

Chapter 21 - Drawing

"So Cal, what's on the agenda for our new wolf?" Alek asks, sawing his way through some of the toasted sourdough while the others fill their plates.

"I'll be taking Ember into town this morning," he says cheerfully, pouring himself some juice, "sometime after 10 so more people will be at work than in the streets. But first, I believe Ember has a task of yours he'll need to complete first."

Alek chuckles and nods "That's right."

"If you're going into town, can you get me some veg if I give you a list?" Hess asks.

"You just had a delivery." Cal tilts his head. "Did they forget stuff again?"

"No, more substitutions from food damage. Simon heard a rumour that they switch their fridges off at night to save electricity."

"That's very concerning news, Hess." Alek interrupts sternly. "Why didn't you come to me with this yesterday?"

"I-I ... forgot ... master. I'm sorry."

"We really must do something about your memory." He tuts sighs, scooping another mouthful and gesturing to Cal to continue.

"Uh, yes ... give me a list of what to get and I'll grab it for you." Hess mumbles a thank you and keeps his eyes down. "Do you need anything Voigt?" The grey wolf holds up a finger while he finishes chewing and puts down his cutlery.

"The pipe?" He answers in a way that suggests Cal should already know.

"Oh yes, yes. I have that written down. Anything else?"

"No just that. Make sure it's correct, I can't have anything different. When I have that I will be able to finish the fountain today." Voigt says sighing in a preemptive relief towards the master.

"Good, I can't have anything going wrong tomorrow. We have a new wolf to show off." He turns to Ember who flicks his ears up and looks at the human.

"Y-yes master."

"I intend to talk with you about what you should expect tomorrow when you come up to present your sketches. But the rules apply for all my wolves. You must be polite and respectful, much more than you are with me. These are some extremely important people and must be treated as such. Do you understand?"

Ember nods, noticing that the master seems to be concerned about the banquet. "Yes master."

"Very good." Alek resumes his meal. "I assume some clothes are on the shopping list also?"

"Yes, that's the primary reason he'll be going. The secondary being that it will allow me to monitor his reactions around humans."

"Yes, please report back to me when you return, I'd like to know how that goes."

"Yes master."

Alek looks over at the chubby wolf playing with his egg yolk. "Hess."

"Yes master?" He responds dejectedly, lowering his ears and keeping his head down.

"Have I upset you?"

"No master, I've upset myself."

"I'm sorry my boy, I know you do try." Alek puts down his cutlery and speaks sincerely.

"I forget a lot of stuff." He whines.

"Not a lot, just some. We all forget some things, even me."

"Yeah ... I guess."

"You never forget a recipe." Alek inflects, trying to improve his mood.

"You never forget to make us a cake on our birthday." Cal adds and Hess jolts his head away to hide a flicker of a curl to his lips.

"You never forget which sweets I like so you know which ones to avoid." Voigt joins in.

"You never forget to say something nice about someone when they're out of earshot." Alek grins, going for a low attack.

"Heyyy!" Hess growls, unable to stop smiling now.

"Oh boy, that got his attention." Cal laughs, pretending to cower behind his hand.

"That was mean, master." Hess harrumphs, forcing the smile away with a frown.

"Everyone knows you do it, Hess. That's what makes you such a loveable sweetheart." Cal says, peering around his fingers. "It was kinda obvious when you told Voigt I always made your clothes smell really good, and you said to me that his flower arrangements brought a tear to your eye because they reminded you so much of home. We do talk to each other you know." he giggles softly, but Hess just grumbles and ignores him, ploughing through the rest of his food with red cheeks.

The meal progresses on with no further incident. Hess's embarrassment is soon forgotten and he quickly re-enters the friendly conversation. Ember also manages to join in occasionally, slowly feeling as though he's understanding them well enough to know what he can or cannot safely say. He gets a laugh from them all once and that makes him significantly happy.

