

The wild dog shoved his paws into his pockets, pulling his jacket just a little bit tighter around himself. Cold tonight, colder than the forecast predicted - but then again, that should be expected what with the season fast changing. The official start of winter would be coming up on Friday, though it felt to him like that mark had already passed about two weeks ago.

Shame he'd gotten out of work so late tonight, but... he didn't have to be in until the afternoon tomorrow, and besides, it was a nice night. He lifted his nose to the air, tasted the cold breeze stinging of car exhaust, cement left to mildew from being kept wet for too long, the vague tang of someone down the street taking a drag off a cigarette. The dog's exhalations wisped out through his nose and curled up into the air in front of him, little foggy clouds that billowed up and then dissipated. Altogether, not exactly a *pleasant* smell, but he'd gotten used to it and enjoyed it well enough.

Or, maybe *enjoyed* wasn't quite the right word. That was just... how things were. The way a car sped by a little too close to the sidewalk, and billowed his coat around him; the way his satellite-dish ears swivelled back and forth, catching all the little noises around the streets and half-conversations of the other people walking around at this time of night; the way the acrid bite of that cigarette just strengthened as he approached this upcoming alley. A rather tall, broad-shouldered zebra passed him, smelling faintly of whiskey and - Askia turned his head slightly to the side to get another whiff as he went by - and gin, at the same time. Not really a good combination. But in a city like this, so many people around meant that you had the opportunity to meet all types.

The last few alleys he'd passed had been closed off, blocked by chainlink fences with padlocked gates or with half-assed "Do Not Enter" signs strung across the entry. This next one, with the faint cloud of hazy smoke wafting out, had neither of these - and as Askia passed he turned his head to look down that way, made eye contact with one, two, three other people, glimmer of their eyes kept sharp by the glowing end of that cigarette. As soon as he caught sight of it, though, the one took another puff, flung the butt down to the ground, crushed it beneath his foot. In the same movement he swept his own coat to the side and reached towards his pocket.

None of his business. Askia turned forward again and kept on walking, perhaps just a little bit faster. He'd set out a hunk of ground beef this morning to thaw in a pot of water in his sink, and fully intended and wanted to cook that up before bedtime tonight. A hyena friend of his had sent him a lovely array of spices for him to try out, along with a recipe for a new kind of dish he hadn't yet had before.

Tap, tap, tap of footsteps behind him, nothing new, nothing unexpected. A little bit odd, since he'd gotten a look behind himself when that zebra had passed, and hadn't seen anyone coming up from behind. Still, though: people had places to be, and in a city like this where it was often easier to walk than drive, it also wasn't uncommon to see someone, or several someones, on that awkward border between walking and jogging while trying to get somewhere. Even at nine on a Tuesday evening like this. So the wild dog swivelled his ears forward again, tried to keep his head down so as not to catch the blowing breeze on those radar dishes too much, and bundled his coat closer to his body.

And - then he felt something wrap around his neck from behind, felt himself lose his balance and tumble backwards, felt a paw against his chest pushing him down even faster. Crack of the back of his head against the pavement, and all of a sudden all he could see was bright white sparkles flooding his field of vision, all in front of the reaching skyscrapers and the dark clouds

beyond swirling, spinning, flowing like warm syrup. Tasted blood, too, but he couldn't really feel anything in his mouth other than the strong, stinging throbs of his heartbeat radiating out from the back of his skull. He couldn't really breathe, either, but - that actually came to him as a second thought, as something further behind everything else. His body just... didn't respond, as if he knew he should know how to breathe, but just couldn't remember.

Vaguely, the shadow of one of those people from the alleyway came into view above him, a wolf or a coyote (or maybe a cat, or a mink?) with another cigarette held between his lips and his arm just now coming to rest at his side from throwing the wild dog to the ground. He glanced around, across one of his companions who also came into view, over his shoulder, back behind him - and then motioned down at Askia, still trying to dig his claws into the rough cement beneath him just to feel like he wouldn't fall upwards off the planet.

