

Interwoven

FLAMES: PART ONE

16th Day of the Shining Light, 30 AoE

The beating on Tobias' door roused him from sleep. Insistent and overpowering, he might have been surprised if not for the familiarity of it all. Briefly, the tiger considered rising. He could, of course, but that would just get him in the way. Things would be smoother, as ever, if he stayed put.

Instead, the prince reached down with a groan and swept back his sheets. His naked body was exposed to the air, and he flopped down on his back as the door was brusquely shoved open. Tobias spread his arms and legs wide, sprawled out atop the bed and completely laid bare and vulnerable as armoured figures stormed into his chambers. Brett was among them, overseeing the actions of his warriors.

Tobias didn't move. He simply stared up at the ceiling as the guardians moved to his dresser, his desk, his closet and even under his bed. They pulled his belongings apart, leaving them strewn across his chambers. More than a few fragile items shattered as they were so casually tossed aside. The tiger grunted as the cold iron of the guardians' armoured gauntlets gripped him and roughly rolled him over to check even the bed he lay on.

His eyes rolled with him, but they settled on the lone armoured figure by the door. The hyena wore thinner armour than most of the kingsblades, but the shapely and small plates provided sufficient protection while not inhibiting his motion. Regret sparkled in his eyes as Tobias' met them. He shook his head, and Tobias nodded to him. It wasn't his fault.

The hyena nodded back, the fur of his beard rubbing against the lip of his chestplate as Tobias was dropped back down on his bed again. There he was left, staring at the ceiling and simply waiting for it to be over. If he was lucky it wouldn't happen again for many weeks. If he were unlucky, they'd find something that invoked their wrath. Fear did not rule the tiger so much as irritation, and so he folded his arms across his chest and remained as still as he possibly could. They did not deserve words. He would not waste his breath.

It was a few more minutes until the armoured prince's order went up. "That's enough. Abandon the search; we're done here." As one, the warriors turned and left the room in absolute disarray, with all of Tobias' belongings either damaged, broken, or at the least scattered.

As the warriors filtered out, Tobias turned his head to Brett. The older prince stared back at him. "Good morning, brother. Find anything interesting this time?"

The older tiger's eyes narrowed to slits. "I'm here under orders. You know that."

"You're always here under orders." Tobias rubbed at his face with a paw. "You couldn't wait until I was up? You couldn't invade my chambers on *any* other day?" He looked up over his paw to see an almost apologetic look on Brett's face for a fraction of a second. It was swiftly

replaced by impassive focus. “How many more times are you going to search my chambers for contraband?”

“As many more times as your king demands, to be sure that you’re not harbouring any seditious materials or intentions. You know that.” His eyes flicked to the chainmail-clad kingsblade at the door.

That again. Tobias sighed and shook his head. “You don’t have to do this, Brett. You don’t have to do anything and everything he demands to the letter of every order.”

At that, Brett actually gave a lopsided, mirthless smile. “It’s because I follow his orders to the letter that you’re the one getting searched instead of me. I’ll keep my sanity, thank you very much. Fredrick is our king, and you can keep defying him at your peril.”

The younger tiger worked his jaw. “I hate you, you know.”

“You and me both. See you at breakfast.” He turned back to the door, but paused briefly as he stared at the kingsblade. “Hope you got your eyeful of depravity and filth this morning.”

Tobias blinked as the hyena stared back at Brett. “I wasn’t aware it had left yet. My *prince*.”

Brett scowled, but instead of answering he just turned and marched out of Tobias’ chambers. When his door slammed closed again, Tobias closed his eyes. Tears ran from them. He didn’t even know when they had been shed.

Silence, for a brief moment before the hyena broke it. “They wouldn’t be denied. I tried, but with Brett there they didn’t... *wouldn’t* listen. I’m sorry.”

The hyena’s words were a small comfort, but only a very small one. Tobias rubbed at his eyes to clear them as he rolled over to face his kingsblade again. He’d still not grown used to the beard. “You can’t stop them, William. They don’t answer to you.”

“Oh, I *could* stop them. I’d just wind up in a dungeon for my troubles... or in the ground.” He leaned back against the wall, arms folded. William’s eyes remained fixed on Tobias’ face and they didn’t drift elsewhere, despite the tiger’s nudity. “Do you need help cleaning up?”

