

15/01/14

Part 2 – Fire, Thunderbolts and Storms

Was her love trying to lose her? Was he trying to throw her off his scent? Ruth threaded her way through the crowd in the bar in search of him, first going to the bar area and then to the crowded seating area where a football match was being shown on the large television. None of the patrons seemed to pay much attention to her, too fixated on their own conversations and the television to notice the lovestruck skunk in their midst. This did not matter – the one thing on her mind was finding her love once more. He would be easy to spot – all she had to do was look for a skunk wearing a guitar. *Come on, my baby, she thought wistfully to herself behind her smile, you cannot hide from me for long. Love knows no bounds, and it won't be long before you fly right into my heart.*

Several minutes of searching yielded no results, and unseen to those around her, a tear escaped her eye. *I have failed in my search.* she thought. *What can I tell Ray? He always gets his catch.* But all hope was not lost. If he hadn't left already, she would be able to meet him on the way out. She glanced at the bar for a moment, but soon turned away – she couldn't chase him while intoxicated, and the queue for it was far too long for it to be worth the wait. Besides, her chance would almost certainly be lost. With that, she weaved back through the crowd and headed for the entrance. *I hope I'm not too late.*

Her search would not take long, however. She heard two voices talking, one of whom being the skunk's. Immediately, her heartbeat began to race, and she ran towards their direction.

"Here I come, my sweet love!" cried Ruth. "I have almost found you now."

*

Ron had hoped that he would never have to meet the owner of these eyes again. But try as much as he could to deny it, their owner stepped out of the shadows and revealed themselves before he could say anything more. The blue eyes belonged to a dragon who stood about half a foot over his height, her skin black and silver in contrast to the blue shirt she wore. Purple trousers coupled with her attire, along with a head of long black hair. When he looked up at her, he saw none other than malevolence in her eyes. This was none other than Brenda, the ex-girlfriend Vic had tried so hard to cut out of his life following her obsession over him. And here she was again, neither of them pleased to see one another.

"You again, huh?" snarled Brenda.

"Just tell me what you want from me, and then piss off." snapped Ron, baring his claws on his hand paws. He noticed a flash race through her eyes, and he knew immediately that she was not here simply for a confrontation. He was sure that she had another purpose in mind.

"I considered myself a reasonable dragon." replied Brenda, sweeping her hands in front of her. "I set certain rules while I was with Vic, and I expected those rules to be obeyed."

"Sounds like the words of a psycho to me." said Ron. But Brenda paid his words no attention.

"You and those two sluts in that band turned him against me." Ron released a low pitched growl at this insult. "You don't tangle with me and get away with it."

"Don't ever call them that!" he barked. "And no, *you* did that. You're nothing but an obsessive bitch." This was swiftly followed by Brenda pushing herself into his face, so that their noses were almost touching. It was there that he spotted a glint in her right hand. She was holding something, but in the still limited light, he couldn't tell what it was. But he didn't allow this to dissuade him. He wasn't going to allow Brenda to ride roughshod over him again.

"I'm not obsessive!" seethed Brenda. "I still love Vic, Ronald. And none of you will stop me from having him. He will see that I'm the girl for him, with or without the three of you trying to take away everything that's important to me."

"Well, he doesn't love you." countered Ron, suddenly clutching his guitar as though afraid she might take it from him. "All you ever did was dictate what he could do, tell him how to run his band, try to make him get rid of Andrea and Freya, and follow him every place he went. You call that love? What are you, fucking stupid? I know that you almost killed him when he broke up with you. And our fans hate you for what you've done to him." He finished with a cocky smile, and it grew when he saw Brenda fuming under her controlled scowl, smoke beginning to pour from her nostrils.

"Well, you know what I say to that?" snapped Brenda, jabbing her left hand through the air in front of her. "I say they wanted him. They both would have been happy to fuck him any time they wanted. They don't deserve to be called by their names."

