

Savoring the Time in Our Moonlit Oasis

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The moon is rising as the sun goes down on this kind of cool spring night and I've reached where I want to be tonight, where I like to be basically a few nights every week. At our special meeting spot in the woods, as usual Javier is running a little bit late but I've come to expect that by now. Suddenly I begin to hear booming, rhythmic footsteps and slightly labored breathing. The sounds of someone running and then I begin to see a tall and wide silhouette coming closer until it becomes fully visible and at that point it's too late to move out of the way of the path it's on, not that I really wanted to. I'm tackled hugged by the man I've been waiting for though admittedly for only a few minutes and I barely brace myself to not be completely knocked down by him only staggering a bit instead before regaining my balance and squeezing him back. After we finish embracing for a bit he breaks off from the hug first and then starts talking.

"Oh gosh, I'm so sorry I'm late... again but I swear it's because I was just struggling to find the right bottle at the liquor store which I did get. Did I keep you waiting long?" Javier asks me sheepishly while standing with one of his big muscly legs crossing the other and a hand rubbing nervously at his arm.

"It's cool. I've only been here a few minutes so no need for you to worry too much. So you got the Smirnoff's then?" I ask and he proceeds to pull it from out of the bag on his back and nods.

"Good because I brought the juices, same as ever" I say, pulling the Capri Sun pouch and Cranberry juice bottle out of my bag like I always do when we meet up like this. Javier smirks and I can feel myself doing the same since we both know our night is starting now.

"Sweet, I brought special shot glasses with me too. Let me just get those... wait a second I just realized you say you've only been waiting for a few minutes but we were supposed to meet up at 8 and it's 8:40 right now. That means... oh... oh my gosh you were late too weren't you Edwin?!" Javier says loudly and kind of accusingly and I can't deny it because it's true I can only blush in embarrassment in response and he catches that which makes him start laughing.

"Oh man...**ahahaha**, after all this time of you being super punctual and lambasting me for being the late one all for you to finally be late now **hehehe**. Have I *finally* rubbed off on you?" that last question gets asked with a bus load of sarcasm and the laughter continues for a little longer while I try to think of a comeback.

"What?! N-No. I was only late because I was studying for finals and just lost track of time a little, that's all. I'm not gonna be like you, the guy who managed to be an hour late to a party

literally across the street from him.” I respond and that makes Javier look down in a bit of genuine shame it seems.

“Ouch Edwin. That was a low blow”

“Yeah you’re right. I didn’t mean to go that far, sorry” I take a second to think of the right thing to say next. “Let’s get the night back on track. Show me these ‘special shot glasses’ you got for us.”

“Sure, take a look at these.” He takes the shot glasses out of the small pocket at the top of his bag and shows them to me. One has the head of a howling wolf on the front with an E on the back as well as half a...what I think is a plus sign as well as three letters A, L, and W. The other shot glass has a rhino head on the front with a J and what looks like the other half of the plus sign and the letters A, Y and S on the back and then it clicks in my head what these shot glasses mean.

“No way! You actually went back to get those custom shot glasses and got them designed with that idea we were both joking about?! I thought you said it was too corny and overly lovey dovey and all?” I say with my arms folded since I remember being more sincerely into the idea then he was at the time a few months ago.

“I know and I remember you getting all huffy because us joking made you want them and I just kind of shrugged off your attempts to seriously get them kind of like a jerk but now that you’re going to be taking finals soon and almost certainly graduating in a few weeks and I’ve only got a semester left after this one before I do too I realized that I don’t actually have two many mementos of our time together. Sure I have some photos, the gifts from you that you’ve given me on special occasions like the watch you gave me to celebrate the anniversary of our first real date or that cookbook you got me for Christmas with the sweet message you wrote in it but nothing that I could say put on a nightstand and remember the good times we’ve had together just by looking at. We’ve been together for almost as long as we’ve both been here on campus and I just want something to commemorate that. After all you helped me a lot with making it this far through college and I’m positive that I wouldn’t even have made it through freshman year without you by my side and after you finish here I’m not even sure when’s the next time I’m going to see you again if I even do at all since you’ll be back home and soon enough I will be too, several states away from you. So while I thought it silly before and a little too cheesy, I’ve really warmed up to the idea of having something small like this to remind me of us, especially for when you and I get back home and I also thought they’d make a nice surprise gift.”

“Well...that’s a lot to lay on me right before we take our first shot of the night. I-” before I can really start my next sentence Javier interrupts me to say “I’m sorry. That’s just been on my mind for a few nights, since when I paid for and got the shot glasses made. I didn’t mean to kill the mood or anything.”