"Look through his pockets," the first one said, his voice gruff and accented. The third sidled up, and then just as quickly dropped to a crouch and started rifling through Askia's coat pockets. It hurt to breathe, hurt to blink, hurt to swallow... "Take 'is phone, wallet, jacket, whatever. The usual. And let's do it fast. I think he hit his head, so we should be alright. I think w-"

Then - another ear-splitting *bang*, though this time it actually came from *outside* the wild dog's head. The three of them jumped at the sound and all looked the same direction, back towards where Askia had come from... and then one ducked his head and cut into a sprint, the first reached towards his other pocket and slid out a knife, and the third froze with his paws halfway in Askia's clothing.

"This ain't your business," the first one said, brandishing that knife straight forward. Askia *would* have turned his head to look, but his first attempt to do so resulted in another rush of feeling like he was hanging off the edge of a boat about to capsize... and then he must have blacked out for another second or two, because next time he found himself able to open his eyes, he did so just enough to see that guy take a swing and then get intercepted, reciprocated, thrown to the ground. Another *bang*, this one loud enough to send yet another sharp wave of pain through the wild dog's still-pounding head, and he managed to see that one and the other attempt to scramble away.

Faint scent of whiskey, and gin...

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A voice he didn't recognize, low, gruff, tired: "...Yeah. Yeah, down off Maarloeve, by the bookstore. Three of 'em, a dragon, a mutt, and a jaguar. No, they ran off..."

Askia tried to swallow, just tasted blood again. Everything hurt. He didn't think he'd hit the ground THAT hard.

"...Yeah. I shot one, in the leg. Ran off towards Seventeenth. ...No, it wasn't me. Aah..."
Glimmer of eyes just catching the dim orange glow from a nearby streetlight. Had he not known before that this was a zebra standing over him, Askia would've never been able to figure it out.
"Painted dog. Hit his head pretty hard... yeah, I can wait. Yeah. That would be good. Thank you..."

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Askia knew for a (fairly reliable) fact that he didn't pass out again. It was just that he had quite a bit of trouble remembering what happened from that point, up until when he suddenly shocked back into his own head... and then wondered if he'd died or something, since he didn't recognize anything about where he was.

He still wore all his clothes, other than his jacket; he lay in a bed that seemed a bit too wide for just him, with a single sheet and then a surprisingly plush comforter pulled halfway up his body; this room, which certainly wasn't his own apartment, was dark, large, sparsely furnished; and then he didn't recognize the zebra sitting in the other corner, folded newspaper held in his lap with the lone beam from a desk lamp directed down-

Oh. Yes he did. That would also explain the faint scent of booze that hovered on these sheets.

"Ex-" Askia stumbled over his words, coughed, cleared his throat, swallowed. That faint taste of blood still lingered, and now that he'd sat up, his head had started throbbing again. "-cuse me - um... what - what happened?"

The zebra peered up at him over the newspaper, glasses that looked positively too small at the end of his snout sliding down just a little bit over black leather skin. "Are you actually awake this time?"

"What? I..." The wild dog looked down at his paws, and turned them over. His fingers clenched when he told them to, and unclenched just as easily. "I mean, I think so? Have I been awake before?"

"Mhmm. Hit your head pretty damn hard. Concussion, no doubt - you passed out for about eight seconds total in three different bursts, but for the rest of it, you were entirely out of it. I waited with you at the spot 'til the ambulance and cops arrived, gave them the info..."

"This doesn't look like a hospital."

"It ain't. I was more qualified than the paramedics who got there." The zebra pointed towards the other wall at one of the only decorations, a flag folded up in a neat triangle and set in a display, with small text he couldn't read from here. "Was military. Twelve years."

Askia let his paws fall back down to the blanket atop him, and felt the velvet plush beneath his fingerpads. It was that kind that stayed nice and smooth when brushed one direction, and put up a fight in the other. "Oh. Medic?"

"Surgeon, mostly. Not so great at diagnosing, better at fixing. I think what *you* need," and he pointed towards the dog with the rolled-up newspaper, "is to stay in bed for the next couple a' days. Stay away from bright lights and screens, and booze. No driving."

"God." He brought his paws to his head, and then immediately regretted the action with the splitting pain that pumped down along the base of his skull, *b-bump, b-bump*. "I'm gonna have to - call in... look, thank you, ah..."

The zebra licked his lips. Everything about him seemed tired: the way he sat, the way he held himself, the way he watched Askia, the way he spoke. "Zuli. You can call me Zuli."

"Thank you, Zuli, but, um - could you give me a ride home? I set out some meat to thaw, and..."

"I don't think I can do that. You're in no shape to move around."