"They aren't even his species." Ron balled his right hand paw into a fist. "Freya's already got a boyfriend, and Andrea doesn't want another one after the kind of marriage she had. They said this to you yourselves, or did you conveniently forget?"

"They're nothing to me." exclaimed Brenda. "They're a pair of liars and connivers, and you are just as bad if you can't see that. I'm sure they were doing it behind my back. And what about you?"

"What about me?"

"Do not try to deny that you had a part to play in him dumping me." He shook his head in disbelief. "Does your wife know what you did?"

"Jackie knows about you." cried Ron. "Glad you're not *my* wife. You're meant to be in a mental hospital, you sicko. My medical training has taught me how to spot one." But then, he felt a slash across his chest, and he released a cry in pain as the blade tore through his skin and fur. Though his guitar was unharmed, he clutched his body where he'd been cut, feeling the warm blood that seeped through the wound. It was then that he caught a glance of what was in her hand. She was carrying a butterfly knife. *Oh, you have got to be kidding me.* he thought, his eyes widening and his heart tensing at its sight. *If she thinks she can kill me with that thing, she's wrong.*

"You thought you could get one over on me, didn't you?" said Brenda, her voice trembling with rage as he tried his best to nurse his wound. "Never saw just how much I loved him? Do those two bitches really think he'd want them, when he could have someone like me?"

"All of us," he raged, managing to prop himself back upright, "know you for what you are. All you ever wanted out of Vic was to get your face in the limelight. That's all it ever was for you. Everything you ever told Vic about how much you loved him and wanted to lay his eggs was a lie." Just then, he felt himself caught by the scruff of his chest, his guitar straining against his body. And before he could fight back, Brenda's hand gripped his neck, before lifting him up from the ground.

"Oh look, Ronald." smirked Brenda, as Ron tried to prise her hands free. "You're in trouble again. But this time, your bandmates aren't here to save you. Once you're out of my way, Vic will never leave my arms again – and you and those women you two apparently respect will be in ruin, in more ways than one." He dug his claws into her fingers, and this was enough to make her yell in pain and release him from her hold, sending him tumbling onto his back.

"So you want to get rid of us so that you can keep stalking Vic, even after he made it clear that he doesn't want you?" questioned Ron as he got back to his foot paws. "You really are as insane as he said you were." This only made Brenda smile.

"That only proves one thing to me, boy." she said wickedly. "That he does still love me. Understand this – he is *nothing* without me! You have just been in my way all this time." She advanced upon him one step, still without raising the knife.

"Huh. And there I was thinking you'd just breathe fire over me instead." scoffed Ron. But rather than taking up the opportunity as he expected her to, she looked insulted by this suggestion.

"Yeah right." sneered Brenda. "I'm not wasting my flames on a piece of shit like you." She raised

her knife to the night sky, with Ron exposing the sharpened claws on his hand paws in reply. Neither of them showed any fear of each other's weaponry, and Ron did not react when Brenda shoved him to the ground, but with an effort he managed to avoid his guitar making contact with the asphalt. He looked up to find her with her knife at the ready, about to move in for the kill. "I'm gonna enjoy making you suffer just as you made me suffer."

"I am not taking the blame for the things you did!" he snapped. But just when Brenda was about to lunge forward, out of the darkness came the very thing Ron had been trying to escape from.

"Oh there you are, my petite skunk hunk!" cried a crooning voice from behind him, coupled with a rapidly strengthening scent of skunk spray. He looked behind him to find Ruth racing towards him, her arms outstretched and her tail flailing with each step. His heart sank. He hoped that the two would never come together, as if the idea of Jackie meeting her wasn't enough.

"Oh no, not her again." he groaned to himself. He got up and tried to run away, but Brenda simply grabbed him by the neck and shoved him straight into Ruth, who caught him in her arms and coiled her tail around his body. Immediately he scented her spray, and began to choke as the foul smell filled his nose and mouth.

