

The fox was practically holding a spotlight over David, his gaze unyielding, his ears at attention, ready to pick up any sound coming from the husky. He poked the husky's sore side trying to coerce a confession out of the poor pup.

"Spill it. Where were you the other night?" Tim inquired.

"Nowhere, I was just at home doing homework is all," David lied.

"Liar, Stacy and I stopped by to see if you wanted to hangout but you weren't home."

"I was probably out at the store picking up some groceries for my mom when you guys came by."

"And what about your paw?" the fox inquired pointing at the bandaged wrapped paw.

"Cut it on a rock or something when I fell in the parking lot." David affected embarrassed ear gestures to add to the lie.

Tim thought about it for a moment, *a likely excuse but*, "Well, why didn't you answer your phone when we called?"

"It was on silent and I didn't feel it vibrate," David offered.

Tim tapped a claw lightly on the desk and he saw David's ears flick to each tap. The husky would have heard his phone vibrating even if he didn't feel it. The pup was hiding something and the fox was going to get to the bottom of it. *What could it be?* David was usually very easy to figure out. *He could have been out taking photos again but there wouldn't be any reason to hide that. He doesn't look hurt either so he didn't get into another fight.* Tim sat there thinking what the husky would want to keep secret from him, not really listening to what David was saying at the moment. *Maybe he's finally seeing someone again.* David hadn't gone out with anyone since Robert left their freshman year. A smile began to tug at the edges of the fox's muzzle at the tantalizing thought of his friend in a secret relationship.

"What are you smiling about?" David asked suspiciously.

"Oh nothing," Tim said with a fox smile, "You got any plans tonight? Stacy and Justin want to go watch that superhero movie that comes out today?"

"Sure, it looks interesting enough."

The bell rang and the two left the library to go to their last class of the day.

David had a hard time concentrating on his classes today. He couldn't stop thinking of the bull and how he wasn't really a bad guy. David gave a long sigh, he couldn't wait for the weekend to come, but time seemed to move backwards during the last hour of school.

The weekend flew by in no time and they were back to the rigors of school come Monday. The movie he saw Saturday was really good as far as action movies go and they had a great time afterwards at the restaurant. The husky even managed to get all of his school work done, leaving him some free time to

relax and enjoy the day. Tim was a tad annoying this weekend. The fox kept revisiting the topic of David's disappearance Thursday night, and soon Stacy and Justin were curious to his whereabouts that evening.

Mr. Gravis, the photography teacher, had sent David on a little errand to pick up some larger photo paper and film from the Art Department's supply room. David was happy to accept the quest and was on his way back to the classroom with stacks of paper and film in paw. As he turned the corner he saw a door open and a fur step out into the otherwise deserted hallway. Normally, he wouldn't think much of it, but something about the fur looked familiar. Another look from around the pile of supplies in his paw confirmed his suspicion. It was that pit bull, Brian, from the park where he and that boar jumped him. David's heart began racing and he prayed that the other canine wouldn't bother him. Another look in the pit bull's direction made his heart skip a beat when he saw Brian smiling at him. It wasn't one of those, *oh hey friend nice running into you* kind of smiles, it was more like *I'm glad to see you nerd, it's time for you daily beating* kind of smiles. In vain, David moved to the other side of the empty hall to avoid walking into the pit bull, but Brian switched sides so that they kept on their collision course. David stopped as he contemplated turning around as Brian kept on approaching, the pit bull's paw steps echoing in the hall as he got closer and closer.

Just as sudden as David had stopped, so did Brian. The last thing the husky saw of the pit bull was a scowl on his muzzle before he turned around and down one of the side halls. The paw steps were growing louder though and it took a moment for David to realize the noise was coming from behind him. Just as he was about to turn around a large figure moved past. He didn't get a look at the fur's face but, it was unmistakably Alex. David started walking and watched as the bull turned down the same hallway as Brian before he went the opposite direction back to his photography class.