Little bit of nervousness shot through his heart then. He'd heard all the statistics about the prevalence of mental illness and war veterans, and - honestly, it sounded kind of fishy to him that the police would let this random stranger take him home to watch him after an attempted mugging-

Askia's ears perked up, and he patted his pockets. "Stuff. Where's my stuff?"

"Nightstand." Zuli pointed again. "You gotcher phone, wallet, keys. I don't know if you had anything else on you. One of 'em got away, but he was bleedin', so... we'll be getting a call when they find 'im. I wouldn't worry about that."

Askia took a moment to inhale, hold that breath, exhale. Sure enough when he managed to turn his head through the blossoming pain, there they were, sitting in a haphazard pile next to a green-faced digital clock that blinked on and off, never reset after losing power. "Um."

Zuli unfolded his newspaper, and looked over it again. "Mm."

"Why did you-"

"You were in trouble." He licked his finger and thumb and turned the page, then turned to the next one after that. "Twelve years of my life devoted entirely to helping people out. That ain't a habit that dies easy. And, besides, you..."

Here he swallowed, tightened his grip on his newspaper, and adjusted his posture in his seat. It looked like just some kitchen chair from a grandma's house, complete with tattered cushion and chipping latex paint.

"Remind me of someone. Someone I was close to."

Maybe it was just the throbbing concussion and scrambled-eggs brain inside his head, but Askia couldn't stop himself - "From the military?"

Those eyes flicked up to him, this time catching the light of... something. Not the lamp beside him. Something else. "Yeah. From the military. Your name wouldn't happen to be... wouldn't happen to be Elijah, would it?"

Askia took another look around the room. Apart from the windows with their curtains drawn, the displayed flag, the chair and table by Zuli, there was a bookshelf that had a total of three things on it: a single book that had fallen over onto its side, a tattered grey wolf plush, and what looked for all the world like an old envelope.

"No. It's not. I'm Askia."

"No, of course it's not... Eli's long gone..." Zuli licked his lips again, and swallowed. "...Askia."

“Yes.” He paused. “Wait. Yes?”

Yet again the zebra folded his newspaper back up, and this time rested it atop the table beside him. He pointed towards the bed, next to Askia. “Do you mind if... if I...?”

The wild dog glanced down. “Huh?”

“Just. Sit. You really... remind me of...”

And he trailed off. What could he do? Couldn’t just tell this war veteran *no*, especially after all the trouble he’d gone through to help him out and save him. “Yeah. Alright...”

Quiet footsteps along the floor, nervous, slow... tired. The zebra really *did* seem like he stood head and shoulders above Askia himself, especially with the dog lying back while Zuli approached. Wide shoulders, solid stance, firm arms, strong back. The mattress complained beneath his added weight when he sat, and Askia could feel the compression inside the springs.

Silence for a moment, other than a rhythmic, steady drumming against the tall windows at the other side of the room. Maybe it’d finally started raining, as the sky had been hinting at throughout the entire past week. Certainly felt cold enough in here, though when Zuli reached back and lightly placed his hand on the wild dog’s leg, through the thick blankets...

“I’m... sorry if I come off a little... strong,” he said, keeping his voice low. It carried the same kind of roughness that Askia felt on sandy winds back home, grating at his skin through his fur and catching in his throat. “It’s just... Elijah and I...”

The hell was he supposed to say at a time like this? That hand on his leg, about halfway between his knee and his thigh, felt... well, it felt like the kind of touch of someone reaching out, *wanting* to be touched in return. “It’s okay. Um... take your time.”

“We were like brothers. You know? We were both stationed in that town, me taking care of the soldiers and any civilians caught in stray fire, him keeping guard at the... at the local school. Volunteered for the library, but got put at the school. Complained about it for the whole first week. Always had something new to say when we made it back to our camp at the end of each day...”

There was hurt in that voice, heavy, cold hurt. Askia could remember the pain from when he was first told his mother wouldn’t make it. “Things like...?”

“*“These dang kids, got so much energy, don’t even know what’s going on around ‘em’... ‘it’s like they don’t have any sense of self-preservation’... and then, one day, ‘there’s this wolf pup who seems to like me’... first time I saw him smile since deployment. Always a diamond, making a friend in a situation like that. Was a kid from the school he’d been guarding, this... little guy who spent all his time reading. Star of the class before and after the war came through. I kept an eye on him afterwards. Woulda gotten into contact with his parents to let ‘em know what joy he’d brought Eli for those few days, but... they’d been killed, too. Wish I...”* He coughed, then did so again. “Wish I coulda told Eli what that kid became. He’d be proud.”