“Tranquilo cariño. I wasn’t done talking there.” He says “sorry” again and I just say “it’s fine” before continuing where I left off. “Anyway what I was going to say is that I didn’t know you were feeling all of that but I’m glad you told me. Heck you could have told me sooner because I’ve been worrying about that a lot too, what we’re gonna do after school is done. Maybe we could just stay long distance for a while after with calls and stuff and do our best to visit each other when we’ve got free time for a trip?” I say in an attempt to throw some type of solution out there.

“We both know that wouldn’t work. Your parents always plan a yearly trip back to your family’s home in Dajabòn and save up for that as well as take you with them and my family would never let me go on vacation alone especially if they knew it was to meet up with a secret boyfriend. I’ve never told them I was gay and I remember telling me you’ve never told your family either.”

“*Sigh* You’re right I’ve never told them. Between the warnings I got as a kid and their uhhh, less than good reactions to gay people as a whole I thought it better to keep it a secret when I realized I was into guys. Though they have become more accepting with time. I just wish they could have done so when I was still a kid but what can you do?” I shrug my shoulders.

“Yeah. I’ve never told because I’ve always been expected to be the man of the house and love women and have a family of my own someday. My mom and younger sister are always on my case to be responsible as a man and stuff.. Plus there's also the family that asks ‘porque tu no tiene un novia?’ whenever you see them y’know?”

“**Heh**, yeah. Or tell you how they had 10 girlfriends or something when they were your age and you’ve just got to accept that not wanting to give the reason why you don’t while going okay andddd...? in your head” I chuckle at my add-on to what he said and he does too then smiles at me and I come to a decision on the next move I’ve got to make.

“You know what? After graduation I’m gonna tell my parents and then I’ll figure out some way to visit and see you after I do. Hopefully with their help if things go well.” Javier looks at me in shock and it’s easy to understand why.

“Are you for real?! You’d actually do that?” He asks me, looking a little less shocked now.

“Hell yeah I would. I want us to stay together for as long as possible and if that means telling my family so I can make seeing you after graduation easier than I’m willing to do it. Besides they’ve always said they’ll love me no matter what so why not put that to the test by coming out to them, right?” I try to put some snark and confidence into that last sentence to hide my worry and then I

hear from Javier “you might be on to something Edwin. I’m going to tell my family too and if they can’t accept me then screw them. I’ll still have you, right?”

“Of course you will, Javi. I can’t guarantee we’ll be together forever or even for a really long time but I’m going to do everything I can to make sure we stay together as long as we can. I’ll fight literal tooth and claw for us.”

“What did I ever do to deserve you?” Javi asks rhetorically but I answer anyway. “Be extraordinary of course” and he breathes a sigh before smiling at me and I couldn’t be happier right now than to know I dispelled some of Javi’s fears and made him smile tonight. We just stand in each other’s company for a few minutes then he brushes his giant, smooth brown hand against mine to get my attention before talking. “What do you say we do a toast to us with our first shot while the night’s still somewhat young and then I’ve got another surprise to show you before... you change.”

“Sure. I’ll pour the drinks since you brought the shot glasses.” I take the vodka and pour it into the shot glasses till they’re about half full and then I add the cranberry juice to his and the Capri Sun to mine almost to the brim. Then I hand his glass to him and keep mine in my hand. He does the talking.

“Cheers to us. To our love and these nighttime forest meetups which hopefully someday will no longer need to be a secret. May both them and our love be everlasting” after Javier finishes we clink our glasses gently against each other. “Salud”

“Salud” and then we both drink our shots. It burns a little but it’s a good burn that the juice lessens.

“I’ll never understand why you still chose Capri Sun rather than something less sweet and with more flavor.”

“Oh come on. I’ve explained it before, it’s just a mix that makes me feel nostalgic. Reminds me of the family get-togethers I got dragged along during the holidays where me and some of the other kids would sneak downstairs to play games and have a couple shots. Back near the beginning of high school, it just reminds me of then and home.”

“I can understand that. A drink to remind you of when things were easier and made more sense.”

“Yeahhh” I sigh happily then pour myself another shot. Javi shrugs and hands me his glass so I can do the same for him which I do. We both gulp down that second shot at almost the same time and then he reaches into his bag again to pull something out, something with a chain.

“Here it is. Isn’t it amazing?!” He pulls out what looks to be a necklace in its entirety.

“... y-Yeah, it sure...is. What is it exactly?” I ask nervously hoping not to sound like a total idiot. He sighs before suddenly tosses the necklace at me I’m guessing so I can get a closer look and I catch it without even trying.

