

Chapter 10 - Cups of tea

Blake just finished another call with a client. Wendy Brown, to be specific. During the week, the two were suddenly involved in a Tweeter trash-talking feud, which oddly enough, saw Wendy as the target this time. With a sigh, the reindeer put his phone down and made his way to the kitchen to grab a snack.

He looked over to his book collection, making his way there with a granola bar in his hand, chewing and scanning the shelf for something to read. Blake began to realize that he needed something new to read. The reindeer took a moment to think. The library is where he should go. He hasn't seen the inside of an American library before. It would be a good idea to check one out today. It's Saturday and there is plenty of time left in the day. The reindeer went up the stairs to his son's room and knocked at his door.

"Yes?" Erik answered from behind the door, with music playing from his headphones.

"I'm going to the library now. I'm just going there for a little bit." Blake answered truthfully from behind the door.

"Ok, see you later." the younger reindeer replied, putting his headphones back on and proceeding with his studies.

"See you." the older one replied and went back down the stairs, grabbing his coat and putting on his shoes. Stepping out the back door, he made his way towards his car.

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The Cosmer Library is only a 15 minute drive from Blake's home. It's not as big as other libraries around downtown Minneapolis, but it does have a respectable book collection for its community. The reindeer pulled his vehicle up into the parking lot and made his way to the front door. It was a little chilly this time around, as it was the beginning of November and the weather was getting colder as time passed. Snowflakes were also falling gently onto the surface.

Blake opened the door to the bricked building and entered. The castle-like structure of it made it stand out from anything in the community, as well as the vintage look of it inside. Looking around briefly, he adjusted the collar of his trench coat and walked up to the sheep librarian at the desk.

"Hello, how may I help you today?" she asked very friendly as the tall reindeer stood in front of the desk.

"Hello there, I was wondering if I could sign up for a library card?" he asked towards the sheep who immediately nodded her head. "Yes, absolutely." she pulled out a clipboard with an application form on it. "Just fill this out and I'll get your card printed right away."

"Thank you." Blake nodded and grabbed the clipboard and filled the application out. Full name, Home address, phone number, all that was needed was filled out within a few minutes. The sheep soon

returned with a new library card for Mr. Toivonen. She looked over the application briefly before stamping it. "Alright, that should do it. Feel free to have a look around."

"Gladly. Thanks again." Blake nodded and put his new card into his pocket. He made his way down the hall, scanning the signs on each shelf naming the genre of books available in that aisle.

The library itself wasn't all too busy for a weekend afternoon as only a few furs walked around in the corridors. The general shape of the inside reminded Blake of another library back in Oulu, as many libraries in Europe were located in old buildings, with some of them seeing refurbishment. Cosmer Library had some of the European traits, but it still felt very much like an American library.

The reindeer turned into the non-fiction aisle and began to scan the shelves. His ear twitched shortly after, as he heard a familiar voice come from nearby. It sounded pleasant, but also animated and bright, slipping into different accents and tones. It sounded like the person was telling a story. Blake's curiosity got the best of him and decided to investigate a little. He turned back out of the aisle and moved a couple over towards the children's corner, ears perking forward as his hunch was confirmed.

Koray Demir, Erik's literature professor, was surrounded by a group of young preschool-aged cubs, holding a big, colourful book. Blake watched on as Koray read every single page and showed the coloured images to the kids around him, using different voices for each character and watching the cubs react to his animated reading style. As the reindeer watched from afar, he remembered when Erik was as young as the pre-schoolers. Him and Mila used to share the duties of reading bedtime stories to Erik. Their son wouldn't react much and towards the end, he always fell asleep. It's a good memory Erik's parents share at least. They can be proud together of their efforts to raise a good fur.

The cross fox finished the book in due time and smiled as he closed it. "Alright, children, that's it for today. You've been a delightful audience! I hope you all had as much fun as I did." he smiled to the kids who responded in variety. "Yes, Mr. Demir!" and "It was fun!" were just a few things that the kids said. Koray grinned and put the book aside. "Okay, well, I'll look forward to you all coming back for more colourful stories! See you all next week!"

The children got up and returned to the parents who were nearby, watching and reading on their own as their cubs were busy. The corner of the library slowly cleared as Koray waved towards the children and watching them wave back one by one. Then he caught a glimpse of the grey reindeer standing at a distance. A jolt of surprise made him give a small yelp as he recognized the man.

"Oh...Mr. Toivonen, what a surprise!" the cross fox chuckled as he cleared up his space in the kids' corner. Blake chuckled and slowly moved around the chairs to approach.

"I'm surprised to see you here, too." Blake began to talk, watching Koray clean up a bit. "Do you read to the kids often?"

"Yes, I do. Every weekend," Koray nodded. "As you could probably see, I have a lot of fun with it! I love to introduce children to the magic of literature!"

"Oh, I could tell. You were having quite the blast with those children." Blake chuckled.

The cross fox could only smile as he cleaned up a bit more. He then turned to the reindeer once more. "This may seem sudden but...how would you like to grab a coffee? Meet me at the cafe across the street in 15?"