David waited inside the school for ten minutes after he saw Tim and Stacy leave the school grounds. He told Tim he had to stay after to finish editing some pictures for the school newspaper. He actually finished doing the edits over the weekend, but needed an excuse for Tim to go home with someone else. The husky hopped into his car and drove off, hoping to catch Alex before the bull got too far. David went up and down the streets in the nearby neighborhood, looking for the large bovine, but couldn't find him. He was passing a small playground when he caught sight of a bull turn a corner onto the next street. David picked up the pace so he wouldn't lose him. When he spotted Alex he slowed down and started to doubt if this was a good idea or not. It was sort of a spur-of-the-moment decision to track Alex down, but he wanted to thank him for earlier when he scared off that jock.

Alex was peacefully making his way home, it was a slightly chilly day, but that didn't bother him, the sun was out providing some warmth and he had his black jacket on. He heard the rumbling of an engine behind him that grew louder but didn't seem to pass. He turned around and saw a blue sports car trailing slowly behind him. He couldn't tell who was inside because the windows were tinted and the glare from the sun was blinding. He stopped walking and the car crept towards him until it came to a stopped next to him. The window came down and recognized the husky sitting in the driver's seat.

"Oh, uh, hey Alex."

"Hey."

"On your way home?"

"Yeah."

"Do you, uh, want a ride maybe?"

Alex stared at the little husky sitting inside the little car for a minute. He wondered what the dog was up to, why was he looking for him in the first place and why on earth would he offer him a ride?

"I don't think I'll fit."

"The seat slides back and lowers." David adjusted the seat for the bigger bull, to show that Alex could fit, if a bit snug.

The husky was being awfully persistent. Alex was about to tell the husky to get lost and not bother him when he took one more look at the husky. The canine looked nervous as he waited for an answer but, it wasn't a scared-nervous look, not like some of the freshmen gave when they saw him walking towards them; it was more like an anxious waiting-for-an-answer look. *One ride wouldn't hurt* Alex though as he agreed to the offered ride and climbed into the passenger seat. The car groaned and wobbled in protest under his weight as he settled in. The ride was nice and smooth, but the silence made it awkward until David said something.

"I just wanted to thank you, for earlier today. You saved me from that guy again."

"I didn't do anything."

"Oh. Well, still, if you hadn't scared him off..." David pondered what the pit bull would have done and the images weren't pleasant. "Anyways, I just wanted to make sure I said thank you, even if you didn't mean to help me."

Another bout of silence broke out so David tried to dispel it. "So, what were you doing there anyways? If you don't mind me asking."

"Going to the restroom." Which was true, sort of. It was actually one of his free periods that his counselor turned into a study class to help him graduate. He left the study group to go to the restroom taking his sweet time when he spotted the husky leaving a room with a pawful of stuff at the other end of a hall. There was a closer restroom but curiosity got the best of him and he decided to follow the canine. When he reached the hallway the husky had turned down he saw the canine just standing there. He also saw another canine further down the hall approaching the husky. When he made eye contact with the other dog and saw him stop he remembered it was the same one from the park. If the pit bull was looking for another fight, Alex was going to make sure it was with him and no one else this time. He walked past the husky and started following the other canine.

The rest of the ride was quiet except for when Alex pointed out where to turn. David pulled up to the driveway and saw the white picket-fenced house that the bull lived in.

"Well, here we are."

"Yeah. Thanks."

David wanted to ask if he could come by his house again, to take pictures, but Alex was pretty stoic throughout the whole ride. David was hoping the bull would warm up to him. The intimidating guy certainly wasn't the frightening, mean-spirited beast everyone thought he was, though he certainly wasn't Mr. Chatterbox which made it difficult to talk to him.

Alex could sense the husky had something else he wanted to say, but Alex didn't want to sit there in awkward silence, so he got out of the car which almost jumped off the ground when he stepped out of it.

David's heart was racing and it felt like he had butterflies in his stomach. He just wanted ask the bull a simple question, but it felt like he was asking him out on a date or something. David drummed up the courage to speak when he saw his last chance about to leave.

"Hey Alex, I was, um, wondering if I could... maybe come by this weekend... to take pictures of your house for my photography class."

Alex thought about it for a while, he wasn't doing anything important and his mom would be working most of the weekend. There wasn't any real reason that he could think of as an excuse to deny the husky from stopping by and visiting. So the real question here was... did he really want to be bothered by the canine more? He looked at David sitting in the car, ears twitching nervously, that anxious look in his eyes again.

"Sure, I don't care."

"Cool, how about Sunday around one?"

