

Changing the Rules

By: Rufus Quintin

For: Vickfox

For the first time that semester it hurt to be outside. The post-mid-term-cold-snap left Victor wishing for his heavy jacket, another thing to call home about. He found himself rubbing his paws for warmth, venting visible exhalation beyond the tip of his muzzle, silently enduring the wait for the fox named Miles. He stood in the spot they met at on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays by the Tin Man, the bronze representation of some founder or former president whose significance couldn't hold a place in his memory. He watched the trees liberate themselves of their leaves and counted the number of days left in the semester and added them to the number of days in the next. "Don't despair," he thought, "the worst is yet to come."

He scanned the commons, expecting to see the matt orange coat that habitually enshrouded Miles. An inner clock told him they were getting late. His inner voice suggested he cut back on the games and hit the bed at an hour that wouldn't result in an attitude of sleep deprived misanthropy. He realized the absurdity in his own advice, finding a smile stretch across his lips that would have looked peculiar to the passersby, had anyone noticed. Furthermore, his gaming was a connection and what other connections did he have?

Miles finally turned the corner down the path, his jacket imitating the color of fallen leaves. He walked with a measured degree of confidence irreverent to the growing risk of tardiness. His muzzle turned into the wind, loose clothing fluttered around his slender frame. The fox seemed to have connections everywhere. Victor considered that cool, for lack of a better term, though it could sometimes get irritating for reasons he found hard to place. They could seldom walk across campus without getting pulled into a conversation with strangers or peripheral friends, representatives of every social clique. Perhaps that explained his lateness. Victor felt sure of it, rejecting a nagging sensation of discomfort classifiable as envy.

He found himself more mutable as of late, perhaps under Miles' influence, with whom he forged a friendship last year before the campus shed its snow. They hit it off discussing strategies for overcoming the end boss in Final Fantasy, and the correct sequence with which to imbibe potions during the hunter epic weapon quest in Warcraft, during the ridiculously easy Photoshop class that served as an entry requirement to their mutual major; Game Design. Victor noticed the change in himself sometime at the beginning of the semester, finding himself immediately absorbed into campus life, a great contrast to his freshmen year. Some of those

connections rubbed off on him, or perhaps the skill to establish them did. Either way his Facebook page had a longer friends list, and whatever that meant, it meant something he could quantify.

Victor swung into lockstep with Miles. They had grown past the point of formal greetings, preferring instead the wordless nods and the comfort that came with forgone rituals of acquaintance. They waded in unison through the tides of students, migrating as if choreographed during the brief intermezzo between morning classes. Victor felt like commenting on the weather, but did not, finding the perpetual cloud cover less than noteworthy.

"Zombies," said Miles, his eyes affixed and unmoving at some indiscernible point further down the path.

"Zombies?"

"Zombies," he reiterated.

"What about zombies?" Victor asked.

"We need a game about zombies," he said, his muzzle still parallel to the path beneath his feet.

Victor listed close to a dozen titles from memory featuring zombies in one permutation or another.

"No, no, no," he said, turning to Victor, who caught a glimpse inside the cowl of Miles' orange hoodie, seeing the fox's eyebrows raised in a startling performance of epiphany, as if he were about to utter some cosmic truth. "In those games you *kill* zombies, we need a game where we *are* zombies. No one has invented a game where you are a zombie."

Victor scanned his memory for examples, but found none. "Why would you want to be a Zombie?"

"Remember Halloween at Kappa house?"

"Yea."

"What were you and I?"

"Zombies."

"How many others did you see?"

"Probably like eight or nine..."

"How many where there."

"Like... twenty-four?"

"There you have it, people want to be zombies."

Victor shrugged.

"Dude," Miles said, jabbing Victor in the flank. "We can make this."

"So do we eat each other's brains, or what kind of havoc are we supposed to wreak," asked Victor, used to the occasional breach of personal space.

"All sorts..." Miles suggested. "Plus zombies eat the brains of the living, only rarely are they known to eat each other's brains. We need to factor it in somehow."

Victor elicited a genuinely intrigued murmur, letting his mind calculate the potential.

"This weekend..." continued Miles, almost out of breath, "we brainstorm."

"Brain... storm... eh? Shall I eat yours?"

"I'll give you something to feast on?"

"Good, you're buying the pizza then."

"Sounds like a plan."

"Do you have your old X-box?"

"Yea, haven't unpacked it though."

"Bring it. And Apocalypse II, we need to do research."

"You got it."

They approached the hexagonal computer science building, standing tall in all of its brutalism. It's windowless concreteness ready to overbear on any whimsy they may have felt. Victor opened the tall steel-framed double doors, resembling those of a gargantuan telephone booth, entering behind the other fox. As natural light transitioned into fluorescence Victor read the emblem of an oversized political action pin, bearing the slogan of a Gay Rights campaign, buttoned on the fox's stuffed orange backpack.

"What's that," asked Victor in a half jog, regaining his pace beside Miles.

The fox hummed, eliciting clarification. He pulled his hood off his head, revealing two ears perked in Victor's direction.

"The pin," said Victor, repeating the same action, revealing auburn ears standing tall through the holes of a black wool knit cap.

"Prop 30. You voted right?"

"Absentee, back home. That the marriage amendment?"

"Yea, Could have used you here."

"Sorry."

"We would've lost anyway."

"Are you?"

"Me? Oh no, no. I'm wearing this for my R.A. More out of support, even though the elections over."

"Ahh."

Miles didn't respond. His pace picked up as if it suddenly dawned on him that they were already late.

"Can you get me one," Victor asked, trying to keep up.

"Why? The election is over?"

"For support. I know someone too."

"I'll see," said Miles in a noncommittal tone of voice, distancing himself a few footfalls ahead of Victor.

Victor struggled to keep up and trailed the rest of the way through the corridors and unkind light. He followed Miles into their classroom in which the professor had already begun to speak. They sat in their usual spaces, a little more hunched over than usual, trying not to be noticed.

"I can't believe you talked me into this," said Victor traipsing a few steps behind Miles, his one-size-two-large blue hoody drawn up over his ears, occluding all but the very tip of his vulpine muzzle. The soles of his shoes dragged against the ground, pulverizing the moist parchment of

leaves with each languid step. The not at all unpleasant aroma of late autumnal decomposition accentuated by the tincture of fireplace smoke had a way of implanting within him the wish to be someplace warm, home. Someplace where he could clad himself in cotton and corduroy and lose himself in the unobstructed hours of a fresh weekend. Instead he found himself outdoors en route to a place only vaguely described, entrusting himself to the fox.

"Relax," Miles said, not looking back, "there is always next weekend."

"I know," said Victor, not at all satisfied by the other fox's rationale. He felt more than a little out of place and expected the feeling to mount. "Will I even know anyone there?"

