

Chapter 5 - Aftercare

Hess hobbles through the kitchen door 10 minutes later as Ember finishes up with the last of the dishes. He slumps down on the nearest chair and pants, his cock semi-hard, but turgid, as though he'd been erect the whole time he was gone. Ember wipes his hands down and steps over.

"You alright?" He says; at which Hess, while panting, nods and gives a thumbs up. "You know, I read in a book once that when you're scuba diving, that means you're running out of air."

Hess smiles and leans back in his seat to get a proper look at the black wolf and, more importantly, his kitchen. He scans the room and the piles of clean and dry dishes to the side of the sink and visibly relaxes.

"You don't like other people being in your kitchen without you, do you?" Ember guesses, leaning back on the island table.

"Fuck no. You should have seen the state of the poor thing when I joined. Cal's pretty clean, but he's not clinical clean." Hess says, able to form full sentences again.

"Did ... you have a good time?" Ember asks, burning to know what kinds of things Voigt likes to do, because by the looks of things, and the way he acted after breakfast, he can be pretty rough.

"Oh yeah dude, no one fucks like Voigt. I see stars." Hess massages his thighs and stretches his legs somewhat. "I'm just gonna need a sec to recover."

"You should have gone to bed for a bit"

"No offence mate, but the idea of leaving my kitchen in the hands of Cal, and a newbie for any longer than necessary, makes my teeth itch."

Ember huffs and folds his arms.

"Don't get me wrong, you guys did a good job. I know you well enough to suck your dick, but not enough to leave you alone in my home."

Ember exhales slowly and nods. "Yeah, alright."

"Boy, I'm gonna explode later. I hope I don't break the fuckin' thing, the master'd be right pissed." Hess laughs, expecting the black wolf to join in but he doesn't. The laughter stops and he thinks a moment realising that he'd exposed an unknown fact.

"What do you mean?" Ember says, curiously. "What would you break-"

"Never mind." Hess quickly interrupts, pulling his hands up his hands defensively and shifting his eyes. "It was just a dumb joke mate. Hey, help me up would ya? Let's see if I can stand" Says the chubby wolf, veering the subject and holding out his arm. Ember levers him up to his feet and, shaky as they are, he stays standing.

"What did you mean by that?" The black wolf persists, letting go of the arm when he's sure he's stable.

"Look, I'm sorry mate, I can't talk about it. The master will explain it all to you later, ok?"

"I hate all this secrecy." Ember mutters, turning and pacing around the table. "Why leave me in the dark? What's the benefit?"

"Hey don't get all riled up at me!" Hess growls, supporting himself on the table.

"But you're part of the problem." Comes the heated reply as Ember starts to let his frustration get the better of him again. "No one's telling me anything! Why won't you just tell me what's actually going on?"

"That's because we're not allowed to tell!" Hess raises his voice and slams his hand down. "Listen, you wanna fuckin' get upset, then do it outside and not in my fuckin' kitchen. I gotta get all these plates and shit away and start lunch prep. Hearin' you whine about not knowin' everythin' that goes on 'ere in the first few hours o' yer first day is pissing me ri'-off."

Ember stiffens as Hess's language starts to get more broken. He opens his mouth, unsure of what even to say before he's cut off again.

"I don't wanna 'ear it! Get out of me kitchen! Go on, off with yer! Before I throw y'out!" Hess stares menacingly, mentally steering the bigger wolf toward the door.

Ember tumbles through the door and into one of the chairs around the dining room table. He pants, scared at the sight of seeing Hess turn so violent so quickly. He moves himself away from the kitchen door, hearing the heavy bang of a large knife on a chopping board. Looking around frantically, he sees Voigt through the floor to ceiling windows and staggers over to it before tapping on the glass.

Voigt turns around, wearing some thick waterproof boots, a pair of 3/4 length jeans, plain t-shirt and gardening gloves. He sees the distress on Ember's face and quickly puts down his toolkit, gesturing to side. He walks off in that direction and the black wolf assumes he's meant to meet him and follows parallel through a door. It leads him into a thinner and much less decorated hallway with another series of rooms on the wall opposite. All the doors have two glass panels, so he peers into them all until he finds one that has a way outside. It opens up into a cloak room of sorts with several sets of outdoor clothes, wire brushes to get dirt off, and various arrays of tools. The exterior door opens and Voigt steps in.