"Sure."

"Alright, I'll see you then," David said as he waved goodbye. He was relieved with how everything went, and his tail was wagging happily behind his seat as he drove home.

Alex went inside and headed towards the kitchen to grab himself a drink.

"You're home early."

"Yeah, someone dropped me off."

"Oh that's nice, why didn't you invite them inside? I could have made them some snacks or something."

"It's alright, he had to go anyways."

"Aw. Well maybe next time." His mom gave him a big hug and he snorted at the motherly affection.

Alex noticed she was in her waitress uniform. "You're not going into the diner, are you?"

"Yeah, I told Louie I was coming in."

"Why don't you take the day off? You're already working the rest of the week and weekend. You should take time to rest."

"Oh don't worry Alex, I'll be okay. You know I don't like to sit around and do nothing. I've made some dinner for you, it's in the fridge. I'll see you later tonight when I get off alright?"

"Yeah."

"Alright, I love you. Bye!"

"You too mom, bye."

The week crawled by at the usual slow pace, though this time it seemed to stretch on forever. David had a couple of tests, and a book report due, which made things worse. Seeing Alex didn't help time go by any faster, as he got the jitters every time he saw the bull. They hadn't talk to each other since the car ride, and David was starting to wonder if it was a good idea to still visit the bull this weekend. Tim, Stacy and Justin have stopped badgering him about his disappearance and he hoped it had finally blown over, but he sensed they were scheming something, though he didn't know what. His extracurricular activities at least provided a pleasant distraction that helped him get through the week: T.E.A. was trying to plan a camping trip, he had some photo assignments for the yearbook and newspaper, and the student government and senior class body meetings were entertaining; they were fretting over prom, graduation, and fundraising, but everything seemed to be on track. It was his job as secretary for both groups to keep them organized and informed. He could see why no one else wanted the positions, but he was a very orderly canine and could handle the simple tasks.

Sunday finally rolled around and it was almost half past one when Alex looked at the clock in the kitchen, he finished his drink and got up to go outside. He wasn't going to wait around for the husky to come by, the little dog probably forgot, or decided against coming. *He was probably just being nice and didn't expect me to agree to it.*

Alex walked out to the barn, looking at the field. The entire acre had been plowed and harrowed and he was going over it once more with the harrow before he would start sowing. The soil was starting to get pretty loose, but he still had a third left to go over. Alex wasn't much of a farmer, and the crops never turned out great, but the whole process was great exercise. He would have to find another workout regiment once the seeds were planted and winter came around. The spiked device was lying against the wall where he left it and his harness was sitting on top of the barrel. With a grunt he lifted the metal grid and placed in on the field where he had left off the other day and hooked himself up to the rig.

David speed down the road, trying to make up time. He was already thirty minutes late. His mom wanted him to get the spare light bulbs that were 'somewhere' in the garage, and then he had to turn around halfway because he forgot his camera, of all things. He was feeling uneasy when he pulled up to the quaint looking white house, and was beginning to rethink things once he found himself facing the blue door. He wondered if he should turn around, he was late, and what if Alex had left since he didn't show up on time. He took a deep breath and rang the doorbell before he could chicken out. His ears were perked towards the door waiting for any sound to indicate someone was coming to greet him. They began to droop after no one came to the door, he tried knocking next, but still no one came. The bull didn't seem to be home, he didn't really need to be David thought, he was here just to take pictures after all. He felt foolish standing there on the porch in front of the house now.

David had his camera in paw as he went around to the back of the house to the barn to get some pictures. As he rounded the corner, the barn and the field came into view. His heart leapt when he saw the bull in the middle of the field pulling the harrow through the ground. David called Alex's name to get his attention and the bull dropped the harness to approach him.

"Didn't think you were coming."

He sounded a little winded, the edges of his blue shirt turning a darker color as it absorbed the sweat. The braces of his overalls were attached this time but seemed to strain to contain his chest with each breath he took.

"Sorry, I got caught up at home with my parents. I hope it's still alright if I take some pictures."

"Help yourself."

"Okay, thanks!"

David couldn't stop the wagging in his tail as he watched the bull walk back out to the field. He turned his attention to the barn and began to adjust the settings on his camera. It was sometime before David started feeling a little thirsty. He had taken some great shots of the barn, house, woods, and landscape, but was looking around for something that would really catch his eye.