"Beth is coming, and so are Allen and Carl."

"Who are they?"

"Beth is my R.A., and Allen and Carl are some dudes she knows."

"I've never even met them before."

"Beth is cool. All the people who hang out with her seem alright. You'll fit in. You need to make friends with her anyway, especially if we want to room together next year."

Victor mumbled in the affirmative.

Miles slowed, matching Victor's pace. He asked, "Why so resistant to going out?"

"Not my scene," Victor said, casting a sideways glance out of his hood.

"You don't even know where we are going?"

"Where are we going?"

"Lambda Delta Lambda"

"The Frarority?" Victor asked.

"The what?"

"It's a Fraternity or Sorority that's gone co-ed."

"I suppose you can call it that. Don't know much about them."

"What kind of a party is this?"

"Do you need a reason for a party?"

"Only when I drag my tail clear across campus on a Friday night."

"Why you even coming then?"

Victor shrugged.

"You can always turn around."

"Naa. I'll come with you."

"Suit yourself, just try and have a good time... and make friends!" Miles nudged Victor, sending the fox wobbling off the sidewalk and onto the asphalt that reflected streetlight in the sheen of recent rain.

"Fucker," Victor said, more ashamed to be caught off guard again than anything else.

Miles chuckled.

Lambda House stood at the end of Frat Row, or at least their college's equivalent thereof. Some previous administrator, perhaps the Tin Man, had a thing against Fraternities and moralized the more bacchanalian examples out of existence. The peeling paint, the year round Christmas lights, and the ornamentation of countless ownerless solo-cups on every level surface gave further clues to the building's purpose. Music could be heard emanating from it halfway down the block.

The steps creaked underfoot. A small flock of smokers murmured on the veranda avoiding the damp and moldy secondhand furniture in the last phase of use. Victor pulled his hood back off his head, trying to maintain some semblance of Jedi-like composure. The warmth inside would have been welcome, had it not been characterized by the smell of dampness, patchouli, and vague cannabinoid resins which the former could not quite disguise. He scanned the crowd, finding it thankfully not too dense, even recognizing the profiles of Facebook contacts.

He followed Miles into the through the corridors, over impossibly stained carpets and past furniture beyond the point of repair. The fox led him to the kitchen, to a tall and slender feline with fur of pure black and long length he introduced as Beth. She further introduced two men standing with her; a raccoon Victor reckoned near his age, and a stag that had to be past typical college demographic. They spoke their names as they shook paws, Carl and Allen respectively. No sooner had he let go that he found a cold beer in his paw. A cheap brand he wouldn't have liked, had he liked beer, but he couldn't turn it down, deciding to nurse it toward a much needed buzz.

"Hey now," the feline said, accusing the raccoon responsible for distributing the beverage, "facilitating underage alcoholism I see."

"I'm not facilitating, I'm encouraging," the raccoon said.

"Shush you," she said, "I'd really like to go to a party without having to play den mother. And you two," she continued, turning to Miles and himself, "one," she said, holding a single finger up in Miles' face, "and if you do something stupid, I disown you. And you too, whoever you are."

Victor nodded.

Miles chuckled softly, receiving a wink from the raccoon.

Beth never seemed to stop speaking. She spoke at Miles, Allen and Carl, and occasionally himself. His eyes widened when he became her addressee, often shrugging, nodding, or shaking his head as context dictated. She seemed sympathetic enough, he thought, but her energy tended toward unsettling. He felt the coldness of the beer bite his paw pads. He saw the others sip from the tall cans and followed their lead. His nose and muzzle wrinkled out of reflex.

He overheard the chuckle of the stag, who apparently read his reaction.

"Didn't pop your cherry did I?" he asked in a surprisingly nasal voice, exiting one conversation and beginning another.

"What?" said Victor, not quite sure how to react.

"First time drinking?"

Victor shook his head, stretching the truth as far as he could.

"It's crap," the stag said, "don't let this be your first impression of beer."

Victor nodded, staring into the wide mouth can, swirling the aluminum cylinder as if aromatizing its contents would somehow increase its palatability. "Yea, I'm not feeling it."

"It's an acquired taste," he continued, "what do you drink then?"

Victor stammered, wasting time with a contemplative hum. He announced a few drinks that all fell under the category of cocktail.

Allen chuckled again, which left Victor feeling embarrassed and unsure why.

"What year are you," Victor asked, changing the subject and doing his best to follow Miles' advice on socializing.

"Oh, I finished a few years ago. Class of '08."

"Oh," Victor said, not exactly sure how to carry on the conversation.

"How 'bout you?" the stag continued for him.

"Sophomore."

"What brings you here?"

"Miles talked me into it."

"Not your scene?"

"I don't think so."

"That's too bad; it's really not a bad place. The culture and the atmosphere here is really good, really supportive. I spent a lot of time here when I went to school, even lived here my senior year."

"It's nice," Victor said, disregarding the scent of what he thought was black mold.

"It's trashed now, I'm going to have to figure out why. Carl lives here now. First time here?"

Victor nodded, forcing down another swig of beer.

"What's your first reaction?"

Victor shrugged, casting a glance at Miles, hoping for a little support. The fox seemed to be in heated conversation with Beth and Carl, too distracted to recognize his plea. "I've only seen the outside and kitchen, can't really make a claim yet. I guess it's good." They fell silent for a period that felt longer than it was. He asked, "Umm, what brings you back?"

"Oh, I'm with Carl, he lives here now."

"What do you guys think?" asked Beth, interjecting herself into their dialogue at perhaps the right moment.

"Think about what? We missed a beat," said Allen as the conversation circle opened to include them both.

"Dental dams," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Woah, what did we miss?" said Allen.

"Do you use them?"

"Of course not."

"Naughty!"

"Naughty is good."

"Ugh," she sighed, throwing up her hands. "At least you two are responsible, right?" she said, turning to the foxes.

"Never used them cuz I never had the occasion," said Miles, in unfazed honesty.

Victor fell into Beth's headlights. His eyes widened as the question extended itself to him. He shrugged, feeling everyone's gaze upon him.

"It's a latex barrier people use during oral sex and rimming to protect against sexually transmitted diseases," Beth explained without hesitation.

"Oh," Victor said, falling into abashment.

"It's obviously a good idea," she said to him, tilting her head and taking on a more serious tone, "I just wish they were more available."

Carl sided with Allen. A debate contrasting efficacy versus practicality ensued, with Beth the sole, albeit enthusiastic proponent. Miles and Victor restarted their own conversation, agreeing that they had very little to offer the primary thread. It didn't take long for them to pick up their discussion on the prophylactic qualities of chainmail versus plate in NorseEpic: Battle of Midgrade, which quickly grew to include a party of three conversing in the hall.