"What's the matter? You look mortified." He says, placing a stable hand on Ember's shoulder.

"Hess threw me out of his kitchen" he says, a quiver to his tone. "He was so angry"

"Ah ..." Voigt says calmly, and chuckles. He looks down at the black, furry feet in front of him. "What size shoe are you?"

"What?" Ember asks surprisedly and looks down. "10, why?"

"Good" The older wolf goes to a shelf labelled 'Cal' and pulls out a pair of outdoor boots. Or more specifically, the label once said something much longer, but the rest of the letters are scribbled out and are unreadable beyond the L. "Here, put these on"

"You're taking me outside? Won't I need something to cover up ... up here?" He gestures to his exposed sheath.

"We're only gonna sit in the seat overlooking the garden. Stop asking questions, put them on and come with me." Voigt says sternly and goes back outside onto the paved path circling the house.

Ember slips them on easily, a good fit, and joins his fellow wolf. They both walk around to where the tall windows are and sit down on a bench looking out into the garden. The hedges and floral arrangements patterned purposefully around the centrepiece; the fountain. It sits silent with its pipe work exposed, making it seem much less grand, like a TV with a broken screen. Outward in steps are well-trimmed bushes in two rows with more groups of complementarily coloured flowers scattered throughout.

"So, what happened?" Voigt asks, looking out into his domain and scratching his toned belly.

Ember sighs and produces a short, breathy laugh as he leans back. "Nothing. I just asked too many questions again."

"There isn't anything wrong with being curious" the older wolf says gently, turning to face him. "Hess gets quite emotionally charged, especially in his kitchen. And doubly so when he's been made to edge for a good half an hour while his backend's being used. He loves it, of course, but it can make him a bit fragile."

Ember looks down at the floor, embarrassed again by the nonchalance of such open sex talk. Pushing that aside, he starts to realise that he might have been a little too pushy, and not taken better consideration towards Hess's feelings; just like he did with Cal.

"Now don't get me wrong," the grey wolf continues, "he has a bit of a poor temper sometimes, and he struggles to contain it. So you're not wholly to blame for the outburst. I don't know what kind of questions you were asking, but I can take a good guess"

"I was getting frustrated about being kept in the dark about what really happens here." Ember says dejectedly, fiddling with his fingers. Voigt nods and looks back out to the garden.

"You're not going to like hearing that I can't tell you either, but I do want to employ a little reasoning. You've seen us doing what we do here and we all look happy to you, don't we?" Ember nods, still looking down. "Do any of us show concern, or fear, when the topic of our sessions with the master come up?"

"It's not come up a lot, but ... no, I guess not"

"Then all I ask is that you relax a little. All will be revealed at 5 when you go up to see him." Voigt stands up and turns towards the black wolf, who looks up to meet his gaze. "Stay here for a bit, look out at the garden and relax; it's a nice enough day for it. When you feel ready, I'd like you to go back to the kitchen and work things out with Hess. He's a good kid but he's a little delicate sometimes; I might have just worked him a little too hard beforehand for you to go pestering him."

Ember nods again and clasps his hands together to stop them fidgeting. "Alright, thanks. I'll go see him in a minute."

Voigt is about to walk away when he stops a moment and looks back at the seated wolf. "I know what it's like, I've not been here for that long, so I remember it better than the others. I had all kinds of questions and got no answers. The master explained everything to me on the first day, just as he will with you. So, try not to bother the others about it because it will only upset them; Hess especially."

"You're right, I'll try to be more patient." Ember half-smiles, grateful to the old wolf.

"Good lad." Voigt turns and stops again "oh, one more thing." He lets out a 'heh' under his breath "Did he start talking different, when he got angry?"

"Yeah, he went really Northern" Ember says.

"Ha ha, you must have made him pretty mad then. Give him a few minutes, he calms down pretty quick when he's in his happy place, just be gentle. I've gotta get back to work now, so I'll see you at lunch" Voigt turns finally and picks up his dropped toolbox on the way back towards his broken fountain.