David made his way back to the barn to get some water from the hose, instead of bothering Alex for a glass from the house. He wiped his muzzle free of the water dribbling down the side and hopped up on a barrel to take a seat while he looked over the photos he had taken. A look at his cell phone told him it was a quarter past four and he blinked at the screen not realizing that much time had passed by. The sun was on its way down and that's when he saw Alex slowly move across the field. He immediately hopped off the barrel and brought the viewfinder to his eye. He took several shots then adjusted the settings and took some more. Alex was moving across the field with the sun hovering over him casting him in a silhouette, his shadow moving along right next to him on the field.

This would be perfect for his portfolio David he thought as he took a couple of more shoots before he zoomed in on Alex and gulped. There was a great view of the muscular bull in the camera's focus now, the blue shirt, clinging to the large bovine's body, was completely dark from sweat. The fabric seemed to

stretch around his arms to try and contain the muscles underneath. David was still snapping pictures as he marveled at the sight of Alex through his camera.

Alex noticed that the husky was facing him now and from the canine's posture and the camera in his face he must have been taking pictures the bull. It was a little vein of the bovine to think the husky was focusing on him, but that didn't stop the bull from feeling the need to prove how strong and tough he was. Alex started working harder, straining to pulling the harrow through the dirt. He put a little too much force into his next step and strained his shoulder a bit. He shucked off the harness and started rolling his shoulder around to work out the soreness.

David was shooting on burst mode now, capturing every detail of the bull's muscles bulging as he rotated his shoulder and arm. He watched as Alex unhooked the brace of his overall, and massaged the spot where the harness had put pressure on his shoulder and chest.

David took the camera away from his face when he saw the Alex walking towards him. His heart began to race and his tail curled to the front of him. The incident with Ben on the bleachers flashed through his mind and he feared Alex was going to beat him to pulp. David just stood there waiting for Alex to approach him. David felt relieved when he saw Alex was just getting something to drink and went over to join him.

"Sorry about that, I hope you don't mind me taking pictures of you. I should have asked first."

"I don't care."

"Well thanks, I got some good shoots."

Alex was leaning against the barn, still trying to steady his breath when the husky sat on top of the barrel next to him and began talking again. The canine was trying to make small talk which was something he wasn't particularly good at or keen on.

"So what do you grow out here? Isn't it kind of late to be planting crops?"

"Broccoli, spinach, and radishes."

"That's cool. Do you grow crops all year round?"

"Sometimes."

"Wow! That must be a lot of hard work."

"It is."

"And you do this all by yourself?"

"Yes."

"What else do you have to do besides pull that spiked thing around?"

The bull's damp sweat soaked shirt was starting to chill him but still, he stayed and "talked" to the husky. The canine was a little incessant with all the questions he kept asking and Alex idly wonder why he hadn't just walked away yet. He wasn't used to talking this much, at least not with anyone from school . The husky, however, seemed genuinely interested in him and all this farming stuff.

David found out Alex wasn't much into farming, he did it more for the exercise than anything else, but it seemed the bovine knew a fair amount about agriculture. David asked a few more questions before he noticed a cold breeze made Alex shiver and decide to call it quits for the day. By the time David started saying good bye the sun had turned an orange hue as it fell closer to the horizon.

"Oh wow, it's getting late. I need to get home for dinner and sort through these photos. Uh, thanks for letting me take some photos of you... and your place."

"No problem."

"I guess I should get going then. I'll, uh, see ya around."

David began walking back to his car as Alex started walking back out onto the field. David took a couple more steps before he turned around.

"Hey Alex, is it alright if I come by again sometime?"

"Yeah, sure."

It was a quick and short answer like all the other ones the bull had given him, but it made the husky happy, and he returned to his car with a smile on his muzzle.