“What happened?”

That was definitely rain, gradually rising in strength and heft against the windows. Askia had to perk his ears to hear the zebra go on after a moment. "One day out there, Eli just... didn't show up for duty. They thought maybe he'd got sick or somethin', but I knew that wasn't it. We bunked together, he and I, and he never came back. And... and a day or so later, when out patrolling the edge of the town, my... another friend found him, against a building..."

Oh God. Askia didn't like where this was going. He struggled to pull himself up, to push the covers back, to push through the pain and cross his legs in front of him.

"One shot, side of his jaw to his other ear. Bullet had gone clean through and lodged in the wall behind 'im. Finger still on the trigger of his own pistol. Had... had notes with 'im, too, one for... me, one for the kid. One for his mom and dad, one for his brother. Said he'd... done something, and regretted it. Said he was sorry. I just..."

It hurt in a thousand different places, but Askia managed to bring himself over to that side of his bed, rest his legs over the edge, and drape his arm over the larger zebra's shoulders, feeling the dense muscle beneath his short-haired hide. Feeling the not-so-distant shivers and shudders. Both of them were hurting, but in very different ways; he just thought that maybe he could offer a bit of solace in sharing that.

"-I'm - I'm sorry, Askia, dammit... you didn't need to hear any of that..."

"No." Smell of whiskey and gin, of... faint cologne, and heavier, bitter-acrid scent of pure, raw male. Zuli kept his hands clasped in his lap and his eyes directed down to the floor. "You needed to say it. How long has it been?"

"Five years."

That wasn't long enough for a wound like that to scar over.

"Five years of him being gone and yet when I passed you on the street earlier tonight, I could've sworn my soul that it was Elijah Carlson who walked by me. Hell, y'even smell like him... then when I saw those punks, I just thought - if I couldn't save him, maybe I could save you..."

Askia didn't really know what he was doing. He reached over with his other arm, wrapped it around the zebra's larger body, pressed the side of his muzzle against one of his shoulders, hugged tight - and inhaled that scent, bright and forward overtone of alcohol, heavier richer undertone of that same thing he'd smelled before. Zuli stiffened up at first, straightened up a little bit - the bed squeaked beneath his little jump - and then settled into the embrace, leaning his weight just slightly over against the wild dog.

Then something about him changed again, not only in the way he held himself but in - in the *scent* that wafted up off of him, too. Askia had long since gotten used to reading the way his friends smelled for little cues and changes in their emotions, and this zebra right here... one hand came up along the wild dog's side, fingers brushed against the hem of his shirt and lifted it up, trailed up his side towards his back, held him in return. That was something of comfort, of relief... and maybe just a little bit more.

Bunkmates, huh? That little something in the zebra's scent and under his touch led Askia to think that, maybe, they were more than that. The way he held the wild dog closer to him, the way his presence and touch seemed to quell whatever had been stirring in him before, how he... how he almost nuzzled down into the wild dog's fur between his ears, how Askia could feel him drawing in his scent, how he could feel those lips graze lightly against his head.

Then the other hand on his lower back, fingers touching, lifting up under his shirt, tickling into the fur at the base of his back, wrapping around towards his front-

"Wait." He lightly pushed at Zuli's chest, enough to catch his attention, enough to feel the taut muscles beneath the fabric of his shirt and hide of his skin. "Wait, wait. I don't... don't think..."

"Oh." And those hands immediately retracted, leaving a faint tingling cold where he'd had them just a second before. "Sorry. I'm - sorry, it's just... I miss him. And you-"

"Remind you of him." Askia nodded, and regretted it. Still had that headache. "I know."

Zuli dropped his hands into his lap and fiddled with his fingers, looking for all the world like a child caught doing something he shouldn't have. "No. You're right. It's wrong of me, to think of you as like a replacement for him..." Then after a moment, a weak smile from this zebra, the first that Askia had ever seen from him. Not only had his touch sent odd little electric shivers through the wild dog's lower body, but seeing that also made his heart speed up just a little bit. "I'm sorry. And I'm glad you're okay, Askia. If you want me to drive you home, I - I can."

