

There was a knock on the door, but Blacksad didn't notice. He was deep in a case file and was *this* close to solving the case. There was another knock on the door, but still Blacksad didn't notice. The door slowly opened, and Smirnov stepped into the office. The German Shepard looked exhausted and being the chief of the police certainly didn't help. He stood there for a moment, not interfering with Blacksad and just watching the toned cat at work. After a while Blacksad's face suddenly lit up and a soft, "Aha!" passed through his lips.

"Finally cracked the case?" asked Smirnov with his husky voice.

"Gah!" cried Blacksad, but he was only startled for a moment before regaining his composure.

"You should learn to knock you know."

"I tried, but you never answer." Smirnov moved closer and sat on the corner of Blacksad's desk.

"How's that case been going?" he asked, pointing at the folder marked with the name of a client.

"You've been at it for a while now."

"Oh, just the usual," replied Blacksad with a grin. "Just found out a person doesn't exist over here, got shot at a few times over there, and who can forget every time I get beat up for snooping around?"

"Never change, Blacksad," chuckled Smirnov.

"And how are things on your end, Smirnov? The kids doing well?"

"You know how they are, always getting into trouble and never really learning their lesson. Turns out your dad being Chief of police is a pretty good excuse to get in a lot of trouble! The missus on the other hand? She's been doing a little rough lately, more so than she usually does with the kids. She's recently been let go from her job and has been struggling to get a new one. We're lucky enough that I can pay the bills, but she lived to work and just feels so aimless right now..."

"That's terrible to hear! I'll keep an eye out for any job openings, but I can't promise anything."

"Thank you so much. Speaking of the missus, why haven't you got one yet, Blacksad? I constantly see you with some girl or another, but you've never settled down. You're gonna start pushing 40 soon enough..."

"Don't say that!" said Blacksad with mock horror. "Besides, I still feel like I'm living my twenties even if my body disagrees."

"Wish I could say the same, haha!"

"But really it's never me who starts the relationships with the women. Sure, it might be fun to mess around along with them for a while, but I've never found anything concrete. Even the most serious relationships I've had just lost their lustre after a while. I don't know whether it's me or the woman, but it just never works out."

They stayed silent for a while, Blacksad batting at his array of pens and Smirnov staring aimlessly at a cork board full of past cases. "Can I be honest for a moment with you, Smirnov?" asked Blacksad.

"Of course," replied Smirnov standing up from the desk to properly face Blacksad.

"I always felt that something was missing when I was with a woman. Nothing really clicked for me, not even in the bedroom. But when I'm with you, I feel something special. Maybe it's just because we've been friends for so long, but I've always felt that you complete me in some way."

Smirnov went quiet for a moment, just staring at his friend. "I-if I said something wrong I didn't..."

Smirnov held up his hand, silently asking for Blacksad not to say anything. "I thought I was the only one," he said softly. "I love my wife, I really do, but I've also felt as if there was something missing for me. I've tried suppressing it for the longest time but whenever I see you, I just can't help myself and wonder..."

Blacksad stood up and approached Smirnov. The two friends shared between them a rare smile of

joy, finally having let go of a weight which had held them down for too long. They embraced, finally feeling as if they have become one in more than just friendship.

While they held each other, Blacksad whispered in Smirnov's ear. "What will your wife think about this?"

"She doesn't have to know," replied Smirnov. He pulled Blacksad away from him and stared deep into Blacksad's eyes. "The only person that has to know how much I love you, is me." Without hesitation he pulled Blacksad back in for a kiss. As they held their embrace, Blacksad reached for Smirnov's jacket to unbutton it. Smirnov replied by picking him up and laying him down on the desk, pushing everything on it to the side. "Let me take care of this, and you just worry about looking cute," he said, swiftly unbuttoning both his jacket and shirt before tossing them aside.

Blacksad was struck with awe being faced with a beauty he had only imagined up until then. Smirnov noticed this and remarked, "Do you like what you see?", turning a little to show off more of his body. Blacksad merely nodded and reached up to pull him back in for another kiss. When their lips met, he ran his hands down Smirnov's chest, feeling every crevasse of the German Shepard. Smirnov returned his compliment with unbuckling Blacksad's belt with a single hand, slowly removing the cat's pants.

Suddenly the phone rang with its shrieking tone. Both men froze, uncertain what to do. Besides for the ringing, all that could be heard was their heavy panting. "Don't worry about that," huffed Blacksad. "I can always call them back later." But Smirnov wasn't paying attention to the handsome cat underneath him anymore. He was looking at the clock on the wall. "Damn, she's gonna kill me," he muttered before swiftly getting up and gathering his clothes. "Hey," called Blacksad, still laying on the desk. "We should do this again some time, without any distractions."

Smirnov stopped buttoning up his shirt and turned to Blacksad. "Let's go on a fishing trip this weekend," he said with a wink. "Just you and me."

Blacksad smiled and gave a nod. "Get dressed then, I have to take this call." Smirnov worked in silence as Blacksad picked up the phone. He listened to Blacksad's deep voice and appreciated the slight rasp to it. When he was finally dressed, he silently made his way to the door. He faced Blacksad to wave goodbye, but the private detective was deep in a passive-aggressive argument and didn't even notice Smirnov was leaving.

Smirnov shook his head and gave a chuckle. "You're gonna work yourself to death, Blacksad," he muttered as he finally left the office.