Tobias started to nod, but he sighed and then shook his head. “Kind, but no, thank you. The servants can do it; I’ve been told by a few of them that they’re very happy to have the chance to work a role that won’t be overseen by guards looking for a chance to beat them.”

William’s eyes hardened as Tobias sat up in his bed. “I’m just glad you’re still calling them servants. It at least carries the implication of personage.”

“You’ve been doing some reading, I see.” The tiger rubbed at his eyes. There was no point covering himself up for William. The shame and embarrassment that he’d felt the first time had long since faded. William had made his utter apathy regarding Tobias’ body abundantly clear. He wasn’t Daniel, and so he doubted he had anything left to offer the hyena even if Tobias himself were inclined to dip his toe into those waters. “Publicly, we’re to refer to them as ‘indentured to the crown.’”

“Slaves. I’ve heard Fredrick say it enough times now to be absolutely certain of the truth.” William turned back toward the door, his back to Tobias as the tiger began to pluck up some scattered pieces of clothing to wear. It was a kindness to protect the tiger’s modesty, but it was little more than a gesture. William had seen far more. “You also know better, I hope.”

“Of course I do.” Tobias sighed and slid his legs into a pair of trousers. “Every new edict is a chance for more cruelty. Every new law scribed to the books is just another chance for Fredrick to beat the people into submission.” He shook his head as William turned his head slightly. “Did you hear that there is unrest even in central towns and villages now?”

The hyena grunted and nodded. He looked back for a moment and, once certain that Tobias was at least modestly covered, returned to facing the prince. “Yeah, but I’m more surprised that you even know about it. I thought Fredrick and Brett were keeping you from that sort of information.”

“They are. I hear things from other sources.” The hyena arched an eyebrow, and Tobias rolled his eyes once more. “Don’t give me that look. I have needs beyond what this castle can provide me.”

“I’m not the one judging you.” The hyena reached behind himself to something on his belt and fiddled with it for a moment. When his fingers came back, a red coin danced between two fingers. “And it’s not as though you’re dallying with some seed-crust-ed harlot in a back alley somewhere. You’ve clearly at least some standards.”

“Of course. I save the *seed-crust-ed* harlots for the midweek.” The comment drew a smile, small and brief as it was, to the kingsblade’s face as Tobias pulled a shirt over his head. He reached out a paw, and William flicked the coin in his direction. He caught it and nodded; William clearly knew he’d been about to ask for it. “I’m expected to be in the Institute all day today. Evaluations with Mattias and then translation work with Davan. I likely won’t be free until dinner.”

William nodded as the tiger tucked the coin into his hidden pocket. It had been a stroke of relative genius – albeit a somewhat embarrassing one – when he’d lit upon the thought of having William guard his coin. Kingsblades still outranked guardians, after all, and they were above reproach at least for the moment. Clearly Fredrick hadn’t wanted to risk Brett using his guardians to search *his* kingsblades. “And will you be taking dinner in the castle?”

That was the question. He frowned to himself as he adjusted the cuffs of his shirt, and when he looked up it was to a knowing nod from William. “Well, at least the food there is probably the next best thing in Sanwell compared to the kitchens here.”

Tobias nodded, but his frown deepened as he looked up at William. How did the hyena know how good their food was? “I didn’t know you were a patron.”

He shrugged. “I’m not. A friend works there, and occasionally she shares a meal with me.”

“Oh. Right. Of course, yes; you wouldn’t... of course you wouldn’t.” The tiger shook his head and sighed. *Of course* William wouldn’t stoop to laying with whores. He had his bear, didn’t he? Or... at the least, he should have. “I just figured that after what Fredrick did, and your bond being annulled... I don’t even know the last time I saw Daniel.”

“It’s dangerous enough that you know about him.” William’s voice lowered slightly as he leaned against the wall. “We don’t get the chance to spend all that much time together. I think the last time was...” The hyena looked up at the ceiling as he stroked at his beard. “It’s been a few weeks. If I am lucky, I’ll receive a note with a time and place to meet.”

If he was lucky. Tobias nodded numbly along. He couldn’t even imagine what it was like for the poor hyena. Pressed into service in a different place to his beloved, their marriage annulled before their eyes, their relationship declared illegal... and yet they still fought tooth and claw for precious minutes. *Minutes.*

It was another reminder that Tobias had really, truly made a mistake all those years ago.