Flutter of frazzled thoughts, sting of throbbing pain, warm burning ember of something else. Zuli's scent was... it was... "...No, that's okay, I think..."

And for the first time, Askia saw the color of those eyes, as the zebra looked him straight in his own. That faint smile remained on his face.

"I think I need to stay here a little longer. You know? I don't think I'm quite ready to do anything on my own yet." He brought his arms up again, and this time lightly touched his nose into the smooth, short hair along the side of the zebra's neck and shoulder, following the thin lightning-bolt ends of his stripes there. "Is... is that okay?"

That was it. The silent hints, the look in his eyes, the tone of his voice... the way Zuli had been gradually scooting himself closer to Askia beside him, everything about him soundlessly screaming *please touch me*. Big, grizzled war veteran, probably hadn't had any company other than a bottle in who knows how long, now with a smaller, slimmer wild dog nosing in at his neck and giving him all the warmth that he'd missed out on over the years... Askia closed his eyes, swallowed, breathed that scent, felt the way it smoothed out and relaxed.

And... and how it *sharpened*, in another sense. He knew it, and he knew that Zuli knew he knew. That much was clear in the way the zebra straightened up, how he wrapped his arm back around the other's shoulders, how he rested the side of his cheek against Askia's head... and how he spread his legs, how he reached down with his other paw to rest it over the wild dog's, how he pressed it a little more firmly into his own side in that embrace.

That was it for Askia. For a few moments he forgot about the pounding ache in the back of his head, about the way everything kind of spun and swam before his eyes if he turned his head too

quickly. He lifted his muzzle, looked up into those eyes, gave a little smile in return, licked his lips...

...and hardly had a chance to open his mouth to speak before he felt another pair of warm, soft lips against his own, light touch, gentle touch, sweet touch. Maybe they both needed some time to heal, and... it certainly felt like both were willing to do what they could to accomplish that. At first Askia felt a bit strange about the kiss - after all, he'd only just met this zebra some unknown number of hours ago - but the longer it went on, the deeper he slipped into it, it felt... better, felt more right. Zuli broke the kiss at one point, only to dive right back in... and then again... and again... and again, now with one of his hands on the wild dog's shoulder, now gently pushing him back down to the mattress, now getting up over him... he made sure to lower him down slowly, to avoid aggravating his headache. Askia appreciated that. His care could be seen in his eyes, and the expression on his face as he did so.

Once the back of his head touched and settled into the pillow beneath him, the dog's nose and whiskers - *twitched*, and wouldn't stop. There was that scent again, the richer, heavier, sharper masculine scent, flowing over him, just growing stronger as the zebra hovered above his chest and slid his hands down towards the waistband of his pants, and started to undo his belt. Askia kept his eyes in place there and watched the way he worked with the belt, old textured leather: he watched how Zuli just opened it instead of taking it off completely; he licked his lips as the zebra started at the button of his fly, and then zipper; and then he swallowed again when he got those out of the way, too, and... showed to the wild dog that he wore no underwear.

Zero to one hundred right damn quick, but he wasn't complaining. Plump, heavy sheath with full balls hanging beneath, partially spread across the middle bridge of his pants, everything showing the same kind of smooth, glistening leather texture as his belt. The zebra's blunted head had already been coaxed out of that sheath, wrinkled skin moving easily with his touch, and as he reached down and spread that skin with his forefinger and thumb, his length continued to slide smoothly out, and further strengthened that scent curling into and around Askia's nose. He just - wanted to lift up, to lean forward and touch his nose right against the smooth head, to purse his lips against the tubelike slit right at the end... but every time he tried, Zuli just lightly pushed him back down.

Even through the seat of the zebra's pants could Askia still feel the intense *heat* radiating out from his groin, sourcing in that heavy set of equipment that stirred beneath his slowly-stroking hand. Zuli reached in with his other and cupped his sack, rolled his hefty balls over his fingers, brought them out into the air in front of his opened fly, dropped them down... and it felt like someone had pressed a hot iron right against Askia's lower belly for a second. Well, or maybe like a bowl that had just come out of a hot dishwasher rather than an iron: hot, smooth, faintly damp.