"I have found you here at last, sexy." purred Ruth as she rubbed around his face, kissing him on the cheek. He winced when part of her tail rubbed around his wound. "Oh...you're bleeding. What happened?"

"Let go of me, will ya?" protested Ron, his eyes watering from the smell. But his voice was muffled behind her fur. *How's Brenda not noticing this smell?* he thought. But at that moment, he noticed her nostrils twitch, followed by an expression of disgust at it.

"Oh, what's this?" she snapped. Ron pushed the tail away so that it no longer covered his mouth.

"She's just one of the band's fans." he said. "I don't know who she is, but she said she loves me." Brenda's expression suddenly turned eerily sincere, and he thought he could see a smile as she lowered her bloodied knife and folded it away.

"Ah, so you haven't told your wife or this skunk your little secret, huh Ronald?" said Brenda, her anger sharing its place with malediction. "It's just as I thought."

"You've lost it. Honestly." said Ron.

"Well, it wouldn't be very nice if news about this reached your wife, wouldn't you agree, Ronald?" Ruth's face abruptly fell, and the strength of her spray began to weaken, but she still kept hold of him. "It's plain to see how much this skunk wants you. And yet you aren't a skunk yourself, and you've been married for three years. You can't be very happily married if she's chasing you, hm?"

"What is she talking about, baby?" she asked. Ron did not acknowledge her with a reply.

"Don't you dare come near my wife." he said, his voice weighty with ire. "You'd have to kill me to get to Jackie, and believe me, we are both powerful."

"I have nothing to fear from her." she said with a wicked smile as she pulled her mobile phone out from her coat pocket. "I don't even have to tell it to her face." Ron froze.

"How did you get her number?" he cried.

"I have friends in high places who can do anything I want them to do." continued Brenda. "Besides, who would suspect I'd be the one to inflict a slash...or a stabwound? She'd soon see that you received a scratch...from a passionate kiss and fuck." Ron roared with ire and strained against Ruth's tail as he tried to get to her, but this time, her hold on him did not abate no matter how fiercely he struggled and he couldn't get free, serving only to add to Brenda's amusement. But as he'd partly expected, Ruth would not allow this to go unnoticed.

"No!" she cried before he could answer her. "This boy's mine. And if you don't leave - "

"Oh, I have something more in mind than taking him from you, sweetheart." Brenda said. "He won't fall today, but until he does, you can have him...but his wife will be devastated. My intention is to make him pay for what he has done to me." She unfolded her knife again and cleaned the flat edge of the knife with a wipe, before softly pricking her other thumb with the end, though not with enough force to draw blood.

"You want him, huh?" snapped Ruth, as she released her hand paws and gave him to her tail, before using it to lift him right off the ground.

"Hey, put me down!" he protested, trying to struggle his way free but not managing to. "This is my business. I can handle her myself!"

"If she messes with you, baby," she replied, "she also messes with me." Ron remained silent. For the first time in a long while, he was entirely lost for words. He looked towards Brenda to find that she had folded her knife away, though still clutched it in her hand as though afraid it would slip out of her fingers like a wet bar of soap. Ruth turned to face her, her eyes blazing with both her desire for Ron and upset at how she'd found him. "I don't know who you think you are, but he's with me now. I don't care what he's done, but don't try and hurt him."

"I have no business with you." said Brenda coldly. "And from the way you talk, you obviously don't know him very well, sister."

"I don't think you do either somehow." replied Ruth.

"Then he will eventually tell you how much he loves you." countered Brenda. "He'll tell you just what he wants from you and how he'd love to fulfil your desires, all the while forgetting about his precious wife." She spat the final two words as though they had a disgusting taste. She showed Ruth a sneer, while Ron turned to try and get a sight of Ruth's face. From what he could see, something inside her was stirring. It was something he knew was coming, but he'd hoped he would be the one to reveal it to her instead.

