

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays

By Bartan Tirix

A loud crack followed by a whimper was heard as the six legged Counterweight carefully set down his younger groaning self. Thankful that the pain only lasted a little while before subsiding as the anthro polar bear flexed and tested his back. "Better?" The larger furball asked.

"Do you really have to ask?"

"It's just polite to." CW Bartan smiled at the smaller one, before getting hugged by the brass dragon flanking the younger one. Seeing the anthro escape from within the two colliding bodies as Beo embraced his larger mate tightly. Really tightly. To the point of flexing those large muscles and getting the six legged one to purr loudly, nuzzle that metallic neck.

"You need to make him more durable."

"Or you just need to know some restraint." The smaller bear grumbled.

"I was restraining myself." The brass one snorted playfully. "You're just too much of a stick."

"What did you say about me?" A dragon called further in the house, getting the others to chuckle as the thin brown made his way visible to the small group.

"I was talking to Furball One." Beo stated, half letting go of the Counterweight and pulling in Sig'eaal. Hearing the grumpy smaller wyrm groan at such a thing. "But I find it highly amusing that you're answering to the word Stick now-"

"Oh, shut up." Siggie snorted. "And before you ask, no. I will not be participating in your little game tonight." A noise in question from the smaller bear, soon turning to a groan of disappointment.

"I swear all you guys think about is sex."

"Actually, it was just going to be a fun little interview game." The CW Bartan stated rather happily. "We're going to be sitting in a circle with a spinner, and people will pick a question while the others get treats." A blank stare from the others, making the hexeped sigh. "Then after there will be a session-"

"There it is." Sig'eaal and Bartan One groaned.

"But you don't need to write these ones. Just the interview this year will be enough." A sigh from the smaller one. "Trust me, this will be more fun than it seems. Everything's set up and ready, we were just waiting for you." A bit of a frown from the smaller one as the brass dragon nudged him.

"Don't you start thinking those thoughts again. You gave them time to socialize and visit each other with your little stunt out there." The brass one released the other two, giving the smaller bear another nudge as if to escort him through the house. Hearing Bartan sigh and head into the party half against his will.

The home had completely changed around from the last visit. Many walls had moved around for just this occasion, keeping several support pillars in place, however. As well as several walls around the kitchen area, but many of the tables were scattered throughout the large new living room area. Still covered in Xmas decorations, food, treats and cakes while a semi steady line supplied as such.

A look from the brass one as he gestured the younger Bartan to help himself. "I'm going to supervise the kitchen again." Beo leaned closer to the smaller furball and whispered. "Stay away from the tomato soup cake. Atlas-"

"Still doing his yearly attempt, is he?" A chuckle and nod from the brass beast. "I'll spare my teeth, thanks." Another nod as the dragons left. The metallic one still swinging his tail upwards to show off his package, only to accidentally whack a bystanding gnom and apologizing several times over. Making the white bears shake their head at the scene before sharing a look.

"The game will be in the center, feel free to head in when you're ready. I'll tell everyone we'll be starting soon." A sigh from the younger one and he nodded, heading straight into the large circle of mats and beanbags. Overlooking the room filled with nearly a hundred characters. From his first novel to most recent ones, and even the characters that were outside finally joining the rest.

Word started to spread as soon as the bear sit down in the circle, getting a dozen others to join in. Some sitting down the old fashioned way, others teleporting into their seats in a puff of smoke that became a raincloud expelling rubber duckies that fell towards the ceiling. The white fox from before bringing over some hard eggnog and sitting beside Bartan. "Drink up, boytoy." A light grumble in response, but he took a sip.

Within the center of the circle was a large flat disc: a giant spinner. Containing plates of treats, drinks, and a bowl of scrap paper strips that likely had questions in them. The bowl specifically being on white strip on the spinner, heading to the center and splitting into two more. Indicating that whoever took the question, three people would have to answer. "All set?" The CW bear asked, getting several cheers as he refereed the game. "Rules are simple: we spin, someone picks a question from the pot, and those within the white strip need to answer."