Damp wasn't quite the right word. Neither was *slick*. Somewhere halfway to either of those: while Zuli had been getting himself into position, Askia had just remained lying back with his paws hovering above the zebra's thighs. Now, though, he reached down, took one of those by the wrist, brought it forward... and had the wild dog first cup his sack, and then the underside of the base of his cock, about halfway to its full size - and also about halfway along the dog's belly. Just one of his balls almost wholly filled his palm, and he could feel its weight, its heat as he softly squeezed and rubbed, and same for the zebra's shaft as well. That kind of... kind of soft firmness, for lack of a better word.

"Yeah," Zuli breathed, and gently bucked his hips forward. Askia got another whiff of that scent, richer, sharper, and throbbed in his own pants. "You're definitely different from how Eli was. He'd've already wrapped his muzzle around me by now... we never got a chance when we were stationed, but he made sure to let me know how much he wanted it..."

"Don't believe I don't want to. It's just that-" Here the wild dog squirmed, though kept both paws on Zuli's cock and slowly, slowly stroked him, coaxing him further out of his sheath. He loved watching the way that wrinkled leathery skin smoothed out and stretched forward as his length grew and stiffened. "-*someone's* been stopping me..."

Just in that little exchange, as well as the what felt like four pounds of meat hanging down against his upper belly and lower chest, he found himself feeling quite a bit more comfortable with this zebra's presence, and his closeness. And the change in Zuli's expression and mannerisms made him think that he felt similarly, to. Another few long seconds of the zebra sitting there, one hand under his balls while Askia still worked along his cock, and then - he leaned forward again, leaned down for another kiss, pressed his hot length up between their bellies, and lifted up a little bit so he could similarly work at the wild dog's pants.

God, it felt good to get those off. Zuli didn't bother fully undressing him: instead he just slid the dog's pants and boxers about halfway down towards his knees, and while there spent a good few moments getting a feel for him much the same way Askia had done for him. Fingers gently touching along his already-hard shaft, feeling the wet throbbing heat, sliding over the contours and veins; hands wrapping gently around the base of his sack and the bottom of his cock, edges of his fingers wrinkling his sheath just a little bit further back, squeezing around where his knot would form.

"Feels good..." Askia breathed, once more returning his paws to his chest to relax. Maybe it was just the nervousness of doing this with a stranger, but it seemed like every touch from the zebra still sent a sharp little shiver through his body. "Mmnh..."

But, then, Zuli did something that caught him off-guard, and kind of reminded him of his headache: those densely-muscled arms lifted up under his legs, hands wrapped around his thighs, and settled his legs over the zebra's shoulders with his lowered pants behind his head. The two made eye contact for a second there, Zuli looking up past Askia's sack and cock... and then the dog's head rolled back with a low, shuddering sigh rolling out between his parted lips.

Zuli kissed Askia's tailhole just as gently and sweetly as he had his mouth, but now he slid his tongue in as well, first dragging up over the puckered flesh and then carefully pressing in. Askia could feel him move his jaw, tighten his lips, dig in a little deeper - and he couldn't help but squeeze back around that tongue as it sank into him, stretching him just a little bit, leaving warm, slick-sticky saliva along his tailhole. Again and again he lapped at him, turning from that prodding into longer, sweeter licks up over his rear, from the base of his tail to the underside of his sack.

Here he alternated for a while, going from swirling the tip of his tongue around the rim of Askia's tailhole and again sliding it a little deeper into him, now working his jaw as well as pushing his tongue forward itself. The wild dog tightened his legs around Zuli's shoulders and pulled his head closer, loving the feeling of his hot, humid breath against the underside of his sack and in his pubic fur, and how he could feel a thin drip of saliva slowly rolling down towards the base of his tail - soon to be licked right back up - and especially when one of the zebra's hands came

around to wrap around his cock again and squeeze and stroke him, in rhythm with how he worked his tongue into his rump.

Sounds of hot breath, wet slurps of his tongue and lips, occasional swallowing, his own panting and gasping... and then the feeling of lips pursed against his tailhole, holding there in another wet kiss, then followed by a second and a third. With that Zuli started to lower Askia back down, legs still around his body and pants back behind him... and lifted himself up onto his knees, large cock lining up with the wild dog's tailhole. For a moment he panicked: if he'd thought smacking his head against the sidewalk had hurt...

"Let me know if I go too fast," the stallion breathed. His saliva had soaked into the short hair around his mouth. "I don't want to hurt you."