Blake scratched his chin then nodded. "Sounds good. I'll see you then."

"See you then." Koray smiled and returned to cleaning up the children's corner, and Blake went on to continue his search for a book.

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The grey reindeer was seated near the door of the cafe across the library and scanned his surroundings. It was a more sophisticated, vintage-looking cafe and it certainly had its charm. In some ways, it reminded Blake of some of the cafes he visited in Rome, while he was playing there.

A familiar-looking cross fox entered the cafe and began to remove his coat and satchel as he spotted Blake at a small table within reach. Draping said coat and bag over the empty chair, Koray then sat down at the table.

"Rather pleasant surprise to see you, Blake. I rarely ever run into parents in my day to day, but I'm rather glad you showed up. I've been meaning to ask how Erik's been doing with his work at home." Koray mentioned, smiling as the waitress came over; he ordered a cup of tea as well as a pastry to nibble on as they spoke. Blake just ordered himself a cappuccino.

"He's been doing fine. I have been trying to get him to speak a little more English whenever he can. I hope it's been reflected in his work." Blake stated, always concerned for his son's ability to do well in university, and glad to see that at least one of his professors was equally concerned.

"He's certainly been doing better. Even his tutor says so. He may turn into one of my best students given time." Koray stated with a wide smile; he'd always had hope for Erik, and his efforts to help the young reindeer do well seemed to be paying off. And that was a good feeling for him. Though he had to admit, getting to see Erik's father was a nice bonus to all of this.

Their drinks arrived, and Koray added some honey and milk to his tea, stirring it gently before taking a delicate sip from the dainty tea cup while Blake sipped from his cappuccino, pleased with the flavour of it. The little cafe seemed to have delicious coffee; very much like the coffee he'd enjoyed in Rome all those years ago.

Conversation turned away from Erik and turned towards books and literature, Koray eager to know what sort of books Blake may've taken out from the library, though he made sure his own stayed hidden in his satchel.

Nobody needed to know that the fantastic young literature professor indulged in harlequin romance novels, novels widely considered to be the bottom of the barrel by most literati. But they were Koray's guilty pleasure. Nobody else had to know that though. Not even Blake.

So Koray turned the topic towards Blake's interests.

"So what do you like to read?" the cross fox asked the reindeer curiously, ears perked. Blake put his cup down, clearing his throat.

"Well, uhm, I have read a lot of adventure and some science fiction novels." Blake noted, Koray nodding as he paid attention. "That's usually my preference, but I also go for some non-fiction once in a while and read on things like historic events and all that."

"Ah, fascinating." the cross fox nodded, adjusting his glasses. "The non-fiction field can be a bit tricky, as they have to be really accurate to what they are trying to describe. I personally have read a few and I can say that some authors are not working hard enough to get the facts straight."

"Is that so?" Blake looked towards Koray as they both took a drink.

"Indeed." Koray licked his chops before carrying on. "It's a shame really. You have to have all your resources in place and all that fancy stuff, if you want a legitimately good non-fiction book."

"Oh absolutely, I agree. Otherwise it's going to be written off in no time." Blake added on. The two went on to continue the discussion, eventually shifting focus on different genres. The reindeer tried to keep up as best as he could to the bookworm of a fox, who unloaded his passion about literature bit by bit. Blake shifted in his seat and drank his beverage, just listening.

Koray adjusted his attire after he finished, look back to the reindeer. "So what have you been up to with your job?" Blake perked his ears as he heard that. It was a relief to him that he could talk about his job now.

"Quite a lot actually," Blake started off. "I had a call with one of my clients today about something that concerned her with another player on Tweeter. You see, social media is a funny thing. It's so useful in many ways and it gets messages across, but at the same time, you're very prone to trash-talking and misguided people. It's a tricky place to be in."

Koray simply nodded. "I have personally never bothered with social media. I mean, I don't have a reason to go on there. I don't have the time or a purpose to go on there. Well, I do have a Snoutbook, but that's only for keeping in touch with some of my family." the cross fox noted. The reindeer nodded.

The clock had struck 5 PM. Somehow, the two had ended up talking for a good 90 minutes over literature and social media, in a very passionate discussion. Both the canine and cervine looked to the clock, realizing just how much time had passed.

"Oh goodness, I better get back home. I have to go make dinner." Blake got off his chair to grab his jacket. Koray followed suit.

"But, uhm, yeah, do you think we can do this again?" the cross fox smiled as he buttoned up his jacket, a pleased grin across his muzzle. The reindeer saw the smile and gave a low chuckle.

"I'm sure we can. I just have to come to the library more often." Blake chuckled.

"Or we can just exchange phone numbers." Koray noted as he held out his cell phone. Blake perked his ears and nodded, and so the two exchanged their respective contact info. As the reindeer saved the cross fox's number, he slipped his phone back in his jacket pocket.

"Ok, well, we will keep in touch." Blake said as the two walked out of the cafe. The two exchanged goodbyes as Blake went across the street to get to his car and Koray watched the reindeer wave back to him as he did.

A happy sigh escaped the cross fox. "What a lovely gentlerfur," Koray said to himself as he began his walk home.