The large disc was spun, somehow keeping all the treats and objects on it in place as it rotated. Slowing to a stop in front of: Ryoko the brown t rex. Dia the color changing dragon. And Dehoken; the strange old guy from several different series with magical oddness. The brown panther opened the pot while several others got to snack on a treat, picking a strip and reading it out loud. "What is your favorite act out of any series? Mine is actually Red Hypergiant act 1. It had a good introduction and it actually identified a rather supernatural threat. Even towards a world so advanced and forced into peace. That perfect blend of a dark seriousness with a light tone and humor to help break it up."

The red dragon spoke up next. "Favorite is a tough one, but that one we did for Jinx's hatchday this year was actually quite fun. I'm alright with muscle inflation, but the others..." Dia purred loudly, more so when the brass wyrm licked him roughly. "I suppose if I had to choose a second one, likely Rex Overboard act 3." The rest ended up looking at the red bearded guy with sunglasses on, staring blankly at him before the Troublemakers shoved him.

"I'm awake!" Dehoken startled, looking around at everyone. "...Do I have something on my glasses?"

"Sunglasses. And what was your favorite act?" Kindle (Arson) corrected.

"The one with my best buddy of course!" He gestured the brass dragon on the other side and everyone went quiet. "...What?"

"So, Destruction Preventer 2, 3, or Fear Is The Weakness 4?" Bartan grumbled.

"Uh... The other one."

"What other one?" The bear covered his eyes and groaned.

"Whaaat abouuuuut... That one where I acted as the Censor guy in that sit-com we did?"

"Beo and Dehoken were in that one." Ryoko said, getting the others to nod.

"BFFF-?"

"Sure!" The instant agreement made young Bartan nearly whimper in frustration as the wheel spun again. Landing on Beo, Rixxix, and Thea.

"Which character have you played do you secretly have a crush on?" The brass one read out loud and took a moment to ponder while the others chuckled. "That's a hard one to choose between Bryce from the AWSW series we did and Zhaothe over there." He gestured a red dragon in the back. "But I might have to go with Bryce more, not by much though."

"So, basically you with alcoholism?" Dia teased, getting a playful growl from the brass one as he took a drink.

"Granted, this is a little bit of a difficult concept." CW Bartan spoke up. "Do keep in mind, readers; that when we end up writing these things, it's not like how your kind does movies. Each character made is a group effort and we do assign one or two people for dialog style and purposes. However, the ideas as a whole come from everyone to the center and not just from one person all the time, like you would imagine an RP game of sorts would be." He motioned Rixxix to speak.

"Regardless of how egotistical it may sound, and I know this likely wouldn't count." He looked over the six legged bear, seeing that white head shake while smiling. "I would choose myself. I am a character, am I not?"

"Well, yes, but try to choose another."

"If I must; Anton the griffon from Destruction Preventer. I like intelligence, and I suppose I can feel empathy for being trapped in a world overrun by tradition." Everyone looked over at Thea.

"I haven't played too many, but I did do one that is a spoiler alert from the AWSW series."

"You can say the name. The series has been out for two years, if they don't want to know, they can skip your next line." The ref informed.

"Alright then. It's Marcus." The blue wyrm took a breath. "Flaws make a character, and many of the ones I've played, including myself, are littered with them." A nod from the CWB as he spun the disc again. Watching the pot slide to a stop in front of the white fox, with the branching paths pointing at Ryoko again and Exile; a black and platinum dragon. Watching Kindle pick out a single strip and chuckle.

"First one that comes to mind: what was your most fun character to play? Super easy one: Tobiyas from Hollow Bodies."

"You and your strong females." The younger bear teased her, getting a shove.

"I should be saying the same thing about you, furball."

"Most fun? Hmm..." The brown panther thought for a moment. "Naught from 1989. That was a really refreshing change."

"The dinosaur that was interested in literally everything in existence?" Linet joked, getting a chuckle out of the group as the colorful in the back waved.

"Much like Ryoko's choice, Kassel from Hollow Bodies was likely the biggest challenge in character I've ever had to play, honestly." Exile stated, taking a sip out of his eggnog. "It was weird to be unsure of myself, somewhat afraid of dangers, and not a very good fighter. Though it was definitely fun."