♦

Tim was late to his math class, he ran into that foreign student, the one with the great butt and sexy accent. The cougar had stopped Tim to ask for help getting his locker open and who was the fox to deny a fur in need, especially one as good looking as the feline. Tim stopped at the door for a moment when his usual seat was taken and David was not in his own. He got a strange feeling in his gut when he saw his husky friend sitting in the back corner of the classroom with Alex of all furs. He didn't sit in the empty seats furthest from the bull, but the one right next to the hulking beast. Tim made his way to the back of the room and looked at the two empty seats next to David, then at the husky, and then a quick glance at the bull. Was he supposed to sit next to his friend or the one furthest from the bull? David gave a slight tilt of his muzzle indicating the empty seat next to him and Tim slowly sat down in it as if it was freezing cold. He wanted to ask why they were sitting here and not in their usual seats but the late bell rang and Mr. Thompson began talking.

"So what was that about?" the fox asked glaring at the husky.

"What was what about?"

"Don't play dumb with me. Why were you sitting back there with Alex?"

"Our usual seats were taken."

"There were others open."

"I felt like a change of pace?" the husky offered as an excuse.

The fox was staring daggers at him, the vulpin's eyes so narrow and pointed David could feel the tip of a blade poking at his skin. David put on his best it's-no-big-deal grin, and changed the subject quickly, asking why Tim was so late to class. Luckily the thought of the hunky cougar was enough of a distraction to get Tim off David's back. That didn't last long. During their next math class, David was in the back of the class again with the bull, this time pulling looks as he made his way back there. Tim begrudgingly got up after several back and forth head tilts.

Tim had his suspicions something was up with the husky, he was leaning towards the idea that David was seeing someone secretly. David was too busy with 'work' as he put it to hang out during the weekend. News from Justin about seeing some other fur in David's car leaving school only confirmed his suspicions that he was seeing someone. Seeing David with the bull threw a wrench in all that, Tim didn't know how the bull figured into the equation and that stumped him. The biggest clue came from Stacy when she said he saw the husky and bull in the library together during a lunch period. Tim started to wonder why he was with Alex a lot and started to worry that the bull had something over David or was bullying his friend.

David wondered what Tim wanted to talk to him about. The fox had asked to meet him at the benches by the side of the school during their free period. The black, white, and brown dog sat at one of the hard concrete benches waiting for the fox to show up who came five minutes later.

"Hey what's up? What did you want to talk about?"

"Nothing much, just wanted to see how you were doing. You seem to be busy as of late."

"Yeah, just a bunch of assignments, you probably wouldn't know about that since you are taking all easy classes. Why do you ask?"

"Oh no reason, just wondering who is monopolizing all your free time is all."

"What do you mean?"

"Just wondering if you are seeing someone?"

Tim wanted to be direct, but didn't want to jump to any big conclusions.

"No one, why?"

"What about Alex?"

"What about him?" the puzzled husky asked.

The husky was playing hard ball so Tim was just going to come out with it.

"You've been sitting with him in class, you seem to be unavailable to hang out with us lately, Justin saw him in your car, and Stacy saw you two in the library together."

"Hehe, are you getting jealous or something?"

"This is not funny. I'm serious."

The husky found himself under the spotlight again, Tim was standing in front staring down at him sternly, his arms folded across his chest.

"He's not hurting you, is he?"

That question threw the husky off a bit.

"What?!"

"He's not pressuring or bullying you around to do stuff for him?"

"No, no! Why would he do that?"

"Because he's got issues."

"Where did that come from? You don't know that."

"He dented the principal's car the third day of school."

"That was just a rumor."

Tim held out his black gloved paw and began listing off incidents involving the bull.

"What about when he picked on Greg and tried to steal his weed? Or when he elbowed Derrick and bruised his rib? The fight where he broke that badgers nose. He shoved Nick Branson into the lockers. Knocked out Roger Hinsdale in gym. Gave Sherley Madison a cut on her arm."

"A lot of those are old and over exaggerated rumors."

"You saw how beat up Ben and Brian looked and how violent he can be."

"Actually, I didn't see that and he beat them up to SAVE me."

"And now he's blackmailing you into being his slave."

David lost it at that and stood straight up, his tail uncurling.

"I can't believe you! Why would you think a thing like that?"

"You know for a pup who doesn't like attention or trouble you're about to find a lot of it if you don't do something about him."

David was seething with anger. He couldn't believe his friend would say such things. He had to get away, be anywhere but here listening to him. David turned his back to the fox and stormed off leaving Tim standing there annoyed and agitated.