As Beth failed to make headway in her advocacy, she terminated the conversation in that she ordered the gathering crowd to "...end this damn sausage fest," and, "get out of *her* kitchen." Carl and Allen were urged to relocate to Carl's room upstairs while Victor and Miles took their growing circle to the common room, advised to "play safe" as they went. They left their half-finished beers on a sideboard, agreeing that its palatably decreased inversely proportional to its temperature. They stood beside, rather than sat upon, the decaying furniture, continuing their conversation with a skunk, a canine, and a rather full figured otter who seemed to have an aversion to water. Miles arbitrated for chainmail to no avail, explaining the nuances of online guerrilla warfare to someone unreceptive to anything but hack and slash tactics.

Victor decided to piss, leaving the defense of his position up to Miles. He retraced his steps down the hall, back to the kitchen, finding Beth there having taken on the Sisyphean task of cleaning. She instructed him to the bathrooms on the second floor. Navigating the ever more dense crowd and the narrow halls appeared easier said than done. The state of the bathroom left him relieved to have been born his gender. It seemed as though no one had cleaned it since before the semester began, and even then it must have been a halfhearted attempt.

On his return down the steep stairs and through the crowd of strangers he found the stag holding the raccoon around the waist. Both stood in the narrow hallway, their lips pressed against one another with a resolution that seemed beyond description. Victor tried not to stare, but the image burned itself into his retinas, leaving an inscribed after-image in the vaults of his memory. He underwent a curious physical reaction, an internal ache as if a weak poison were introduced to his belly, sending a tingling shiver through nerves and spine. He felt fur stand on end beneath his clothes. He dared not approach them.

He found the image difficult to shake even after he reentered his group's conversation, which had since shifted into other matters of epic warfare. He found himself with little to offer, lost within the shifting framework of conversation, images, and not enough alcohol.

Victor left for the kitchen, feeling little at stake where he stood. He found Beth where he left her before, running out of things to do in *her* kitchen, as she referred to it.

"Hey you," she said as he passed, taking him, as most things she said, by surprise.

He stopped in his tracks, perking his ears her way as a reply.

"What's your name again?"

"Victor," he said. "Is there anything else to drink?"

"The fridge," is all she said, throwing a nod in its direction.

Victor opened it and took out a soda, showing it to Beth for approval. She nodded. He clawed open the tab and took a sip.

"You're with Miles," she said after half a moment of quiet.

Victor felt unsure if it was a question or a statement.

"Take good care of him," she continued, working over the interior of a microwave that didn't belong to her.

"Oh, we're not together that way." Victor said, finally comprehending her question.

"Ahh," she said.

Again Victor couldn't be sure if that implied an epiphany or a banal statement.

"I think he likes you," she said, not lifting her gaze.

"Is he?"

"I don't know," she said, giving up her task and throwing a sponge into the sink. "He doesn't talk about it, but he does talk about you. You will have to ask him yourself, though I can do some digging if you're interested."

"Oh, I'm not that way."

"Whatever makes you happy," she said. "Just try not to pass up a chance to find it."

Victor nodded and brought the soda can to his muzzle. Beth excused herself to greet a newly arrived couple, a slender feline and a hare that seemed to consist mostly of metal. She embraced the pair with effusive words of greeting. Victor watched from the corner of the kitchen with a newly developed eye for details. He counted five earrings on the heavily pierced hare's ears, each of which took a different color of the rainbow in powder coated surgical steel. He left without excusing himself. He found the stag and raccoon moved into the living room, sitting in the sunken cushions of the couch. The raccoon's paw rested on the stag's knee. Victor counted mostly men in the common space. What few women present wore men's clothes or attended with those that did.

The fox wandered through the rooms and halls now full of guests and residents, fully aware of where he found himself. He sought out Miles, wedging himself through the crowd. The otter seemed to have migrated off, taking the stink cloud with him. The canine remained. They huddled close together, speaking into each other's ears over the risen volume of music and concurrent conversations. He saw a smile spread across Miles' muzzle, watched him break into laughter. The canine laughed along. Miles threw the kind of playful punch Victor had yet to grow used to into the canine's flank, sending him swaying. Their bodies brushed on rebound. They continued laughing and seemed to share a certain glance. The canine purposefully touched Miles' paw.

Victor lost the urge to reintegrate himself. He suddenly felt as though the reason to be there extinguished itself, as if he came a long way only to forget what he searched for. The psychosomatic toxin began its second phase of infection, churning his stomach, entering veins with every pulse, suffusing light pain over his body and into the regions beyond consciousness. He felt a part of himself recoil, as if into a snail shell spiral, a circle without end. His feet turned

him around, lead him back through the crowded hallway, took him through the door, down the creaking steps, out onto the street where a light drizzle resumed, visible only through the cones of streetlight, perceivable on only the most sensitive follicles of fur.

There came a point where, usually six hours in or so, playing Halo single-player began to lose its entertainment value. Final Fantasy and Resident Evil also seemed like a bit of a bother, too much associated with a certain someone to make them desirable alternatives. Online games were out of the question for the same reason. Homework had come, as an unusual exception, first that day. A week's worth already lay organized and impeccably correct on his desk. Victor lay on his bed, the cinderblocks of his walls counted, staring at the glowy stars some previous tenant left on the ceiling. He considered touching himself, but remembered that he already had that day. A second round, while tempting, would probably just leave him as under-satisfied as the first.

If he took the path out the side door through Rowan's Woods and the tunnel between Johnson and Emerson Halls, he might be able to make it to the rec-center without being seen. He really didn't want to be seen today, but it would bode him well to make a trip. He still had ten of the freshman fifteen to work off, and the ramen, soba, and pizza he had been subsiding upon weren't helping the progress. Trunks and towel found their way into a duffle bag, the fox into his blue hoodie.

He made it to the rec-center without encountering anyone he didn't want to see, or at least that he didn't want to deal with the fallout of seeing just yet. The rec-center was probably the newest building on campus, built in 90s tech-boom money. It consisted primarily of glass with its exercise nodes built in tall-ceilinged atria to bring in as much natural light as possible. It was really a nice place, he just wished he spent as much time there as he promised himself. The locker rooms tended to avoid the elevated sketch-factor he became accustomed to, particularly the high-school equivalent. He found himself a nice little nook in the far corner, an area so far removed only a few others stowed their crap there and, one where the risk of voyeurism seemed quite low.

He developed a problem with peekage in high school which followed him into college. He hoped the change in location, the general maturity level, and the increased privacy would remedy the problem, but soon learned it hadn't. There it was, poking out the moment he switched into his trunks. He wasted no time in pulling them up around his waist, feeling the cool fabric of the inside netting brush against bare skin. The idea of pawing for a second time that day became an option again, though that had to wait.