"Alright, next one!" The Counterweight Ref said, launching the spinner around and watching it stop. "Deago, Linet, Rev and Lexar!"

The orange panther picked out a question. "Aside from someone playing themselves, who do you think matched the best role from actor to character? That one is worded a little funny." Deago thought for a moment. "Honestly? I think Bartan did a very good job with Karmu from 1989." A sudden double take from the smaller bear, his muzzle still half full of a gingerbread derg.

"I did who-now?"

"Didn't you do Karmu's lines?"

"I honestly don't remember." Bartan answered the orange tirix. "I wrote 1989 in 18 days and caught the same cold 3 times during. It's kind of a vague mess to me, but I always thought it was Gorret that played him." Everyone looked towards a large black bull with red glowing eyes, watching him shrug

as their sights returned to the bear. "But I mean... Maybe it was me?"

"Linnet?" The ref moved things along.

"The thing about this question is, a lot of us are often assigned roles based on what we've actually done or who we are. Beo is an egotistical strong guy, and he plays that type of role well. But it's not that much different from what he actually knows or has done before, see Zhaiotie as an example stated earlier." The white tirix took a small drink. "So, I'm going to go with Dia playing Zarj'annan from The Thread Of Dawn series, because Dia... Well, plays his most common role very well: the shy guy who's really into a fetish, usually inflation. But here, he had to put that down. TToD still had adultery in it, but it wasn't written by us, so Dia had the opportunity to actually make a different, vulnerable character outside of that common ground he knew well. And I think he did a really good job with it."

"The concept of that series itself is rather interesting, honestly." The smaller bear shrugged. "I don't know if I'll ever continue it though. The second act didn't do very well in the public department." He gestured for the twins to speak up, hearing them whisper to each other for a little bit before chirping.

"Deago as Sebastian in SoT!" The wolfling happily shouted.

"Heavily driven in conviction of what is right and wrong!" The brassling Lexar continued.

"Like he was born for the role!"

"Aside from the adultery, you mean." Bartan One half teased, getting a shy look from the stripeless tiger. "Team effort, like the furball said." The future version of him nodded and spun the disc again.

"Rixxix, The TMs again, and Beo!" The CW bear announced, chuckling at the black Tirix tossing his snout and picking a question.

"What is an animal/creature you would like to see in a written piece/more of in media in general? Interesting..." He slyly looked at the smaller furball. "More the choice of wording than anything." The panther's red gaze reset. "Something I enjoy is theming, and it's also something I honestly wish I seen in that story about the Aatxe you've yet to finish, bear. Theming to those creatures, that is. Much like the game The Suffering having its enemies designed around forms of execution, for example. I like creativity, symbolism with my 'creatures'. Not just monsters for the sake of something to beat up. A vague answer? Yes. But it's so *difficult* to pick just one."

"I expected as much." Ryoko stated with a smirk, while others moved their sights to the twins.

"Kveldulves!" They chirped in sync, letting Rev (wolfling) go first.

"Though not Bartan's original design, their lore used in WSoH is!"

"We'd like to see more of them!" The two stared at their larger father; Beo. Making the crowd do the same.

"Similar to what they said: a Hydra. We've come up with a few character ideas in the past, but we never actually made one. I want to see one eventually."

"I'll add it to the list." The smaller bear grumbled, seeing the spinner rotate again.

"Thea, Kindle, and Linet!" The ref stated cheerfully, watching the blue wyrm take a question and nearly whimper in disappointment.

"Is there a character that another person played that you would like to sleep with? Well, not the person who wrote this question for sure." Thea snorted. "Seriously, some of these sound like something you would find at a sleepover."

"You drew the question, Blueballs." The fox chuckled. "Answer it."

"Just for that, not you either." Another snort as the dragon sighed, swallowing loudly after as those frilled ears blushed. "Does... Bunsen count? Because Beo did play him in that one series."

"Well, two." The brass one corrected him, looking at the hexeped for an answer.

"I will allow this." Bartan Two stated, smirking. "Kindle?"