Everyone finishes their breakfast and the master excuses himself to return to his study. Voigt does the same, saying that he needs to finish making the garden look presentable by the end of the day and turns to walk out the opposite door. Ember helps Cal clear away the table and take all the used dishes into the kitchen to be washed.

"Don't worry, Hess and I can handle this. You go work on your drawings for the master," Cal says.

"Oh ... you sure?" Ember asks, placing a pair of used glasses on the counter.

"Yep. Plus, I want to know what all the nice things Hess has to say about you," he smirks.

"Fuck right off. I'd kick y'out if I didn't hate doin' 'dishes." Hess complains, his northern twang pushing through again now the master is gone.

Ember smiles and thanks them both before heading out into the dining room to collect his paper, now with more creases than edges, and the pencil. He heads out the door into the main hallway

and across it to another set of double doors which he's yet been shown the contents of. The handle turns and the wood swings open to reveal a beautiful library.

He walks in, seeing shelves upon shelves of books, from waist to ceiling, with cabinets under most and more shelves under the rest, some with glass doors. As he looks around, there are some comfortable chairs situated at one end of the room and a writing desk against the window. There's little to see out of the glass with it being at the side of the house, but it and the other windows along that wall, let decent enough light through that you don't need the overheads on during the day.

Everything here looks expensive, from the rugs, to the leather bound chairs that stand on them. From the wood of the shelves to the books that fill them. He daresn't touch anything he needn't and puts his paper down on the writing mat on the desk and plonks himself down on the chair designed for it. It's then that he realises that he has no idea what he's going to draw.

He looks over at the mantle clock sitting on a stand-alone cabinet between the desk and the next window. With less than an hour to come up with at least a couple of solutions to how spells could be made hot-swappable into a collar, he sighs, picks up the pencil and forces himself to make an attempt.

Knowing that he has no artistic experience outside of when he was a child, he struggles to make a solid marking that even resembles a straight line. But he perseveres, adding shapes onto shapes, drawing arrows to show connecting pieces and writing notes to explain better what he finds difficult to illustrate.

After half an hour, the door opens and he expects to find Cal there telling him they need to go, but instead he sees Hess. He shuts the door and wanders over, peering over Ember's shoulder to see how his sketches are coming along.

"Hey these are really good," he says, but Ember knows he's just being kind.

"They're awful. I have some ideas, but I can't draw them very well," the black wolf sighs dejectedly and puts the pencil down amid a pile of shavings.

"They're not awful, you just haven't been taught some proper techniques." The brown wolf picks up the pencil and puts it back in Ember's hand. He then cups his own around it to guide his actions. "Here, let me show you."

In a blank space, Hess gently steers the hand into drawing. The lines he makes are much softer, disconnected and chaotic, but the overall shape that appears is that of an oval. Then he's made to draw another parallel to it with lines connecting. Ember's eyes widen as he sees the shape of a collar in 3D take its form on the paper, complete with silver plate and hints of the locking mechanism in the back.

"This is incredible." Ember says as his hand is finally released. "Why doesn't he get you to do this?"

"Because I'm not an engineer, I just like drawing. Plus, this is meant to be a test for you, to see if you have a head for problem solving, and the talent to show off your solutions." Hess seems surprised in himself when he says that, and smiles awkwardly. "Innit," he adds, chuckling at himself.

"Heh, you sure are a funny one."

"Must be somethin' I picked up in school. But it's true though."

"Maybe, but I can't present these, they're a mess."

"Doesn't matter really, it proves that first, you're willing to try, secondly that you do clearly have some ideas for solving the problem, and thirdly that you can demonstrate it. The art isn't perfect, but it gets the point across."

"You think so?" Ember stares at his messy scribbles and thick lines and poor handwriting.

"Yeah. You just might need to translate some of this text," Hess sniggers.

"Hey, I did my best. I've never had to write anything in wolf-skin before." Ember whines and feels himself being pulled to the side against the belly of the other wolf.