...then, well, it seemed like Askia wouldn't be feeling any more of that. There was that familiar intense, stretching pressure against his tailhole, the powerful heat that he'd felt against his belly and chest and in his paws a few moments ago; there was the sensation of getting stretched and filled, that pressure sinking up into him, sliding slowly deeper; there was the discomfort, the distant twinging, the too-fullness. Zuli was watching his muzzle, though, and stopped each time he squirmed or his face scrunched up. Such an odd feeling, when his body and tailhole tried to clench but found it could not do so, with the girth already settled up inside of him - and the longer it went on, the more he got used to it.

That wasn't *fully* right, "getting used to it". Still every little movement from either of them sent another sweet shiver through the dog's body, that firm girth remaining stiff under his tail while he moved and clenched around it. Zuli had kept one hand down between them, keeping himself at the right angle to continue sinking slowly into the smaller canine beneath him, while he had his other braced against the bed beside Askia's head. The weight from his body pressing down into the mattress, making him tilt that way just a little bit; the heavy burgeoning force from this body above him, Zuli probably having twice the mass that Askia did just in muscle alone; the heat, the desire, the need thrumming through the equine, throbbing inside the dog's rear, making him gasp and squirm again and again.

When he *could* find the ability to open his eyes through the growing, stirring pleasure, Askia looked up - to see that stallion above him, hips pumping steadily deeper into his rump, broad shoulders, thick body blocking out what dim light came in from the windows across the room. He swallowed, and tasted his own slick exertion as well as the lingering taste of zebra on his lips, the other male's saliva still clinging to his lower lip from that kiss they shared.

Muscle, power, strength, size, all bearing down on him from above, steadily filling him further, stretching his rump, pretty much forcing him to swallow and squirm and let his breaths out as low, shuddering moans; Askia's eyes fluttered shut again, and no sooner had he done this did he suddenly taste himself on his lips, Zuli's snout pressed to his muzzle in another, deeper kiss. Deep like the one he'd slid under his tail, tongue digging, searching, wrestling against his own, all the while he continued to monitor his pace under his tail. Zuli could tell when he'd started to push the smaller canine too far from his noises and his clenching, and stayed right at that edge... which meant that every time he thrust in, Askia could feel the slightly-wider bulge of his medial ring touch and tease at his own already-stretched tailhole, but go no further than that.

Blunted head probably as wide around as his own wrist steadily pounded deep into him, every time earning another all-over clench from his body and a throb from his cock, a thick puddle of

pre drooled down into his belly button and the fur of his lower stomach from the tip of his own cock. At one point Zuli broke away from the kiss and pushed his chin down against the top of Askia's head, heavy breaths washing out over the dog's big ears, and he looked down to see those hips sliding up between his thighs in that slow, steady rhythm, careful and gentle though still with notable force and desire beneath the movements...

...and then at first he thought maybe it was just his head still a little messed up from hitting the ground, but when he focused his eyes in the dark and really looked... that was definitely his lower belly, right above the base of his cock, bulging slightly out each time the zebra's hips slid forward against his rump at the peak of his thrusts. That familiar feeling of getting filled to the brim accompanied that, just the same as what made him clench and throb; the wild dog reached down and placed one paw right at that spot and *felt* the bulging, the firm heat of Zuli's cock pressing out on him from inside. If he pushed down on that bulge, he could also feel the zebra sink just a little bit deeper into him.

Then - flat teeth on his neck, nipping at the skin beneath his fur, causing his body to react by turning his head the other direction. Now that he always remained a good four inches inside of the dog even at the end of his tugs out, Zuli no longer had to keep a hand on his cock, and instead squeezed and rubbed as Askia's cock with that one, fingers wrapped firm yet gentle, thumb sliding over the slickness of his leaking pre. The wild dog let his mouth hang open and lurched forward and back with those thrusts, now freely squeezing down on the zebra's girth and releasing, clenching and releasing in rhythm. The smells that swirled around his head sharpened his feeling of everything else, too: his own musk and arousal, Zuli's heavier, richer aroma of muscle and exertion, the cooler, flatter smell of natural equine musk, the gentle twinge of himself still on those lips, on that breath repeatedly washing out over his muzzle and through his whiskers after the zebra released his neck - and now on his lips as they met again for a kiss.