He grit his teeth as the question lingered on the tip of his tongue. It’d been there at least once a day every day for the last two years, but he’d never dared ask it. Part of him expected it was because he knew the answer, and didn’t want to lose William’s favour. The kingsblade had been a boon in the face of Fredrick expanding his power and authority into every aspect of everyone’s lives. “William, I was... wondering. Do...”

When he looked up, the hyena’s head was tilted. An ear was perked as he listened intently. Adorable, as ever, even all those years later. “I, uh... I know it would not be the same. I hesitate to even ask, but I expect that you have needs, and that they are not being met in Daniel’s absence, and so...” He swallowed. Why was it so hard? His brain wouldn’t organise the words in his muzzle properly. His tongue tripped over the offer.

“I appreciate it, but no, thank you.” Tobias’ eyes widened as William shook his head. “You’ve paid for your calling coin at the Crest. It would be rude of me to take your place. Strange as the offer is, I’m still very grateful for it. Thank you.” He gave another little smile.

“Oh, no. I wasn’t...” Tobias cleared his throat to hide his sigh. Damn it all. “I didn’t mean to offend. I just thought you deserved perhaps one nice night, for all you’ve gone through.” Coward. That’s what he was. A damned coward.

“I’ve got paws that work, so I make do.” He shrugged as Tobias nodded, looking down and flattening his ears as best he could to hide his embarrassment. Stupid. He was being stupid. Of course William would have thought that’s what he meant! Why couldn’t he just say it? *Hey, I still think you’re incredibly attractive and sweet and, if it would please you, it would be my pleasure for you to spread my lips like the legs of a heat-stricken fox.* They were not exactly complex words conveying a complex idea.

But William clearly only had eyes for one person in all the world, even if he never truly had the opportunity to see him, let alone act on his urges. “I think I must rather have been spoiled. I don’t think I could be satisfied in such a manner anymore.”

William snorted as Tobias stood from his bed. “Who said anything about satisfied? I make do, and that’s about it. Daniel absolutely spoiled me.” He shook his head as the tiger approached. “Still, this is not a conversation you and I should be having here and now. Do you require anything further of me, my prince?”

Removal of your pants while I shove you against the wall and show you some of what Soren taught me. “No. No, I think I have all that I need for the moment, thank you.” He did

pause and glance back in the room for a moment. “I... suppose if you could summon a maidservant on the way out, that would be appreciated.”

The hyena nodded back, but he stepped in front of the door before Tobias could reach for it. “One last thing, before you go, if it would please.” Tobias frowned but nodded slowly, and William reached back again. He adjusted his belt to bring a small pouch into view, and he eased it open even as he covered it up. “Close your eyes. Please?” He added the plea as Tobias scowled.

Nevertheless, the tiger sighed and did as he was commanded. “Hold out a paw.” He did so, lifting the right toward William. Something cool and metal was laid gently into his grasp, and his thumb ran over a small chain connected to it. “Alright. Open.”

He tilted his head down as he did so, and gasped. It was a silver ring that rounded a disc, upon which was imprinted in blue a depiction of the southern frilled gryphon; the symbol of Ratholarin. Set in its eye was a small topaz, the yellow jewel glinting in the morning light. The chain was a necklace. “I... I don’t...”

“Been watching your family ignoring your birthday for years now.” William stepped back against the door and away from him again as he nodded at the necklace. “And at this point, I’m just building a stash of crowns. Figured you deserved at least one small gift. I, uh... hope you like it. Happy birthday... for what it’s worth.”

The burning in Tobias’ ears intensified as he brushed a finger across the gryphon. He’d not thought it possible to consider William higher, and yet the hyena always found a way to prove him wrong. “It’s lovely. I don’t... even know what to say.” He smiled as he lifted his head again. “I love it. Thank you, William.”

He smiled back at the prince, who had to drop his eyes back to the amulet before his ears and cheeks caught fire. “I’m glad. You get on your way, and I’ll make sure a servant is sent to attend your quarters.” He stepped back further, pulling the door open to allow Tobias to leave. “If you will be in the Institute all day, I will retire to my own quarters and get some sleep.”

Tobias nodded as his smile faded only a very little. William did look tired; the hyena was definitely not fond, even after years of practice, of spending his nights at attention outside Tobias’ chambers. “I hope you can sleep well. Thank you, William.” He held up the chain even as he began to fasten it about his neck. “And thank you again, for the gift. It is most thoughtful.”