The sheath or two he saw in the showers didn't help the situation. He kept his short, trying to convince himself that he didn't want to cast a wayward glance through the steam below the waists of other dudes. He was the kind of guy who would shower before a swim in his trunks, which in and of itself seemed kind of embarrassing, but preferable to taking shit for sporting a skin. Victor quickly made his way to the pool, trying hard to compensate his gait lest everyone notice the tent in his trunks.

The plunge did have a curative effect. The not too uncomfortable chill of the Olympic sized pool wrapped around his body and quickly permeated his fur. Water touching every inch of skin, sending a full body shiver from toe, to tail, to ear-tip. He enjoyed the leap, the first seconds of fall, the tiny bubbles leaving his fur, caressing his face, rushing past his ears. He let himself sink, overturning control to the fluid dynamics of water. Those seconds had a strange way of clearing him of all complexities, all the doubts, reducing the one-hundred channels playing simultaneously in his mind to one of pure static. Fingers curled into the water, arms pulled him forward, and legs swept him along.

He postponed the moment gravity would reclaim him with a lap, then another, then six more. Upon leaving the pool it felt like two of himself occupied the same space and he had to carry the weight of both. Rivulets of water rained upon the cold poolside tiles, leaving a shallow river in his wake. His load lightened with every step, but other burdens slithered their way back into the furrows of his awareness. The steam heat of the showers struck him. He stood under the nozzle, letting hot displace cold. He held his muzzle in the stream, let the heat burn his nose and lips, and the corners of his eyes. Behind his eyelids images projected in the multi-chromatic blur induced by external heat and pressure. He saw his Warcraft avatar fall, saw a male raccoon and stag kiss in the hallway, saw a canine happily brush against Miles, saw them both laughing. All of a sudden, nothing sounded better than being back in his dorm room.

His foot-paws took him back to his locker, over slick tiles, and through the crowd of half-naked males of every species. One male in particular stood out. Victor noticed the colors of his own species, the reds, browns, and whites of a fox. He recognized the slender frame carrying the shades of his kind with his back turned his direction. Victor saw shorts slip down legs, a bare butt appear with a sliver of silvery white up its crevice. His sheath flashed before vanishing behind the brim of swim trunks. The first Victor saw of a tiny gray tuft, a birthmark to the left and below the other fox's naval.

Victor rushed out of sight, into the secluded grotto of lockers. He resisted the voyeuristic impulse to peer back down the hall no matter what. He doubted if the fox was actually Miles, questioning whether his chlorine blurred eyes correctly identified one of the few foxes on campus. His body crashed upon a wooden bench, he rubbed his stinging eyes. The fox stood

before him in the vividness of recent memory, his slender frame bare to the fur. He knew the image would stay with him like an engraving in steel. He willed it to.

A change into his street clothes revealed a sheath in the advanced stages of peekage. A towel-down only made it worse. Victor felt the heat of blood rush through his face. His ears swept back to hear even the slightest sounds of approach. He expected to be discovered any second, bearing a boner under the most inappropriate of circumstances. He rushed himself into his pants, dealing with the awkward feeling of half-wet fur on fabric. Buttoning them felt even less comfortable. He threw his hoodie over his shoulders and ears and rushed through the hall and outdoors where his damp fur met the bite of cold. His maleness throbbed, tip pushing painfully against the waistband of his jeans, only the early stages of hypothermia aided in abating its presence.

Victor's teeth chattered by the time he reached the dorm. He held his arms against his chest, feeling cold burning all areas of exposed skin. He felt a seeping numbness, the weak poison from the night before, a hollowness. Something intrinsic seemed to ache, like some viscera or sinew, a part of himself that wouldn't be found in any anatomy textbook. Victor couldn't place it, it frightened him to the point he felt like turning back and finding the health center. He realized part of himself strove to convey an article of meaning, informing him of an inherent quality, something he was already well aware of.

The door to his room fell shut behind him. He locked it and stuck his key in the slot for good measure. He thanked every god there was that his roommate wasn't there. He stripped himself of his damp clothes, walked to his closet to retrieve dry ones, seeing himself bare in the mirror. His cock stood there, arousal returning with every beat of his heart. He sighed, retraced two steps and threw himself onto his bed. He looked down his torso at the vulpine characteristics of his sex. Fingers wrapped around his girthy shaft and began to slide from tip to knot. He didn't stop until every part of his maleness throbbed, sending throngs of white upon his belly. He panted, taking in his pungent scent, watching the trickle of fertile fluid pour from his slit, down his tip and over his paw. It was intrinsic, he thought, not a mood, not a kink, not a passing trend. Like the line of viscous fluid on his stomach it was a part of him and would continue to be, the time approached where he had to recognize that.

"Dude!" said Miles, dropping his heavy overfilled backpack at the adjacent computer station. "Where the hell have you been?"

Victor looked up from his screen but didn't go as far as making eye contact, keeping his gaze navel level.

"That was seriously uncool how you disappeared from the party Friday night. Do you realize we stayed until 2am looking for you? Beth is *not* happy!"

"I just got kind of tired, these 8am classes kill me at the end of the week," lied Victor, returning his gaze to his computer screen, trying to refocus on the Photoshop menu before him.

"Why didn't you tell anyone?"

Victor shrugged.

"Not cool!"

His ears flattened themselves against his scalp; his tail had the urge to curl under his chair.

Miles unpacked, setting up his laptop beside the desktop station. He produced a number of USB dongles of various functions. He came to rest beside Victor, having little else to say. They watched the instructor give his presentation and completed the tutorial without speaking to each other.

"You really need to apologize to Beth," Miles said after the instructor assigned them work time.

"Why's that?"

"I think you offended her. I think she likes you, but you disappointed her when you walked out. You know, she made everyone at the party look for you."

"Damn," Victor said, willing his ears even lower.

"She wanted me to give you this," Miles said, reaching into one of the side pockets of his large orange backpack. He produced a duplicate of the rights pin he possessed and handed it to Victor.

Victor held it on the palm of his paw, inspected both obverse and reverse surfaces. "What's this for?" he asked.

"You wanted one."

"Thanks," he said, remembering that he in fact had requested it and buttoned it to the outside of his backpack.

"So tell me," Miles said, "are you not comfortable around gay people?"

Victor felt a sudden surge of blood through his cheeks and muzzle. His white chin fur took on a slight pinkish hue as a wave of warmth swept through him. He stammered, unsure of how to

respond. "No," he said, "I mean, no I'm not uncomfortable around gays. You guys are all really good people and I do support you."

"I'm not gay," Miles said. "But Beth and the others felt blown off by you. Beth especially is confused."

"But I saw you with that canine. What's his name? It's just that you brought me there, and, and you two seemed to..."