“I suppose I shouldn’t have expected you to know what it is right off the bat given how rare these are. It’s called a solar beam charm and it’s used to capture and retain sunlight through the enchanted gem in it’s center which the lady who sold it to me told me it’s Larimar so that’s cool. Back on topic this means we can finally change together like we’ve wished we could for so long now!” I look closer at this charm with it’s bright gold link chain, the bright blue gemstone with a small glowing green center and some ancient looking symbols all over the chain that I don’t think I could decipher if I tried though one looks like a sun, there’s one that’s just a P stabbing through the letter e and then there’s another that’s just a human with a deer’s head standing in an awkward pose. I finish looking over the charm and toss it back to Javi who catches it with ease and it sinks in just what this means.

“Oh my gosh! Yeah we can, because you wererhinos shift with the day as opposed to the night like us. That’s so exciting! Man between that and the shot glasses you must have spent a lot of cash this month.” I say that hoping a note of appreciation and maybe concern comes across like I want it to instead of anything else. I guess it did because he says “I kind of did but don’t worry about it man. It was worth it for being able to do what we usually have to wait till those final moments of dusk to attempt.” It takes me half a moment to realize what he’s referring to, then I do and I feel a bright smile form on my face.

I then grab his hand and he instinctively pulls me closer and lowers his head to meet mine after putting the charm on his neck. I finally let go so the change can begin and the feel of the skin on Javi’s hand becoming harder tells me he’s doing the same. I look into his hazel eyes as they shift to pure black and no doubt mine have shifted to yellow then I close them and we kiss. As our lips lock as I feel the change continue which is for the better since seeing the change from person to were creature can be a bit horrific depending on and it’s better felt anyway. The way your bones rearrange themselves to be a supportive skeleton for essentially a whole new creature, new muscle forming and stacking on top of changing old muscle, the face changing shape and elongating to have a canine snout now, the sharpening of almost every tooth into fangs or in Javi’s case some of them dull and change into molars and other teeth more fitting of a herbivore. My hands finish morphing from into wolf paws before the rest of me finishes fully changing tearing through all of my clothes except my underwear and I feel Javier’s hands have also fully changed into those big leathery hybrid hoof hand so I open my eyes to see the big

rhino man and break the kiss by moving my head back and he lets go, both of us sharing a feeling of complete euphoria.

“Oh man...that was... incredible, just about everything I’ve wanted for a long time now.” I huff out with my werewolf muzzle while I catch my breath while sitting on the grass, both from the combo of the shift and that kiss both of which took my breath away. The change usually leaves me feeling pretty great on its own since it feels like getting out of a hot, cramped car after a multi hour car ride times 10, just the way your whole body stretches, realigns and reshapes itself followed by finally breathing in true fresh air again for the first time in a while. That combined with that long lovely kiss made it all just an incredibly pleasurable experience that was just something electrifyingly special. Now I’ve never been happier, then Javi snaps me out of the stupor of the moment.

“I...I...know what you mean Edwin. I can’t tell you how long I’ve wanted **that** instead of us both trying to capture a kiss while both in the middle of you changing back and me shifting into my were self and the mess that was. With the solar beam charm now we’ll be able to do that a lot more.” He smiles at me with his now rhino face with the horn and everything which still manages to retain the warmth and charm he had as a man and I smile back with my werewolf fangs that he never seems to mind.

“If our families could see us now what do you think they’d say?” That’s a question I wasn’t expecting and it takes a bit to form an answer.

“Hmm I think they’d be confused as hell over how they got here and then be even more baffled that we kissed in front of them instead of you running away from me or me hunting you down like a proper werewolf. Of course they’re not here and we are, so let’s savor that.” I say as I move from sitting to just laying sprawled out on the grass.

“Okay, I’m gonna.” There’s a brief pause and then he says “I love you” while sitting in the grass right next to me and looking lost in thought.

“I love you more”

“More than rice and beans?” Javi asks me his smile returning at his own joke as he waits for me to get the reference and I do almost immediately.

“More than rice and beans” I say to confirm I got it and he chuckles to himself before he leans over to me seemingly going in for a kiss which I lean into as well when I realize. It’s a brief kiss which he breaks first this shoving me down before shouting “race you over to our favorite tree wolfman. If I beat you you have to give me that signature howl of yours.”

“I intend to win but I’ll give you a small sample as a consolation prize cariño.
Ow-oww-Awooooo!” I howl into the night catching up fast on my four paws to my loving rhino
as we both race into the woods and all our concerns just melt away because as long as we’re
under the moonlight together it’s all gonna be okay.