“You’re welcome.” The hyena grimaced through his smile. “We’re both trapped here. I get to see just how much you have to put up with, and the toll it takes. You deserve... something. More than this.”

“If I do, then we both do.” Tobias shook his head as he stepped forward. The urge to give the hyena a small kiss, even just on the cheek to say thanks, hit him but was forced aside. The door was open. If anyone saw... “I will see you when I return tonight. Get some rest, William.”

“By your leave, my prince.” He bowed his head as Tobias stepped past him and strode into the hall. He closed the door behind them and didn’t waste any time heading in the opposite

direction to the tiger. Tobias watched him leave, his heart pounding in his chest. Damn it all. Damn everything. Damn Fredrick, especially.

It was almost impossible for Tobias to reorder his thoughts. In the wake of the morning raid he always felt out of sorts. William was there. William was always there to make him feel better. He knew well that the hyena wouldn't have been there if he'd been given even a hint of an opportunity to be elsewhere, but that didn't make Tobias less grateful for his presence. It also didn't make Tobias less flustered by it. William had gone from a distant memory to a constant fixture in his life. Even two years later, he still wasn't sure how to feel about it. He still wasn't sure how he felt about *him*.

But that would have to be a problem for another time. He set down the hall with determination. Mattias would at least have brought some food into the vault with him for Tobias' arrival. He'd have to suffer Davan's cruel tongue later, but at least the moment would be tolerable. He tucked the amulet under his shirt. He almost imagined it feeling warm against his chest.

His blush refused to fade.

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Soren laughed at him.

He *laughed*. Tobias frowned at the painted dog as he wiped tears from his eyes. It had not seemed so funny to him when he had first related the story of that morning to the courtesan. "I fail to see why this is so amusing."

"Because, my dear prince, you should have simply followed through on your desires." Soren lay sprawled out beside Tobias on the dog's plush bed, one of his paws dancing idly along Tobias' naked thigh. The lay together in the nude, face to face with Soren's still grinning head propped up by a paw. "Gives you a birthday present, goes out of his way to be nice? Take some initiative, for goodness' sake! He follows your orders, doesn't he?"

"Unlike you, he doesn't take to instruction quite so readily." Tobias rolled his eyes. "And I hardly think forcing him would be the way to convince him of my good intentions."

"I've yet to meet a male who fails to turn to moist clay once his cock's in my mouth or my tongue's in his sheath. Especially both." Tobias' jaw dropped as Soren winked up at him. "Please. Don't look so shocked. You've heard me say worse, and I thought you *liked* when I was vulgar. Or was that just during the deed and I've misjudged you all these years?"

Tobias shuddered. Soren wasn't wrong. "I just don't think that he would react quite so positively as you think. I don't even think that I *should*." The tiger sighed and rolled onto his back. "He still holds to his beloved, and I forfeit any right to hold him at my side *long* ago."

The bed shifted as Soren rolled atop Tobias. His paws rubbed at the tiger's shoulders as he wriggled his backside down against the tiger's lap. "We are not talking about love, my prince; we are talking *lust*. You're not intending to wed him. You just want him to hoist your legs over his shoulders and-

“And he is *not* going to want to do that while he still pines for another.” Tobias glanced away. His sheath tingled at the painted dog’s pointed words. Curse Soren. He always knew just what to say.

“Maybe, maybe not. You won’t know if you don’t try, and you say they’ve been together for over ten years now?” The tiger nodded and Soren snorted. “Then they’ll probably be bored by now with one another. A little tail on the side never hurt, especially if the other never finds out about it.”

Tobias scowled up at Soren until he caught the dog’s wink. “You cur. You’re teasing me, aren’t you?”

“Of course I’m teasing you. What took you so long?” His paws kneaded gently at Tobias’s shoulders as his hips ground slowly back and forth. “It’s a good thing you’re holding back, you know? You’re respecting him and what he wants. Respecting *both* of them, and the love they clearly share for each other. You’re doing the right thing, even if it’s not getting you what you want.”

“I don’t even know *why* I want it. I thought I was done with this... that I was well and truly over it.” He shook his head even as he hardened under Soren’s efforts. The painted dog’s rump was wonderful, but his conversation was what Tobias prized above all right then.

Unfortunately for him, Soren was a much better multitasker than Tobias himself was. He continued to grind slowly as he nodded. “The heart wants what it wants, and so does your cock for that matter. You said how much he meant to you before, and here he is being all sweet and gorgeous and always there.” He reached down to trace a finger slowly around the amulet about Tobias’ neck. “He obviously doesn’t hate you, if he was willing to do this for you.”