It was a good thing Tim had rehearsal today because David would have left him without a ride. That didn't put Alex in a better situation when the husky pulled up next to him on the side walk. Even before he squeezed himself into the car Alex could tell something was wrong. The tiny space in the vehicle was thick with tension. Alex could tell David was mad about something from the scowl the canine constantly wore, and felt the need to ask if something was bothering the husky.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing" David quickly responded.

The bovine snorted. "Just asking."

David took a big breath, counted to three, and let it out in a sigh.

"I'm sorry, it's just my friend got me really mad earlier today." When Alex didn't say anything David continued. "He was saying some horrible stuff about you."

"Who doesn't?"

"I don't."

Alex gave a loud huff and a intense glance at David who seemed to shrink in his seat when he saw the bull look at him.

"Well, not anymore. Once I got to know you. If others just did the same they wouldn't say such bad things about you."

"Ignore them."

"I can't, not when it's my best friend saying those things. He thought you were bullying me to be your servant for Christ sakes." David kept on ranting all the way, riling himself up into an even more agitated state.

Alex was relieved when he saw the white fence of his house beyond the trees. He was afraid they were going to get into an accident with how aggressive David was getting. Alex also hated that he was the reason why David and his best friend were fighting. The last thing he wanted was to cause trouble for the husky so he came to a decision.

"You alright?"

"Yeah."

That was a lie. The scowl on the husky had now turned into a snarl. Alex placed a large paw on David's shoulder stopping the husky from getting out.

"I'm busy today, you should go home."

Before David could protest the bull was already out the car and on his porch. The last thing he saw was Alex's tail whipping behind him as the front door shut. This was all Tim's fault David thought to himself. Now Alex didn't even want to be around him all because of what the fox had started. He was supposed to hang out with Alex today and Sunday and go out with Tim, Stacy, and Justin Saturday. Tim ruined his entire weekend. David peeled out of the driveway racing home, the roar of the engine a deafening sound Alex heard even from inside his house.

"Hey Alex! Was that your friend?"

"Um... yeah, he couldn't stay."

"Aw, well I'll guess I'll see him this weekend then."

"Naw, something came up."

"Oh, I'm sorry dear."

She pulled off her oven mitts and dusted off her apron before she pulled Alex into a big hug, though she couldn't wrap her arms completely around him. He quickly returned the hug and was already heading towards his room. He wouldn't admit it but the hug was comforting, even if brief.

It was weird having someone around when for the most part of his high school experience no one dared to be seen with him. Alex found the husky's presence... curious, if a bit annoying with all the talking and questions. He was not a troublemaker but trouble seemed to follow him around and he didn't want to cause anyone any trouble for the husky. Alex decided if being around the canine was causing problems for the husky then he would just have to stop seeing the little guy and go back to being alone.

Stacy and Justin had tried contacting David to see what was wrong and if he still wanted to get together, but David ignored all their calls and text messages. He still hadn't received anything from Tim and that only added to the pot while he stewed in his room all weekend. When Monday came it was Tim's turn to drive but David didn't care, the fox had not made any attempt to talk to him and David didn't want to talk or see him either. All week they avoided each other like the plague, they used different entrances to the school, sat with different people at lunch, and David even skipped this week's T.E.A. meeting. His other meetings didn't go so well as he had a hard time concentrating, he even had to ask another member of the student body for a recap of the meeting because he wasn't paying too much attention. The only time Tim and David did see each other was in math class. Tim sat in his usual seat he sat at and David sat next to Alex.

Alex could easily tell David and that fox friend of his were still not talking to each other, and the tension between the two could split an atom. The fox would glare at him every time he entered the room and would only give a passing glance at David when the husky entered. David didn't even spare a glance at the fox and would sit next to him with a forced smile on his muzzle. It was awkward for Alex. He also felt responsible for being the cause of their spat and tried his best to not be seen with David. He wondered why the husky would chose to sit next to him over the fox, his best friend. *"Does he really want to hang out with me that much,"* Alex pondered, *"or maybe David was doing it just to get under the fox's fur."* Alex left class as quickly as he could to minimize their interaction.

At first, Stacy thought it was just a tiff between the two and they would be over it by the weekend, but when Thursday came around she was feed up by it. Whatever was going on between Tim and David had them acting like cubs and she was going to put a stop to it. Justin stood back worried for the two and himself, he could tell Stacy was scheming something from the way her ears were twitching and the way her tailed swayed.