"Oh. No, no, no," Miles said, pinching the bridge of his muzzle with thumb and forefinger. He shook his head. "Ok, I get it now. Now everything makes sense. Listen." Miles voice fell into a whisper as he leaned toward Victor, their eyes met, each fox immediately read the other's expression and each felt the sting. "That was Olaf. He's a Philology student. He is a great guy, very interesting, and he actually speaks Old Norse, but I'm not interested in him. You're my best friend Vic, but I can't be with you either, I hope we can still be friends."

Victor exhaled a deep breath, wishing himself away from where he sat. The templates, menus, layers, and images before him on the computer screen all blurred together into an unintelligible tangle of color. He could no longer will the pieces into order, could no longer operate what he understood, and could no longer render that before him into a coherent image. He felt his muzzle form words, but no sound came from his lips.

"This is all the more reason to talk to Beth," said Miles, speaking for Victor. "She is sort of the unofficial GLBT counselor. She has made a big difference in a lot of people's lives. You need to make peace with her, she will help you out."

The poison that afflicted Victor once again throbbed through him. He felt the waves of heat and cold, the pain and the shame ebb, grow, and consume what they washed over. He refused to let his gaze off the screen. He let the colors blur and the outlines spill over. His eyes did not belong anywhere else, he thought, he must not let them go.

"I'm sorry," said Miles, who seemed taken by the same strategy, his eyes locked on his dual screens. A perceivable tremble accompanied his voice, as if the words pained him.

The hour came to a close, though each minute dragged. Victor accomplished very little, watching only his cursor circle around icons in tiny ellipses. He heard Miles shut his laptop, unplug and put away his dongles. He heard the zipper of his backpack and the commotion of students departing. Miles left with them. Victor stayed behind until the classroom lights shut off on their own.

Victor rotated the green and black can of an oversized energy drink on the surface of his pullout table, slouching impatiently in his perhaps intentionally uncomfortable lecture hall seat, waiting for the prescribed boost of energy and focus to kick in. His muzzle often darted toward the double doors behind him, processing the faces of students as they trickled in. He didn't see Miles among them for over a week, nor did he expect him today. It felt like more reflex than actual anticipation.

He made a mental list of roughly ten-thousand things to say, ones that contradicted another, others that helped and many that surely did not. Miles' absence gave him the time to think, to hone down the possibilities to a handful. Ten options made it to paper, under the direction of Beth. He read and reread the lines, practiced speaking them, and uttered them alone in his room like a catechism. No words sounded right, nor felt right in his muzzle. As such the list remained tucked into his Moleskin, awaiting further revisions.

Miles appeared. He walked down the steps, his orange coat and backpack drawing immediate recognition. Their eyes met, if only for an instant. Miles passed the row in which Victor sat, choosing a seat a few rows down in one of the wings, leaving Victor with a view of the back of his ears, which became far more interesting than the lecture on ATP synthesis. When the lights came back on and students began shuffling their way back toward daylight, he looked down at his notebook and saw only an empty page.

He sighed, watching Miles join the procession. Victor put away his belongings save for the Moleskin with ten numbers and ten phrases written on an unmarked page. He put his paw upon it. His lips mouthed the words, getting a last round of practice in. He knew which line had to be said, obviously the most difficult. He folded the paper and tucked it into the blank pages of his notebook and then slid it into his backpack. Victor followed Miles out of the lecture hall and into the gray cold outside. To his surprise, Miles waited for him.

"Hey," he said, subject to the pull of wind.

"Hey," Victor repeated.

Their eyes had a hard time observing each other. Both stood there until shivers wrought their bodies. Their muzzles poised to speak, but words stayed in their throats.

"Listen," Victor said, after the last of the students left the vicinity. He began his practiced lines, letting his muzzle depend on the mechanics of motor memory; he had only to force the air. "I can't help the way I feel, nor can I expect you to change how you do. I accept that. You're my best friend and I hope you still want to be mine. That's how I want things to be."

Miles stood with his nose downcast, ears directed at Victor in complete comprehension of each word's meaning. He nodded at the end of every line as though hearing a guilty sentence on each of a number of charges. He pulled a smile across his muzzle as Victor finished, the kind of smile ambiguous to decipher. "Alright," he said, "I want that too."

Victor brought a similar smile, one that took practice to appear convincing.

"I'm sorry I've been gone. Stress."

"Me too," Victor said.

Miles extended his paw, Victor shook it.

"Hungry?" Miles asked.

"Yep."

"Milton or Krieger," Miles said, referring to the duel cafeterias on campus.

"Milton."

Miles nodded and waved his way. The two foxes walked side by side down the now empty path.

"Hey," said Victor, "do you still want to come over sometime and game?"

Miles nodded "Sure, I'm cool with that."

"I know this sounds kind of weird, but my roommate is out of town this weekend, does that work?"

"Yea, we can make that work."

"Good. Bring your laptop and your controller."

"You got it."

The foxes rejoined processions of moving students, queuing themselves in front of Milton Commons for the noon rush. Wind swept through denuded trees without resistance, buffeting them with cold below freezing. They agreed that winter was coming.

"Gotcha!" Miles shouted, yanking the controller to his upper left. The cord whipped the air, nearly tipping a soda can.

“Fuck,” said Victor, watching his character disappear into a flash erupting from the side of the TV screen. A cell shaded, rather diminutive version of Link stood in the foreground, emerging as the recipient of victory adulation in front of the assemblage of defeated characters. His character, Star Fox, stood among them.

“You must train harder if you wish to best me Foxie-san,” said Miles, mocking Victor for the fourth time that night. His paw reached out and nudged Victor in the ribs.

“Hey! What’s that about,” said Victor, rubbing his flank. His bare foot-paw kicked Miles’, albeit with a lack of serious force. Another knuckle-laden nudge nearly knocked him over.

“I’ll give you one more try to best me and then we can switch to a game you might be able to win.”

A quick sequence of clicks reset the screen. Glowing frames travelled their accustomed path of selecting favorite characters from an eclectic array spanning the history of console entertainment. The combatants appeared on an unstable set of platforms, replete with reflex testing hazards. The words “Start” flashed the screen in bold letters, concurrent with a dramatic announcement.

In a matter of moments the two foxes’ made waste of the NPCs, turning agile aggression against each other. The click of buttons and grinding of the plastic housing continued, rattling over the music, effeminate grunts and cries of pain. Four eyes stood transfixed, the screen reflected in their surfaces. Four paws mashed their digits into controllers, subjected to the intense tug of reflexes. Victor attacked with a melee move so quick a particle trail followed his avatar. A dodge, a feint within a feint, and another spurt of lights followed. Fox’s final mid-air strike sent little Link flying off the edge of the screen, it was time for Miles’ to take a dirt nap.

Victor cheered, taking the opportunity to mock Miles he only seldom found.