“There is a broad chasm between hating someone and wanting them to bed you.” He reached up to stroke at the painted dog’s hips, reminded again of how smooth and soft and sheer Soren kept his fur. How *did* he do it? “And even if it were a purely physical thing for him, I just... don’t know if it ever could be for me. At best, it puts him in a terrible position, and all in the name of a moment’s pleasure.”

“More than a moment, my prince; I know how long I can keep you going.” Soren smirked as he sat back and rubbed smoothly through the fur of Tobias’ chest. “You really only have two choices. You either tell him how you feel and what you want, and see if you can actually get a muzzleful of hyena seed... or you don’t, and you take all your pent-up frustration out on me instead.” Tobias smirked as Soren grinned down at him. “What? You’re my best client. I’m allowed to be a little selfish, aren’t I?”

“You’re just saying that because I’m almost your *only* client.” There was a brief hitch in Soren’s face, as a moment’s despair actually shone through the courtesan’s mask. It so often slipped that Tobias felt himself simultaneously worried and gladdened to have caught such a sight. If they didn’t know each other so well – assuming Tobias knew Soren at all – he doubted that the dog would let it slip quite so easily. “I’m sorry.”

But he shook his head, leaning down slowly to nuzzle along Tobias’ cheek. “*You*, my prince, have nothing to apologise for. I don’t hold you accountable for the deeds of your brother.” He kissed at the side of Tobias’ neck with a sigh. “I do wish you had been king in his stead, though.”

The thought had occurred to Tobias, but he shook his head. "I'd have made a terrible king, Soren. I wasn't prepared, and I wouldn't have wanted the position anyway. Believe me; it would have been a complete disaster." He leaned his head back and closed his eyes with a groan as Soren's kisses intensified somewhat. A paw slid up the painted dog's back, resting on the back of his neck and gently tugging him in tighter. "I'm afraid I just have a sharper mind than my brothers, and little else going for me."

"Mmm. Bigger cock too, if the rumours of Fredrick's size are true." Tobias laughed before he could stop himself; his other paw rushed to cover his muzzle as he felt Soren twitching against him. "Don't feel like confirming the stories?"

"I try to make a habit of not sneaking a peek at my brother's malehood, thank you very much." Tobias worked his jaw from side to side as a moment's revulsion filled him. Fredrick had kept Juni at his side ever since the day he'd allowed Tobias to catch him with her. It was as though the king enjoyed tormenting him with what they both shared. Even the thought of it caused the tiger's arousal to bleed away. "I can think of at least one person who might be able to tell better than I, but she's not talking so far as I know."

Even Soren's face soured as he lifted his head back up. "This that hyena girl you told me about? My dear predecessor in matters of pleasuring you?"

Tobias nodded. "I wouldn't have described either of you that way, but... yes." He frowned deeply as he lay back on the bed. Anger thrummed through his body.

It was clear that Soren could see it too. His paws stroked more slowly over the tiger's chest, less to tease and more in an effort to relax him. "You still blame her?"

"No. No... not with what she has to put up with now." Tobias closed his eyes and sighed. "And all I have to go on is what Fredrick himself has told me. She's not permitted to speak, save to validate his words."

The painted dog nodded, his expression thoughtful. "And her son? *Your* son?"

Tobias snorted. "If indeed he is mine. Fredrick tells me that the cub is his, and how he delighted in the years I thought that the boy was mine." He reached up to gently rest his paws atop Soren's, and the dog's stopped their stroking at once. "Whether or not she was a whore dressed up as a maidservant and sent to do Fredrick's bidding or not does not matter to me. At least, not as far as she is concerned."

"I don't believe that." Soren smiled as he shifted himself down Tobias' body. The tiger's arousal had faded fully away again, and there was nothing in his way as he lay his head down on Tobias' chest. "Just listen to you now. Worried about her well-being, scared for what your brother might do to her... that, my dear prince, is empathy. It's not like you lack volumes of the stuff, either."

"I suppose not. Sometimes I wish otherwise, or that I at least knew better how to direct it." Tobias sighed as he let one of his paws lift to stroke the back of Soren's head. The dog nuzzled in against him under his touch. "The betrayal was Fredrick's. It has always been Fredricks. All his little plots and plans and the horrible, horrible ideas in his head..." He sighed again. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't burden you with such woes."