"I'm honestly torn between Remy from SOT and Alkardoc from The Thread Of Dawn, both played by Ryoko. I'd like to see how a session would be like with a dragon that is either very interested in other species, or that never seems to get tired." All male dragons in the room narrow their gaze at her, making the canine toss her muzzle. "One that doesn't release an oil tanker's worth in a single climax, I mean-"

"Moving on, I think I'd have to choose Loqe from Rex Overboard." The white tirix said before the others could growl at Kindle. "I'm completely sure if it's just his confidence compared to his overall size, or the fact he is played by a female." A double take and a record scratch as everyone looked at Linet. Watching her gesture the fox in a shrug. "His dialog is written by Arson."

"I thought it was Beo." Thea curled his neck at her.

"Nope, too egotistical."

"Bartan?"

"You really think I have confidence?" The smaller bear grumbled at the blue dragon, spinning the disc again. Hearing a loud snore from the red bearded man as the little ones shoved him again.

"I'm awake!" He shouted as the spinner slowed to a stop.

"Deago, Linet, and Thea!"

"Crapbaskets." The blue dragon cursed as the orange tirix picked out a question.

"Oooo." Dehoken said, reaching over for a cubed shaped treat. "One if Dia's famous Peanut Butter and Pecan squares-"

"Cubes." The Wolfling and Brassling corrected him.

"Legends say, just one lick will cause someone to go into a sugar coma!" The strange man said, then ate it. Immediately falling asleep after, but at least no longer snoring.

"Who did you enjoy playing as most this year? Hmm..." Deago thought after drawing a question. "To be honest, not all of us are involved in every story. Other than this and the previous one, I haven't been involved in much this year. Aside from those, I did a little bit with Markus' character from Crownless. But even then, it was Ryoko that did the majority of his dialog."

His daughter was next. "To be honest, I'm the opposite. I did a lot these past couple of years; Savah from Crownless, Karddika from Everything You Want- which was really fun in the first act. I even played a Charr version of myself, which was quite fun-" A slight whimper from the orange one as he was covering his eyes and lowering his ears. Getting her to chuckle. "But most fun...? I actually think Trinva from..." She trailed off, looking at the smaller bear. "We never actually gave Nikata's series a name, did we?"

"Not really. It's been on my to-do list for a while, but we only ended up posting two of them. Let alone, those two were actually posted last year."

"Still, I at least wanted to mention it. It was fun to have the role as a little sister, but a reliable part of the team. Still in training, but able to hold her own." The white tirix said, looking over at Thea while the others followed her lead.

"I... Uh... Don't think I did any role this year besides myself in The Art Of Breaking and Jack from Nikata's crew. Jack was definitely the more fun one, but my paws are kind of tied." An uncomfortable groan left the wyrm's muzzle. "...I like flawed characters. In the past stories with Jack, he didn't really do much. But in one, he was nearly the focus of it. I'm not really sure how much I can really say about this, but I won't spoil too much past that."

"Probably for the best. Considering..." Bartan One trailed off, watching the disc spin again while drinking some eggnog. Slowing down and nearly cursing.

"Exile, Arson, and Bartan One!" The furball announced.

"And I almost got away with not being picked." The smaller version of him sighed heavily while the black dragon picked a question and read it out loud. Purring in question as his green eyes lit up after reading it. "Please tell me there's no repeats."

"I don't believe so. Which character do you think would be great to add into a video game? A rather good one, if I don't say so myself." Exile thought for a moment. "It would be easy to choose myself here, but I actually think Hayyyt-Atlas would be an excellent choice. Something along the lines of Shadow Of Mordor style, or more open world. Slowly unlocking more and more atonements as the game went on, as well as many different combinations of them." Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Thais, no doubt here." The fox stated. "I could see her being in a more JRPG-style, almost as a hidden character. A rather rich and unique backstory, many things to explain about her habits and character, as well as things to work on."

"Didn't we talk about that one like months ago?" Bartan half asked her in whisper, seeing his wife nod and smirk at him. "...You wrote the question, didn't you?"

"I'll never tell." A chuckle as she playfully shoved his arm. "Out with it, furball."

"A character for a video game...?" Another light push.

"Don't act like you don't know the answer already."