A pillow to the muzzle cut short Victor’s triumph, subjecting him to the taste of stuffing. Victor reached for the nearest convenient object, an empty two-liter bottle of Mountain Dew and pummeled Miles over the ears with it. The pillow became Miles shield as Victor hopped onto his bed, taking another pillow he found there into his grasp. The second pillow became Victor's primary weapon, the soda bottle taking his off-hand slot. In a moment of sacrifice Miles permitted Victor to land a number of blows upon his head, a retaliating move struck him. He slipped, hit the bed and fell to the floor, loosing half his inventory. The bedsprings shouted beneath him. Miles leapt upon him, straddling his torso, Miles pinched his body like a vice as he battered Victor's pillow shield. Victor writhed beneath him. His foot-paws kicked wildly, inevitably tangling themselves in the game controller cords.

"I give up," he shouted between high pitch bouts of laughter, raising paws in submission.

Miles tossed aside his pillow, he grabbing the fox's wrists, pinning him to the ground.

"Let that be a lesson to ya," he said, panting into Victor's face.

"Foxes never learn," Victor said with irony.

The foxes roughhoused their way across the spread out sleeping bag. Miles held Victor by the wrists and Victor him by the forearms. A look of sharp determination furrowed their faces, engaged in a sport to prove something that hadn't been decided upon, something more entertaining in analog than in digital. Paws grabbed paws, wrists, and tail, desperately clutching clothing or anything that served as apt handhold. Victor huffed out his lung's contents as he thudded down on his chest, paws quickly restrained in what could have qualified as a masterful wrestling move. His muzzle ground into the bedroll, inhaling deeply of its fox toned scent. His every muscle tensed in resistance, gaining little traction against the weight of the surprisingly strong slender fox perched on top of him. A grunt left his muzzle, his legs kicked, toe claws raking the carpet for the slightest bit of traction. He found it, arching himself up, Miles with him.

Victor's ears swept toward the sound of his tail-strap come undone, the snap, it seemed, could not endure the burden struggle put upon it. He felt his pants slack around his waist, felt like protesting, like calling a truce, but the words failed to sound. The garment shifted an inch, then another, with nothing to catch on to prevent slippage. He widened his stance, feeling the creep of vulnerability parallel the exposure of his butt. The shift cost him the defensive upper hand, balance, giving gravity the advantage.

Miles' fingers raked Victor's body to hinder his fall, his paw had to catch the loose waistband, held it, but not body it clad. Victor too hit the ground, struggling to right himself, hampered by the fabric drawn to his knees. Miles took advantage of the new development, restraining his arms to prevent the correction of wardrobe malfunction. Caught in his own clothing Victor rolled and kicked as best he could, the fallen sweats impeding even that. Miles endured the desperate flailing, taking several kicks to the torso, but his paws held firm. Seeing the opportunity he grabbed the band of fabric, a twist shackling Victor's flailing legs.

Victor saw a smile on Miles' lips, the distinct wickedness or competitive curl right before he unleashed some special move or winning combo, the kind Victor always lost to. Victor tried to swallow his laughter, but the reflex continued within. He kicked, but Miles wedged himself between his legs out of their effective radius. He grabbed Miles' arms, but what little strength he had left could not alter their course. Victor gasped, "Stop," between bouts of laughter,

finding it increasingly difficult to maintain bladder control. "Stop," he said again without voice in his breath.

Miles stopped, but only after his fingers curled under Victor's elastic waistband, after a swift tug swept them off his hips, after the motion carried them off his legs faster than he could react. Victor panted. His heart raced. Blood rushed through him. He could hear it in his ears and feel it well in the capillaries of his face. He stared down his torso, past the writing on his t-shirt, past the white of his belly fur, past pubic tufts around his exposed sheath. His cock inched out a telling distance from its home. He looked at Miles who stood panting, holding the shrouds of cloth with his sly smile vanishing into something indistinct, leaving his muzzle with every breath. "Well, look at you," he said, doing just that.

"Hey!" shouted Victor, reduced to nothing but bare bottomed fur. "Give those back!" Victor scrambled and sat up, sweeping his tail over his lap. "Why did you do that?" he asked between breaths with his voice vexed to the point of breaking, holding his tail over the pieces of his gender. His head tilted in an expression past the point of confusion.

Miles remained standing, the sweats and boxers reduced to limp tubes swaying from his paw. He looked down upon them with a glance of intersecting shock and surprise, as if he didn't expect success in liberating them and therefore hadn't really plotted as far ahead. He then looked at Victor as if about to stutter an apology. His thumb swept over the simple cotton of Victor's underwear, over the faded cartoons reveling over their surface. His jaw quivered, as if mouthing over words of apology and or testing the plausibility of the explanation demanded of him, but his lips curled into a smile of vulpine cunning. "No," he said, as if Victor demanded the absurd. He tossed the deceased pants under Victor's desk, about as far out of reach as he could, holding onto Victor's boxers.

Victor sat speechless on the edge of his bed, tail in lap, waiting for that little bit of firmness to subside. His eyes swept away, down at the disorder their struggle caused, averted from what occupied his gaze seconds earlier. Victor refused to look up, refused to even look in his lap at the beginnings of an erection hidden through the bush of his tail fur.

"Tell you what," said Miles, the sly curl of his smile broadening. "I'll let you win this back. Rematch! If you win, I'll let you have these back." He held up Victor's underwear, immediately drawing his gaze.

"That's not fair!" Victor said, with an edge in his voice. His eyes grew wide as his pupils fixated on the shroud of broken in cloth Miles held up like a trophy. "How do you expect me to play half-naked?"

"How about this," Miles said tilting his head to the side, with a tone as if negotiating, "Strip Smash Brothers. Sudden death: one stock life. You win, you can have these back and I lose an item. I win, I keep them. Deal?"

The offer did little to wash the look of confusion from Victor's face. He batted an ear as if Miles' idea circulated with the tenacity of a persistent insect. He lifted his chin toward the standing fox and said, "That's still not fair; you're still the one with the advantage."

Miles nodded and began peeling the shirt off his back. Victor caught the shirt in his lap. "There you go," he said, "that's a freebie." The fox retraced the few steps back to the bed and nested himself beside Victor without even waiting for confirmation. Miles offered him a controller, plucked from the folds of the sleeping bag at their feet. "Pick your character," he said, his glowing rectangle already hovered over Princess Peach.

Victor sat huddled, tail in lap, a controller dropped into his upturned palms, still too confused to fully process Miles' terms. He found his fingers gliding over the control surfaces, guiding his blue rectangle over the portrait of a mallet wielding penguin. The game announced his choice, as if sealing a contract with a click of a button. His concentration shattered, leaving him with only seconds to collect the pieces and calibrate them into a functioning state, to deceive his faculties into believing that he wasn't naked from the waist down. He scooted off the edge of the bed, removing his bare spots from the other fox's field of vision. He sat on Miles' sleeping bag, feeling the cool synthetic fabric beneath him, unmitigated by clothing. He draped Miles' shirt across his lap, unwilling to divulge any more of himself than had already been discovered.