This time it was Askia who tried to pull away, simple because he couldn't get as full of a breath as he felt he needed with stallion lips tight on his own - but Zuli held him in place, firm arm wrapped around his head and tongue slipping deeper across his own, until... sharp inhalation through flared nostrils, needy shivering exhalation, heavier, faster buck into the smaller wild dog, and that feeling of growing pressure in his lower belly returned. This time, though, it didn't stop: it wasn't something he could easily track, but rather just *felt* that stirring, growing heat pressing out on him from inside, widening further with powerful throbs from the stallion's cock buried at least halfway under his tail, blunted head flaring out and locking that load inside of him.

Felt like it went on for a while, too, and that was beneath Askia getting pushed to his own peak, too. A combination of the kiss, the hand on his length and teasing behind his steadily-swelling knot, and the pressure that just continued to build inside of him, until - he unloaded his own cum out across his belly and chest, spurt, spurt, spurt, nowhere near as thick or as much as what the zebra still continued to drain into him.

Pulse, pulse, slowing in pace, Zuli's breathing relaxing and becoming steadier... finally the zebra pulled away, drew his wide tongue over his own lips, swallowed the smaller dog's saliva, and straightened up. Askia felt like he'd just drank a gallon and a half of water, or rather warm honey or something else similarly thick: his stomach definitely looked wider and rounder than when he'd first gotten pinned down to this mattress, and now any movement caused the load inside of him to roll around just a little bit, and press on him from the inside in all the right ways. Zuli looked him in the eye, gave another tired smile, started to slide steadily back... had to scoot backwards to pull his length the rest of the way out... and Askia gasped as his fully-flared head

popped free of his tailhole, emptying with it probably a cup and a half of his seed across the base of the wild dog's tail and the sheets beneath him before he squeezed himself back up.

There was that feeling again, trying to clench and feeling like he was unable to. Every part of him was tired and aching, though this time... this time, he could enjoy it. Felt good to get lungful after lungful of cool, sweet air, rain now steadily drumming against the windows; felt good to have this thick warmth stirring inside his belly and under his tail, accompanied by the lingering tingles of his own afterglow; felt good to watch Zuli, previously-stoic war surgeon who hardly said more than a word, not someone he definitely knew and definitely liked, lick his lips once more and then lower himself back down - and curl his tongue up along the dog's stretched tailhole, lapping up his own mess that had leaked out onto the bed. This time he encountered no resistance when he slid his tongue into that tailhole, and when he came up, a string of thick white cum linked his lips to the wild dog's rim.

Somewhere along the way, Askia's pants and underwear had been forced off his legs, and now lay somewhere... on the bed or on the floor, he couldn't tell. Right now he just wanted to lie back and catch his breath, and it looked like Zuli was perfectly content to let him do this: the zebra stood up, wobbled a little, rested a hand on the edge of the bed for balance, and watched Askia on his bed, also breathing heavily. He tugged his own pants back up his legs but kept his slightly-less-full sack and hanging cock out, slowly retracting into his sheath and squeezing out the last of his load into a thick puddle on the floor.

"Yeah," he said, a bit breathlessly. Where before his mouth had always had a noticeable downward tilt to it, now instead it looked like he couldn't keep himself from faintly smiling. "You're definitely not Eli."

Askia mirrored that amusement. "Sorry to disappoint."

"Disappoint? No, no... I'm glad that you're *you*. I think what I needed was an Askia."

Silence between them for a moment, other than the rhythm of the rain and the faint sounds of their still-labored breathing. Askia didn't have to force himself: the smile came on its own.

"Oh - um..." Zuli started idly doing his fly back up. "Will you be staying for dinner? I mean, I was just gonna order Chinese, but..."

"-Actually, I might've mentioned, I set out some meat to thaw at my place..."

That upward hint at his lips faded. "Oh."

"...and you're welcome to stay for that, if you'd like..."

And, just like that, it returned. Askia might've lost a little bit of blood, his flash drive (looking at the pile of things Zuli had saved for him on the nightstand), and the ability to walk straight for the rest of the night, but other than a concussion it really felt like he'd gotten something pretty damn good out of this night. The zebra held a paw out to him.

"I - have a working shower, if you'd like to get cleaned up... you'll probably need an extra pair of hands with how your head is..."

Yeah. He'd definitely gotten something good.