Ember leans back on the bench, letting the gentle breeze run its way through his fur. He looks out over the garden, watching the large, grey wolf bend down on the floor and start pulling out tools from his bag. The flowers dotted around the garden flutter their petals in choreographed ripples. He inhales deeply at the delicately scented air and lays his head back to look up at the blue sky smattered with clouds, slowly making their commute. The collar around his neck feels tight in this position, but it acts as a reminder of why he's here, or at least why he's *still* here.

"Is it so bad?" He says to himself, righting his head and watching the trees along the perimeter shrugging at the question. His eyes drift down to his naked body exposed like this in a much more

unnatural way than what he's been used to all these years. Feeling more naked now than he did before the collar was on, all because of circumstance.

A couple of minutes pass, Voigt hasn't moved, but the odd clang and curse from that direction, indicates he's still attempting the repair. Ember eventually stands up, stretching in the summer sun and glad to have the wind cooling him down. Black fur heats up quickly in direct sunlight. He turns on his heels and heads back to the side door, puts the boots back onto Cal's shelf, and works his way back to the kitchen door.

'What do I even say?' He thinks, shaking his head. Finding no answers, he simply pushes the door and walks in.

Hess is sat back on the chair from earlier, but facing the table with his head face down in his arms. His ear pricks when the door swings open but he stays put. Everything was as it was, the dishes still stacked and not put away, the sink still filled with water now turned cold. The only difference is a knife, standing upright out of the cutting board.

"Hess?" Ember says, nervously, hoping the anger had trickled out of him.

"What do you want?" He replies, muffled by the fur of his arms. The voice at least, sounding much less abbreviated.

"I wanted to say sorry for pestering you. I should be more patient and not make things harder for you than they already are." Ember stands a couple of meters away still.

"Fine" Hess mumbles grumpily.

Ember shuffles on his feet and slowly steps closer to the brown wolf. He sees the tail sticking out of the back of the chair flick in such a way that betrays his acceptance of their proximity. Ember eventually kneels down next to the chair and slots an arm under the table and one over his back to give the sulking wolf an awkward side hug. Hess sniffs under his arms, and tenses up, trying not to let his emotions overtake him again.

"I'm sorry" Ember says, genuinely and nudges the back of the brown wolf's head with his muzzle.

Hess pulls himself up off the table, swings around and clamps onto Ember's body with his bulky arms, pulling their bodies together tightly. He snuffles against the neck and whimpers softly surprising Ember at how quickly he can become emotional.

"I'm sorry for shouting at you. I just ... got so wound up" he sobs, "I was worried when you left that you'd hate me."

"Aww, I don't hate you. We both just got a bit worked up, it's alright." Ember coos softly, hugging and stroking the crying wolf.

Hess combs his fingers through the black fur, soothing himself by the touch and the feeling of a pair of strong arms holding him tight. They spend a minute like this so Hess can recover until he pulls himself away and sits upright. He wipes his eyes and nose, trying to act normal, not making eye contact and laughing meekly at himself.

"I can't believe I cried on you on your first day." Hess says, berating himself as he pulls a tissue from a shelf to start clearing his nose.

"I'm just glad I didn't end up like your cutting board." Ember jokes, petting his shoulder.

"Oh, no, I'm not violent at all. All bark, no bite, that's me." he laughs again and tries to dry his cheek fur.

"For real though, I shouldn't have pushed so much. I didn't realise how much it bothered you"

"It's ok, really. I'm just ... really fucking frustrated right now, and it rubbed me the wrong way. I was super nosey on my first day and it drove Cal up the wall. I just ... can't tell you anything, so -"

"No more questions, I promise." Ember stops him.

"Thanks man" Hess sniffs again and looks down at the floor.

"Now come on, where do these plates need to go?" Ember asks, standing up.

"Hey, no more questions remember" Hess smiles, looking back up and punches the black wolf's thigh.

"And you said you weren't violent." Ember retorts rubbing his leg.

The chubby wolf giggles and gets up to start showing Ember around the kitchen properly, putting all the morning's dishes in their rightful place so they can get to work preparing lunch. Hess takes several opportunities while they work together to touch Ember in affectionate ways; placing hands on his hips as they cross paths, sniffing his neck, batting tails together, and even a little footsie when they're both sat peeling vegetables.

Ember blushes each time and each time finds another piece of himself that wants to stay.