The game began with its frenetic surge of action. Movement, particles of light, and music intersected in controlled chaos of game play. Fingers swept over controllers, willing the learned patterns of muscle memory to materialize and command the digital marionettes on the small television screen. Both collided in the same playful ferocity as their controllers had minutes before, ambivalent to the stakes their masters set.

"We should order some more pizza," Miles said without surrendering concentration.

Victor hummed a questioning reply.

"So you can go downstairs bare bottomed."

"Sure, but give me two rounds and you'll be the one answering the door with your butt showing."

"Pretty confident there, fucker," he said, pulling his body into a dodge not unlike that of his avatar.

"I did win the last one, I feel a streak coming on."

"One way or another I'll have you streaking," said Miles, letting the princess pelt the penguin in a barrage of turnips.

"Bad puns kill kits," said Victor, landing a special move on Peach's head.

"That means you're next?"

"Apparently not, seems you forgot how to play," said Victor, pounding Miles' damage percentage above 150.

"You could at least use some moves I didn't teach you," Miles said, spamming with a frying pan and missing.

"I don't think you taught me this one, but I'll school you on it," said Victor, gripping his controller to the point where the casing threatened to snap. The penguin engaged a grab and throw and tossed Miles' princess off the edge of the screen.

Miles spammed the jump button, but saw his character end in a giant flash. He beheld Victor's character standing smug with his arms crossed. "Fuck," he said, his tail twitching out of irritation.

"Class is over, where's my pants?" said Victor melodically, with a prideful tone in his voice. He crossed his arms in the same fashion as the penguin on screen.

He tossed the vestment back at Victor, catching him in the face. "Rematch," he said, picking up his controller. The television announced the name Star Fox in the same heroic tone as before, locking him into the next game.

"What?" said Victor, pulling the underwear off his face. "What are we playing for now?" he asked as he entered into the logistical challenge of getting his pants back on without fully exposing himself.

"No, no, no! That wasn't part of the deal. You could have them back, but I didn't say you could wear them," said Miles.

"What?"

"Rules are rules! You should have specified. Lock in, next round."

"So... when do I get to put my underwear back on?"

"If you win the next round. You lose, I own your shirt."

"That's not fair!"

"You playing or not?" Miles said in a flat tone, tossing a nod toward the television screen.

Victor locked in his character again, feeling little in the way of options and a little bit intrigued.

"Are you always this easy to get naked?" Miles said, selecting the Lyat Cruise stage.

"I don't know, I've never been stripped before. Speaking of which, you owe me your pants."

"Fuck," Miles said, "I would have hoped you forgot about that."

"Pay up."

Miles sighed and cast an accusatory glance down at Victor. He stood, turned to the side, and let his fingers undo the tail-snap, and pulled his waistband down his slender hips. He stepped out of his ankles one paw at a time with perhaps more discretion than required. He cursed and tossed them at Victor, again aiming for the face. Victor deflected them with an upraised arm, turning his head to the side. He looked back to find Victor leaning against the wall with a knee up and his hips turned away.

"You tenting something there?" said Victor, more teasing than observing.

"You in," Miles said, again nodding at the television.

Victor nodded, asking nothing further.

The television counted down to start the round. Immediately the sound and smoke of gameplay resumed. Their diminutive characters tumbled across the screen almost too fast for the eye to follow. The round dragged on with more discipline than before. Their concentration less hampered by banter.

Victor interrupted a flurry of attacks, speaking over the dramatic music and sounds, "So... are you trying to keep me naked?" He cast a split-second glance over his shoulder at the reclining fox.

It took Miles a few moments to reply, though Victor lost count during the continuing action. A shrug went unobserved. A taciturn, "Yea," came as his only reply.

"Uhh, why?" asked Victor, not removing his eyes from the screen.

"Why do you think?"

"I donno. Do you want to?"

"If you don't shape up I will if you like it or not," said Miles.

"I'm up two and you're still playing shit. We'll see."

"Hey now, I know what you're trying to hide down there. It's cute how you pretend how you don't like it. Just try not to pre all over my shirt, big boy," said Miles, the sly antagonism evident in his voice.

Victor's thumb and forefinger committed a critical error at a crucial moment. The penguin flew off the platform and disappeared in a speck of light.

"What?" Victor said unfazed by defeat, turning back at the other fox.

Miles smiled, "Told you so!" He reached out his paw and flexed his fingers in a beaconing action, "Hand it over."

"I'm confused," said Victor.

"What's there to be confused about? Hand me your shirt Romeo."

"Why do you want to see me naked? You told me you were straight?"

Miles tossed his controller aside and sighed. He looked down his slender body at the television screen, no longer seeing his avatar reveling in victory. Video game music continued to play, drowning out the worst of the silence.

"I'm sorry," said Victor, "you come over after you found out about me, and you take my clothes, now what? You need to be honest with me."

"Truth be told, I don't know what I am."

A moment passed. Victor nodded, "I know how you feel."

"You know, I've never been with a guy before. It's one of those things I grew up under the impression it was off limits. But I've thought about it from time to time and I'm not against it," said Miles, the words left his mouth slowly, as if considered one at a time.

"I can relate to that," said Victor, "I guess there's nothing wrong with it, no matter what my family thinks. It's just scary not knowing what group you belong to. It's like finding out that you're a little less part of something you grew up thinking you were. The thoughts have been there for a while, causing problems. I wasn't sure what to do with them, if anything at all."

"Beth told me how you feel about me. I could see that for myself too. I could tell it's been there for a while. I want you to know that it's alright. I had the same problem. Beth says the group

you belong to is the one you make for yourself. It seems like you're a little further along than I am and I admire that."

There didn't seem like any other words to say. Thematic music went through two or three more cycles, becoming more and more inappropriate with each loop.

"We cool?" said Miles.

"We cool," said Victor.

"Now where's my shirt?"

"What?"

"I won and we had a deal."

Victor sighed and pulled his last remaining cover off his back. He felt a chill as it left his body. He held the fabric in his paws and beheld it as if it were a severed piece of himself. Miles took it, appraised it, and tossed it into the corner. "So now what?" asked Victor with his muzzle cast in Miles' direction, his voice devoid of any semblance of certainty.

"Let's play again," said Miles, picking his controller back up. Miles locked in his character. The television announced the name Toon Link to canned cheering. He looked over at Victor expectantly.

Victor found his controller and engaged in the sequence of clicks that brought him into combat. He watched his character tumble across the screen but found it difficult to will it into its most deadly moves, difficult to concentrate feeling the lack of fabric on his body. His fingers seemed to lag behind his thoughts. He found himself making mistakes, giving Miles openings that would have surely resulted in his defeat had he not noticed a similar level of detachment in the other fox's moves. Both avatars flailed at each other, failing to send attacks home with the same efficiency of before.