"Okay, okay. You got me. But I'm going to kind of cheat here a little bit: I was going to go with Saber, your brother, for an action based game. Like Max Payne or something similar. However, I honestly think that a 'co-op' puzzle game would work well with the four in WSoH act 4: Saber, Stratacast, Sinality, and Stagg. I mean, think about it: Saber being the ranged focus with the ability to ricochet attacks. Possibly even crowd control. Strata would totally be the muscle and ammo box, having the options of just tearing down walls or structures. Sinality would be perfect for stealth and manipulation. And Stagg would be the Brains and Detection, the overall lead and tactician. I think it would be really fun, and there would be a lot of interesting dialog between them all."

"I'm surprised no one said Sarious or Endzeit." Thea snorted. "They're literally in a video game."

"Excellent answers." CW Bartan gave another spin. "Twins, Bartan, and Linet!"

"-Fuck me sideways." The younger bear cursed.

"That comes after." Several others teased, making him groan and cover his eyes.

"What is your most favorite game this year?" The two little ones chirped, whispering to each other for a moment before clearing their throats and speaking in sync again. "Scribblenauts Unlimited!"

"I barely played that." Bartan One grumbled.

"But it was fun!" Rev chuckled.

"You used a large brick to rescue a cat from a tree!"

"But, to my understanding, the plan was to throw it at said cat and knock it off the tree. Not climb on the brick and pick it up."

"Why would you use a brick?" Thea snorted.

"It was Kindle's idea, not mine." The bear snorted back. "For me, and this is hella tough, it's between Terraria, which Jinx ended up buying for me, and Dying Light. It has to go to Terraria though, because I actually didn't start playing Dying Light until November of 2018. The Majority of my play time

was in 2019, and the two are nearly neck and neck in terms of like-ness. Two completely different games, but I love them both. Let alone can't thank Jinx enough for pressing me into it. I actually ended up looking at it a year or so before and passed because you were forced to play as 'human'." A breath from him. "Misanthropy strikes again."

"Though I know the bear won't agree with me on this-" The white tirix started.

"Please do not say Night In The Woods..."

"No. Yakuza 0." A groan from the smaller furball regardless, making the others chuckle. "It was a really good story, it looked really good, and you **cannot** deny that the music was fantastic."

"Yeah, but-"

"I know, I know. You have your issues with it and it's not perfect. Especially in the beginning, but it is a great game regardless... Just don't try to 100% it."

"Fair enough." Bartan agreed to disagree, activating the spinner again.

"Bartan-" A loud groan in response as the Counterweight waited patiently. "Dia, and Rixxix!" Sighing in defeat, the smaller furball picked out a strip and read it.

"Which song do you think matched the scene best? Okay, at least it's a good one. We don't do this very much anymore for the later works. But in the earlier stories, we used to actually attach a song to a dramatic or emotional scene to really drive the point home by providing a specific tone. The reason why we stopped, well... I don't think anybody ever listened to them. The only reason why we're still doing it with titles (save for two) is because they're required. I honestly detest generic titles, they drive be nuts. But I digress."

The bear continued. "If I have to pick one, it's one of the last ones we ever put in: Machinae Supremacy - Versus, featured in Anthem Of The Lonely Act 4 - Day Of The Dead. To anyone who has ever read this story, you know which scene I'm talking about: the one with Flyare trying to convince herself that, yes, she is a monster, but she is not Evil. It is a truly emotional a beyond Fucking Powerful scene with some of the heaviest dialog in any series we've done, especially considering after she recently lost control and nuked a city. Both Flyare and Rixxix wrote the dialog here and it still makes me cry reading it after the 40th time."

"This is honestly a tough one." The colorful wyrm started, switching between a bright pink and a deep blue the more he thought. "And I'm not really sure if this will count because it wasn't specifically labeled like the others were, but From The Wilderness in Red Hypergiant act 3... Titled From The Wilderness, which is understandable." Dia cleared his throat a little shyly as the brass one held him closer, making the smaller wyrm smile sadly. "I put this story off... This series off for years, the bear pestering me to read it time and time again. But this scene, good grief..."