“You should burden me with whatever will help you to feel better.” Soren shook his head, the motion turning into another long, gentle nuzzle against the tiger’s chest. “That’s what I’m here for, after all. It’s not like you’ve been coming by for the pleasure of my body as much anymore.” His head lifted slightly to smile up at the prince. “Though you *do* still make a point of it, for which I’m grateful.”

Tobias returned the smile. “You do make it difficult to stay away, it’s true. And this place is something of a sanctuary for me, I am happy to admit. At least it is when it’s not being raided by the guardians. Nowhere seems safe from them now.” Soren nodded again and Tobias let his head roll back once more. “This world is changing, Soren. Not just the realm. It feels like everything is on the brink.”

“Mmm. Like it could tip over at any moment. I know the feeling.” He lowered his head again and closed his eyes. “Do you know what I do, my prince, when faced with that sensation?”

The tiger stared down at him and smirked. “Suck some cock, as you so eloquently like to put it?”

Soren chuckled and shook his head. “That, yes, but no. I try to take a moment. Just a moment, every single day. I sit in the quiet, and I think about what I *do* have. What *is* right in the world. What opportunities have presented to me, and that I am grateful to have them.” He stroked lightly along Tobias’ side. “The world is a cruel and dark place. All the crueller for your brothers. But there are beacons of light out there, if you know to look for them.”

Tobias smiled softly to himself. It was a lovely sentiment, to be sure. “You’re very optimistic, did you know that?”

“Would you prefer a dour whore? Would anyone?”

“I suppose not, at that.” Tobias continued to slowly stroke the back of the dog’s neck, petting him gently as Soren sighed. “And no one likes a dour prince either, I guess. Save you, for some strange reason.”

“Yes, but you’re much less dour around me.” He felt Soren smiling against him. “And there’s never been a male I’ve met who can be dour when he’s cock’s in my mouth, or my tongue’s in his sheath.”

The prince rolled his eyes, but smiled nonetheless. “I thought that was your response to reticent males.”

“That’s my response to *all* males. You’d be surprised how effective it is, and in a lot of different situations as well.” The painted dog wriggled up along Tobias’ body and nosed in under his chin. “Only reason I’m not doing it right now with you is because I know you’re not in the mood for that sort of company.”

Well, he was partly right. Tobias hummed to himself as he nodded. If he’d been able to actually speak coherently to William earlier and if the hyena had been capable of interest in him in turn, maybe he’d not have need of Soren’s wares anymore. The thought of that though struck Tobias with something he’d not expected: *guilt*. “Well, I do keep coming back for both. You must be doing something right.”

“Mmm. Just tell me when you want me to get to the other stuff, though. You’re always a treat.” He yawned quietly against Tobias’ chest, and the tiger had to fight back one of his own in turn. It would be so easy to just fall asleep there, with the dog laying against him.

The temptation was strong, but if he lingered overnight it would just provide Fredrick and Brett more ammunition to investigate his life. Whether or not they knew just how frequently he spent his time at the Crest, Tobias knew every visit could be his last. There could always be guardians waiting to storm in and arrest the prince for tailraising. And Soren... well, he’d be lucky if he was arrested at all and not immediately put to death.

The world was, indeed, changing. Darkening. Maybe there was yet some value in what Soren was suggesting. A chance to enjoy the small moments that one could get. Maybe William had the right of it, after all; that savouring those small minutes after weeks of separation was more important than it looked. It was dissent in its own way. It was fighting back against the dark. One tiny, little torch shining in the shadows, and maybe if there were enough of them they could banish the shadows entirely.

“You can get to the other stuff.” The painted dog’s tail started to wag as he lifted his head, smiling at Tobias. The prince returned the smile as he scritchd up behind one of Soren’s ears. “Far be it from me to deny you *your* fun too.”

He could only chuckle as Soren began to slide his way down along Tobias’ belly. Sensitive flesh felt the teasing touch of cool nose and warm tongue, and the tiger sighed as he leaned back. Fredrick could pass all the edicts he liked. He could make this illegal, and it wouldn’t matter one bit. This was *Tobias’* dissent. Soren’s dissent. Their little torches, burning in the shadows. Tobias tugged Soren’s head in tighter between his legs.

If they were going to burn, they were going to damn-well burn bright.