"Get off your soapbox, Brenda." snapped Ron. "I've tried to tell her all along that - "

"Don't you worry, sweetie," said Ruth, "it's alright." Ron could be heard making a low pitched growling.

"No, I'm not having this!" he cried, before turning to Brenda. "You will not destroy my marriage just because you can't have Vic! Jackie and I are too close for that."

"Yes I will." said Brenda, entirely unaffected by the strength of his words. "That will be every day of your life if I have my way. I've destroyed close relationships before, boy. You'd be surprised how easily it can be done."

"I won't go easy on you just because you're a girl." seethed Ron. "If I wasn't wrapped in this skunk's tail right now, you'd be dead."

"And you'll have me to tangle with too." added Ruth. They both scowled at her, only for her to respond with hooting, derisive laughter.

"That'll never happen." chuckled Brenda. "You've shown you're no match for me." With that, she began to walk away, but not without looking behind her with a gloating, childlike smile. "I want front row seats at the divorce court, you hear? This won't be the last time you hear from me, Ronald. If it is, I'll see you in your next life."

"You ain't getting to me!" barked Ron. Brenda gave no further response, instead whirling around on her shoes and disappearing into the night, looking back at him again as she put her knife into her coat pocket and dialled a number into her phone. *Jackie will see through her.* he thought. *I've told her what she is, so she'll never believe her.* Ruth's grip on him loosened and she allowed him to climb down, and the strength of her spray began to fade, but one look at her face showed him an emotion he thought he would never see – concern. And he could see a hint of tearfulness in her eyes too. He knew it would come eventually when she discovered the truth about him – that he was neither a skunk or a creature on the hunt for love. How would he be able to play this without

inflicting a wound deeper than that beneath the strip of his drying blood?

*

Ruth could barely believe what she had witnessed. Not only had her love run into what was evidently an unstable dragon who displayed only a small amount of control over herself, but he had sustained a large wound to his chest, which had bled into that magnificent flame shape that covered its length. *Wow...and I thought I was unstable!* she thought, recounting Brenda's determination to see her skunk burn, to the point of wanting to kill him. She felt for him, wanting to help him recover from his wounds, though he did not look shaken by his experience – only furious. But two things she'd said had stuck out in her mind – was he truly married? And was he really a skunk at all? She had to know before they parted ways. Emotions were running wild inside of her, ranging from her still powerful lust for him and the impending heartbreak.

"What was that all about, honey?" asked Ruth, watching him as he brushed down his trousers. He sighed heavily to himself.

"Meet Vic's ex girlfriend." he said bitterly. "She hates me, Freya and Andrea because she thinks we're responsible for breaking up her relationship with Vic. But he did that on his own – she's been this psychotic from the day we met her."

"Now that's bad alright, Ron." replied Ruth, unable to stop herself from scanning his every feature now that they stood face to face.

"Ain't that the truth?" he replied, looking flustered. His expression then turned rather sincere after a long pause, during which Ruth had watched him with unblinking eyes. "I don't know what I can say to you right now." he finally said. "On the one paw, you've chased me all over the city. On the other paw...you saved my life." Ruth looked confused for a moment. And then she remembered what she'd seen and heard when she'd found him – instead of eating him as they'd become known for, the dragon had been about to stab him to death.

"I did?" she said quietly, stroking his cheek. He nodded.

"She had a knife." said Ron. "She's already slashed me, and I think she would have killed me if you hadn't come running after me."

"Well," replied Ruth with a smile, "you are quite a tease." He scowled, as though she'd spoken a crude insult.

"If she ever comes near the band again, I'll kill her." he vowed. "I'll have a lot to tell the rest of the band."

"You sure will, huh Ron?" she said, her eyes scanning his body slowly like a hospital's X-ray. He sighed to himself again.

"Listen, uh..." Ron started, inspecting his guitar.

"Ruth." she filled in for him.