Dia'vidd continued. "I'll try not to spoil too much, but it was when Thais had given up. Unable to

argue that people were happy with what they were given. To finally put her armed weapon aside and just wait for her internal clock to keep ticking down to her demise. Listening to her music and having only a few hours left to live, she gave up trying to fix the world... Only for this song to come on and give her the will to try to make things right during her final hours." A heavy breath from the dragon. "Music was something she used to cope and help synchronize her own instincts and the cybernetics she was forced to have, something you seen quite often through the series as a whole. But deep down, this scene revealed something as well: just how much music influenced, not only her life and memories, but her own decisions as well. Even if Thais herself could not explain it... And now I want to hug her- where is she?" The snow leopard groaned as the much larger dragon hopped over the crowd to get to her.

"I believe my favorite is from Light Escapes act 2 - Intoxicated." Rixxix stated, still chewing on a cookie. "There was at least two in that, but I'm talking about Intoxicated as a whole: coming right at the end with a heavy twist, which I'm not going to reveal here." Another bite as the black tirix took a deep breath. "*In The World That I've Created, I'm Intoxicated*. A perfect fit if there ever was one, both in tone and lyric."

The snoring started again, getting everyone to stare at the red bearded man while the little ones shoved him awake. Only for him to start choking when he did so, lightly startling everyone while the smaller bear across the room finished his eggnog. Placing it on a nearby table, only for it to fall down out of his reach, even when he got out of the chair and attempted to reach back for it before the last drops made a mess. Even trying to get the fox to help him out when it rolled out further.

Beo 'tapped' Dehoken's back with his large tail, getting the man to finally cough out a black rectangle of sorts that flew very quickly across the room. Hitting Bartan One right on the tailbase and getting him to growl and stiffen in pain while the room chuckled. "Does that mean Dehoken finally nailed someone?" Dia teased while Kindle attempted to pry off the strange object from the bear's rear.

"Oh, grow up." She teased back, just as the thing came off with a loud *Click!* Revealing a remote control with a single large button on it. Hearing the bear grumble and tend to the area as he turned around back in his seat. Watching the disc spin again... Only to feel like his chair was getting smaller. That everyone was getting smaller! Questionable purrs and gasps were starting to be heard as the anthro polar bear's body grew! Knocking over the spinner and sending treats scattering in the withdrawing crowd as his upsize increased! Soon being forced to lean forwards as his body was pressing the ceiling and the camera displayed an Off-Air screen.

The white tirix opened the door to the balcony, still loving that scent of frost that filled the air. Looking down over the makeshift ice rink that was made for the party and the dozen or so on it. Some

large, some small. Some good at it, and others barely able to stand, making Linet chuckle before moving over to the bench. Sitting beside Bartan one, now normal sized again, watching the same thing. At least, she thought he was normal sized. It was hard to tell. "You okay?"

"FD says it might leave some lingering effect." Bartan grumbled.

"Odd thing for a Counterweight to say."

"Likely because he added the word 'Fun' in there somewhere." He took a deep breath. "...Sorry." Her ears perked.

"For what?"

"It's... It's so damn easy for me to be bitter about the holidays. About celebrations, gatherings, parties... Especially when they involve me. When really, I've never had it better." Another deep breath as he took another drink of eggnog. "...I guess I'm not used to things being good for me. And here I am, complaining about first world problems like they're important."

"Stress comes in many forms."

"But do I really have a reason to be? Who cares how many watchers I have, how many favorites or views every piece I throw out on the internet gets? I almost hate the fact that some part of me does care, as if it gives me some sense of value as a person. That I'm actually changing the world for the better, even though I'm doing *maybe* 10% of the work while you guys do all the rest." Another drink. "...And I can't figure out how you guys and just shrug it off. I want to be able to do that so badly, but that damn task your father gave me just claws at the back of my mind time and time again."

"I just never found it important." The white panther stated, leaning against him.

"...Why did you come out?" A noise in question from her. "Not out here on the balcony or anything, but... You've done more work in these stories than anyone else. Yet, every year I've done one of these damn metas or follow-ups... You've wanted to remain out of it. Hidden behind the mask of a character you played as at the very most." Her red eyes gazed slightly away from his brown ones. "Why not this year?"