"I know, I'm only kiddin'."

"Now come on, leave that there, Cal will want you to get some clothes on."

"That's something else I'm nervous about, going into town," Ember says, standing up. "What if I get violent and ruin everything."

"I know that won't happen because you're not a violent person. You running away from your family proved that. You always felt guilty when you attacked a human too. Bloodlust is a real bitch."

Ember sighs and is led to the door back to the main hall. "I hope you're right."

Before Hess opens it, he pulls the black wolf into a proper hug and nuzzles at his neck, slyly sniffing the scents buried underneath, but mostly to be comforting.

"I'm always right," he whispers and pulls away just enough to plant a kiss on Ember's lips. He pulls away quickly though before it gets passionate.

"You're making it easier for me to not want to go," Ember moans softly.

"Then hurry up and get it over with. Then you can come back and you and me can have a little fun later."

"I was hoping you'd say that. I ..." Ember gulps and looks away, embarrassed to say it, but eager to complete his thought. "I want to cum in you."

Hess's eyebrows shoot up and his tail wags violently. "Oh ... oh my. Really? You wanna breed me?" He shifts his weight between his feet as the excitement inside him builds very quickly.

"Heh, you get so cute when you're subby," Ember dares, knowing there'd be repercussions were he not expected elsewhere.

"Grrrr, don't you tease me like that, wolf. I'll power bottom you to your breakpoint if you keep that up."

"Promise?" He wiggles his eyebrows, keeping his lids seductively half-shut. But before Hess can action upon this as if it were admission, Ember turns and opens the door.

"You're lucky I have a lot of food planning to do today, otherwise I'd ravage you as soon as you got back."

"I'm starting to see why Voigt likes putting you in your place. I bet you're really fun to top."

"Gah!" Hess growls and storms after the wolf as he steps through into the hall, but he continues walking past to try and distance himself. "You're working for me in the kitchen later, and I'm going to make it really difficult for you," he threatens, walking backward towards his kitchen and growling with an evil grin.

Ember smiles as he watches Hess walk away with a cock waving him goodbye and steps into the dining room to look for Cal. It's empty, so he passes through it to the narrow hall and again finds no one. Humming to himself he makes his way back to the main hall and ascends the stairs, hearing rustling from one of the bedrooms. Walking further he determines it to be coming from Cal's room and knocks on the door.

"Come in," comes the voice behind it.

Ember walks in and sees him rummaging through his wardrobe, pulling out shirt and trouser combinations and holding them up to himself. Upon seeing his guest, he pulls him over and points towards a small pile of shirts and jeans.

"I was going to call you up. Try these on, they might fit you." He says, returning to the wardrobe and tossing aside a tartan button shirt.

"I'd be surprised if anything of yours were to fit me." He says, picking out one of the t-shirts he likes the look of, with a dark green mottled design on the front.

"They aren't all my clothes." Cal smiles and tosses a pair of corduroys his way. "I kept most of the others' old clothes to reuse the fabric, so the challenge is finding something that fits and doesn't have bits missing."

Ember pulls on the trousers and his sheath pokes out of the open zipper hole. He fiddles around, finding nothing to close it and looks back up at Cal.

"Ha ha, ah, yeah, see what I mean? I took the zipper out of those, I remember now."

The white wolf looks around in his wardrobe some more and they eventually find a red shirt that fits and a pair of light blue jeans with one leg shorter than the other. Cal quickly cuts the other leg to match, creating a very fashionable 3/4 length pair. He hands him some old boots and some socks as well.

"You err, can hold onto those if you want," he suggests timidly.

"So I can work up a stink in them?" Ember grins, and is met with a nod. "I'll do all my gardening in these then. Work up nice a sweat."

"Rrf. Don't go making me horny before we head out. We're already running a bit behind schedule, so let's get going."

Now both fully dressed, they head downstairs, put on their shoes and leave through the main entrance.