"Yeah, Ruth. It's time I told you this." *Remain in my control, my heart.* she thought, bracing herself for what was next. Did he love her back? And was he everything he'd seemed despite her magnetic attraction to him? She nodded, waiting for what he would say.

"You don't get much sense out of someone like Brenda," explained Ron, "but...there were two things she wasn't lying about." He showed her his left hand paw, which had a gold ring on the ring finger. "I am married. And I have been married for five years." Ruth had half expected this, but it still came as a surprise despite herself being married. She could feel herself becoming tearful, but with an effort she managed to contain her upset.

"You don't say, right?"

"No, I do." countered Ron. "I didn't spray back when you were, um, chasing me. I can't." He

turned around and showed her tail to her, the long white stripe immediately catching her eyes again and sending her heartbeat racing. It was almost too much for her to contain the urge to chase after him and take him into her arms once more. "I'm not a skunk at all – I'm a fox. And this stripe isn't fur. It's paint from one of the support beams at the club. I leaned on it as I was changing strings." Ruth inspected his features again, this time much more closely than she had before. It became much clearer to her now – he truly was not the skunk she'd wanted, but instead a vulpine, a species she'd spent a long time around. His tail was much narrower and shorter than hers was, and he did not have any scent of spray other than hers. He also had a longer nose and a larger mouth. Though part of her felt foolish for making such a mistake, another part had not released the hold it had on the love she'd felt – unmistakable and undeniable in its ferocity. Part of her felt deceived, and he wondered if he had secretly enjoyed her chasing him. But there was no denying that she had enjoyed pursuing him and watching his reactions.

"So...you're not a skunk boy? Not *my* skunk boy?" she asked, eyes widened and her voice higher pitched than usual.

"No. I'm sorry." replied Ron, bowing his head.

"Jackie's lucky to have you." she said, trying but failing to disguise her despondency. "I wish I'd gotten to you first." Ron smiled at this, seeming not to notice her tail sagging. She wiped an eye, feeling tears beginning to form.

"You'd be surprised how often I've got that since the band started." he chuckled. "But I haven't had someone chase me like you have before. Freya gets it even more – creatures seem to like her hair."

"Yeah," she replied, stepping closer to him, "mine too. You, on the other hand...I know you're not a skunk, but you are still pretty delectable." Her smile returned and she wrapped her tail around his body. This time, however, Ron did not fight her hold. But his face spoke his discomfort without words.

"Uh...yeah. If my wife asks, we never met." he said in a small voice, not holding eye contact with her.

"Think that dragon meant anything by what she said?"

"Nah, of course not." replied Ron. "Jackie knows who and what she is."

"Now I know too." added Ruth thoughtfully, rubbing around his cheek before uncoiling her tail from him. But suddenly, he looked alarmed.

"Oh, Freya's probably expecting me now." he said, looking up at her and meeting her eyes. "Hm...how can I repay you for saving me?" Ruth thought for a moment. She thought of another kiss and a cuddle, but it was not something she sensed he would react well to. So, she tried something more daring.

"How's a free admission pass to your next concert at the club sound, hm?" she said with a sly smirk. Ron smiled at this.

"Yeah, I'll see if I can get that arranged with Vic. I think he'll let it slide."

"Are you gonna paint your tail for me again?" giggled Ruth.

"Probably not." he said with a smirk. "Still, catch you some other time. See ya."

"Later!" And with that, Ruth began to make her way back to the bar, while Ron continued his walk down the street as he dialed into his mobile phone.

"Freya, it's Ron." she heard him saying. "I'm on my way to you now. I've got one hell of a story to tell you!" She looked back as she walked away, catching sight of the painted stripe again. They would meet again soon, she felt. But how it would unfold, she was not quite sure. Raymond's reaction to this would be one of amusement, but if he learned that she had unintentionally rescued

her victim, surprise would most likely surface. But despite all that had happened that night, there was one thing that had not changed.

"You might not be a skunk," she said, "but you're still not far away from my heart."

The End