"Hey David, got a sec?"

"Oh, um, hey Stac, I don't know. I..."

"Please! I need your help carrying these boxes."

The lioness didn't appear mad at him for dodging all her texts and calls, plus she needed help, how could he say no. So David agreed and followed her into a classroom. It was one of the art classrooms, littered with art supplies and various works, and there were no desks, just large tables for students to work at. There were also no boxes David saw, but there was a fox and another lion on the other side of the classroom. David instantly turned around when he heard the sound of the doors slamming shut. Stacy was blocking the exit and he glanced over at the other door where Justin was guarding it.

"What's going on here?" Tim asked.

"Yeah, why is he here?" David pointed at the fox.

David didn't realize Stacy could be so intimidating. The lioness was usually happy and cheerful, her golden fur making her look radiant in the light, but now she was baring her fangs not in a smile but a snarl and her finger that was directed at him had a menacing claw pointed at him. David found himself taking a step back with each step she took towards him. Justin had no trouble pushing Tim, literally, to the center of the classroom. Soon Tim and David were at opposite ends of a table and Stacy and Justin were behind them. Stacy was the first to speak, a fierce edge to her words.

"You two need to drop the drama queen routine."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Tim said matter-of-factly.

"That. You're acting like a bunch of pups." She turned to David, "Why are you even mad at him?"

"Because he is an ignorant bastard."

Tim's fur bristled as he hissed at David.

"You mean because he is worried about you? Like after your fight with Ben and Brian."

"You TOLD them, after you promised not to!"

All David saw was a golden flash before a paw hit the side of his muzzle, he could feel the tiny prick of claws against his skin. Tim looked dumbfounded and took a step back from the table.

"What was that for?" David yelled.

"For not telling us," Stacy shouted back. "Do you know how weird we were, how much Tim was, and how hurt we were that we had to find out from Tim because you didn't want to tell us?"

Justin quickly walk around and wrap his arms around Stacy from the back in a tender embrace to calm her down, and to restrict her arm movement for the sake of the others. David's ears dropped and his tail fell limp between his legs at hearing how much he hurt his closest friends.

"I'm sorry," he whimpered sincerely, tears forming at the edges of his eyes.

"Apology accepted, but we are not the only one you should be apologizing to. Tim was only worried that you were being bullied, again, and just wanted to make sure you were safe."

David looked across the table at Tim. It was true, he saw the sincerity in Tim's eyes. Tim was just thinking about his safety and didn't want to see his best friend get hurt anymore.

"I'm sorry Tim," he said not quite keeping the sniffles back.

"It's alright. I was just worried is all."

"I'm glad that's settled and now for you."

Stacy managed to break free of Justin and turned to face Tim.

"You need to apologize to David."

"Wha... um, for what?"

"For jumping to conclusions and saying such awful things about his friend."

"But I was just trying to help."

"And you hurt David's feelings in the end."

"But it's Alex."

"That doesn't mean anything. David managed to be his friend without getting punched. Did you even talk to the guy before confronting David about him?"

"Well, I... No," Tim confessed.

She was right again, he had been against Alex since the beginning and when he saw the bovine with David he jumped to the conclusion that his doggy friend was being bullied by the big bull. It was his turn to look at his friend across the table and apologize.

"I'm sorry David. I shouldn't have said those things about your friend."

"It's okay."

The stress and tension in the room vanished as big goofy grins spread across their muzzles. The two were now back to being best friends.

"It's nice to see that you two have kissed and made up," Justin teased them.

"Yeah, and now we can all hang out again and Alex can join us."

"Wait what?!" Justin had a shocked expression on his face, his ears twitched at the surprising news. It was Justin's turn to face Stacy's fury as she turned around and glared at him. Even though she had to look up at him he seemed small in comparison.

"Any friend of David's is a friend of ours, right?"

It wasn't really a question and there was only one answer. Luckily, Justin was trained well and agreed with her wholeheartedly.

"Of course baby," he said embracing her again.

Justin's ears flicked backwards when he heard Tim make a whip sound and everyone began to snicker. Stacy returned the embrace rewarding her tamed lion with a few nuzzles across his chest.