"...Maybe I didn't want to be kept a secret anymore. I can't really tell you." Linet mumbled. "It could've even been Waiting For Tonight as well; the character to not only use my real name, but most of my personality as well. I-including..."

"I hear you." Another drink. "Griffons and raptors are hawt as-" She shoved the bear playfully.

"But... If I was able to open up enough to play..."

"Your-Charr-self getting mounted?"

"Quite a few times." They chuckled. "Then maybe... Maybe I'd finally be brave enough to show my face, metaphorically."

"I've been there. Even Beo has been there."

"Really? He's the most open out of all of us." The two chuckled again.

"I know he is, but... It was actually his beginning he was more shy about than actually being 'naked', for lack of a better word." He wrapped an arm around her. "...I'm glad you are in the spotlight though. You deserve it, Linet. Thank you."

"You're welcome." She smiled, the two spending several minutes staring down at the rink until the fox came through the doors to join them. "Hey you."

"Found the furball, did you?"

"Yep. Want a moment with him?"

"I can scooch on the other side, don't worry."

"No, it's fine. I'm going to grab some hot chocolate before it's all gone." The tirix said, nudging the bear's neck before getting up. Getting her spot replaced by the anthro fox as she called to the panther.

"You can't walk away without showing us the goods." A playful snout toss from Linet as she swung that tail to the side, making the bear blush and clear his throat while the fox nudged him. "Don't act like you don't like it."

"You guys enjoy doing this to me too much." He sighed.

"What did the doc say?" A reach around and tap at Bartan's tail, getting him to grunt a little bit.

"...That I need more vulnerabilities than just Misanthropy. So he left the tail thing in."

"Sounds like fun."

"For you, maybe." He grumbled.

"And for you." She playfully scolded.

"...And for me." The bear admitted, getting a pat on the head from her as they gazed at the scene. Taking a deep breath once in a while and watching it create a small cloud from his maw. And soon enough he couldn't help himself; arm still around her and taking a deep breath.

"Let's get drunk

You can drive us to the harbor.

Wish upon a star

Do you know what stars are?

Balls of fire

Burning up the black Space

Falling from the landscape
Exploding in the face of...
God."

She joined in as well.
"Let's get crazy
Talk about our big plans.
Places that you're going
Places that I haven't been.
Build these walls up
Concrete Castle.
Keep this kingdom
Free of hassle, yeah.

I hear the sound
Echo in the emptiness
All around
But you can't change this loneliness
Look at what you've found
I've fallen down..."

"Sounds like memories, doesn't it?" He mumbled, feeling her nod. "...Thank you."

"*You're welcome.*" Her lightly sarcastic tone made him chuckle. "For what?"

"...For being you. Especially this year." A drink to finish his eggnog as he tossed it in the snow nearby. Holding onto her with both arms. "I don't say it enough, considering all you do for me."

"I know you are though. And you'd be doing the same thing for me." They lightly kissed. "You have already." A noise in confirmation as he took another breath.

"Taste the saline
Rolling down your cheekbone
Tell me that you're alone
Tell me on the telephone
Feel your heart
It breaks within your chest now
Try to get some rest now
Sleep's not coming easy for a while, child."

"I think you just broke up with me."

"Yep." Bartan said rather quickly. "I'm leaving you for a toaster. Oddly enough, it's a better cook."

"Fair enough, just don't take a bath with it." That got him to laugh waiting for a few moments

before she moved a paw lower to that white fluffy tail. Getting him to grunt a little bit on contact.
"Wussy."

"It placed a dent into my ass, I think I have the right to be a little sore-" A slight pull on it half interrupted the bear, getting him to look puzzled at the canine for a moment. More of a look of dread when she smirked deviously.

"Fluffify." A noise in question from him, until he noticed his fur start to puff and grow out.
"Slowly." Kindle let go of the tail and just snuggled up to the growing furball.

"You..." Bartan half whimpered. "K-know how this works, don't you?"

"Oh yes."

"Crap in a hat." The bear cursed, nearly yelping when he was pulled into the snowy floor and used as a mattress. Pinning him down as that coat continued to grow, the fox smirked at him.

"You like it~"