sure? With my idea, you don't have to choose"

Klaus looked down and sighed. "I am. I'm not comfortable doing a threeway. It just rubs me the wrong way. It doesn't feel like it should be!"

"Alright Klaus. I understand," Lukan nodded. "Do you want to be alone for the rest of the night?"

"No. But I'm too... fucked up to be with anyone right now," Klaus replied sadly. "I'll see you, Lukan."

Three days have passed. Klaus was still moping about his decision. It looked like he was still uncertain of it. He was obviously thinking of how he had hurt Platt by

denying him a second chance. It was like Klaus knew that had Lukan decided not to give him a second chance, that was how the otter was going to end up feeling.

Unfortunately, Lukan and Klaus' schedules were at it again with preventing each other from seeing the other. Even at night when they both were off, they couldn't bring themselves to. On top of Klaus still not looking well enough to bring things back to normal, it felt like nothing was resolved at all. It felt like all of it was just a massive waste of time. Was there anything, anything at all that would end this all for good?! Lukan hated, loathed that nothing returned to normal yet. All he wanted was Klaus, and for the otter to be happy. Was it true that the otter just wasn't going to be happy with him? Was he ever going to let go of Platt? Was there nothing that Lukan could do about any of this? What other options did he have left, if anything at all?

Lukan decided there was one thing he could do. That night, once he was off, he would go the otter's, the otter being off that day, and do whatever it took to make him happy. To make the otter realize that the decision he made was the right one. This was the day that Lukan was going to wake up and be a good boyfriend, at long last.

However, when Lukan found himself at the otter's front door, knocking at it. There was no answer. Why? How come? The otter's truck was still there, in the driveway, falling apart as it always seemed to. Lukan tried to look through the windows, but couldn't see anything. He tried the door. It was locked. That's when Lukan heard a commotion coming from the back of the house. Was that Klaus? Lukan hoped so. It came from where the otter's room would be. Lukan found himself, desperate to get the otter's attention, going around to the back of the house, struggling against the tall grass and bushes that separated Klaus' house from next door. The sounds got louder. It sounded like Klaus was breathing heavily and quickly. Too quickly. Like the otter was dying! Lukan felt his heart racing quickly. Was the otter committing suicide right there? Was everything too much for him to bear?! It couldn't be! "K-Klaus!" he cried out desperately. But he got no answer. And as soon as he said it, he realized that the otter wasn't the source of the breathing. At least, not him, alone. There was another set of breaths, cycling around Klaus' that made it seem like one, harmonious, high tempo breathing. What was going on? Lukan tried to peer in the window. And what he saw... A silver pelt. A tan pelt. Rubbing on one another. Both naked. A pair of muzzles locked together. And that was all that Lukan saw. All he wanted to see. No. Way more than he wanted to see. His heart stopped beating, or so it felt like it. The wave of emotions that hit Lukan's brain were so overpowering, that Lukan felt himself drifting fast, and the world turned black.