"Change in rules," said Miles, the confidence in his voice reduced to something else. Agitation characterized his behavior, tenseness in both gameplay and in person. "All or nothing," he said, expelling the words in a forced departure of breath, "winner gets a B.J."

"What?" said Victor, his character doing a backflip that almost resulted in his immediate defeat, "You can't change the rules mid-game!"

"I just did. You in or out?"

Both avatars bounced around each other, swinging without making contact. Were it not for the collection of blood flow in a certain part of himself, the consequent rediscovery of gender hormones locking into the receptors of his synapses, and the unique easily confused pressure welling at the root of his slowly swelling sex, he would have said no.

"I'm in," he said, with no further consideration.

A few sloppy, dilettante moves bordering on button mashing swept the characters across the screen, only luck let a few attacks hit home. Their percentages both stood well into the red, an imminent knockout inevitable. Miles found himself batted around like a newbie, spamming a few simple attacks. Victor appeared worse for the wear, his percentage just ticked over 200. He leapt into an overconfident attack, failed a special move and found himself batted clear across the screen. A jump and a double-jump couldn't bring him back onto the platform. A flash sealed the deal.

Only the television celebrated. Victory music followed its familiar refrain. Both Victor and Miles set aside their controllers, their urge to game satiated for the moment. Neither spoke nor had the fortitude to look each other in the eye. Miles adjusted himself silently, pretending to look at the screen.

"You lose again! That's seven to two for the night. You ready to give up and pay up?" said Miles, after a moment whose duration neither strove to calculate. He looked down at Victor intending to beam a glance of keen-eyed vulpine slyness, but succeeding only in transmitting one tinged by the distortions of nervousness. His voice lacked the confident characteristics usually personifying his victory speech.

"Are you serious?" asked Victor, turning his head without looking up at Miles.

"A deals a deal," the other fox said, foregoing further gloating he certainly won the right to.

Victor felt a little throb beneath his tail, flicked it off his lap a mere moment to reveal a tiny spot permeating the fibers of Miles' shirt. He felt his cheeks flush and left his belly with a little feeling of hollowness. That minute spot whose meaning he knew too well seemed to summarize the past two years, the past two weeks, and the past two minutes more astutely than any combination of words he knew. A small part of himself stained the fabric. It surfaced, left its mark, refused to be concealed further. "Ready when you are," he said, tired of gazing at his naval.

Victor didn't move. Neither did Miles, perhaps not expecting Victor's affirmation, his dare counter-dared, leaving him with the choice to counter-counter dare, or back off. His ear flicked a tick of contemplation. "So let's see," he said, doubling down.

The fox left his resting place, emitting an audible exhalation. His body turned, pivoted on its axis as he rose, coming into view over the bed's edge. White chest, belly, and sheath appeared in succession, bordered in copper fur. An inch of bare pink skin pointed boldly out of his sheath, drawing the eye with its appearance. He knelt in full view just beyond the bed. His muzzle carried no expression. His eyes traced Miles' outline, saw him reclined with his knees intentionally bent, hips enshrouded in little more than simple patterned boxers, tail flicking beside him.

"You're gonna have to lose those," Victor said with his nose in Miles' direction. His eyes followed Miles' slender white belly, up his chest, to muzzle, meeting his eyes. They stood motionless with ears bowed toward one another as if anticipating the movement of lips, the imminent sound of objection.

Miles' paws moved toward his narrow hips, thumbs slid beneath his waistband. His butt rose, his boxers began their journey down his thighs, over his knees, off his ankles, landing on the floor off the side of the bed in an unrecognizable pile. The fox was left with his legs casually spread, providing a more than suggestive first view of himself. He revealed how the white fur of his belly extended over pubic tufts, sheath, and continued past his balls, narrowing beneath his tail. The little gray tuft below and to the left of his naval stood there too. His arousal protruded an inch or two, communicating an urge Miles too seemed hesitant to show. The act of exposure, the uncovering specific excitement eroded the option to yield. A sensation of finality dropped like a curtain, leaving Victor, Miles, and an act to commit.

A couple of comments passed through Victor's mind, cat calls, pornographic one liners, vulgar compliments, but he realized how ineffectual they were, leaving him mute, communicating only via the emotional signifiers of his body. Ears swept back, a tail swung side to side in no particular pattern, his eyes seemed expectant. He moved his body the moderate distance left between them, scooting between Miles' legs, finding himself confronted with the anatomy of his own gender; Miles' balls, sheath, and the curved tip of a cock.

"You don't have to," Miles said, "if you don't want to, that's okay."

"No," said Victor, his gaze following the skinny body up toward Miles' face, looking him in the eyes, "I want to."

The fox slid closer to the edge of the bed, bringing his maleness imminent to Victor's muzzle. The fur of his balls and sheath looked fluffy and well-tended to, and the pink skin of his cock smooth and clean. He recognized a trace of Miles' belongings, his dorm room, and clothes reflected in the faint musk of his intimate details. His paw broke the remaining distance, thumb and forefinger touched Miles' sheath. A paw-pad slid down the smooth skin along the

underside of his shaft. He directed its tip toward his muzzle, observing its curved canine point, its ridges, and the narrow slit near its apex. His muzzle paused mere inches away with lips parted, appraising what he beheld like a strange food. He could taste the scent upon his tongue. He hesitated, letting physical symptoms of conflict rush over him. He let, more than asked, his head to descend, watching cock-tip disappearing behind the curvature of his nose. His lips touched the silky surface and passed smoothly down its length. Tongue brushed against tip, leaving moisture where it swept.



Miles inhaled sharply, drawing the swivel of Victor's ears. A paw came to rest between them and a trembling scritch issued praise. Victor read the clean taste of skin where his tongue touched the fox's maleness. His nose pressed itself in pubic fur. His whisker's bristles mingled

with coarser tufts. The familiar musk of his friend's body circulated through his sensitive nasal passages, direct and unmediated, more powerful than the hints associated with his presence. He let his tongue swirl around Miles' cock, passing over its crest, its slit, and its point. It twitched between his lips, giving Victor more to explore with every passing moment.

Victor's tongue followed down his length, cradling the ventral shaft until his tongue wet the fur of sheath. His tongue-tip dipped beneath the rim, chasing after the very base of Miles' cock. He writhed his way between sheath and shaft, delving into the taboo reaches at the very root of his friend's arousal, into a region somehow permanently imbued with potent male fragrance, laden hints of sweat and testosterone. Miles bucked, a shiver passing through him. His paw arrested itself on Victor's scalp. He uttered the first of many gasps, calling a desperate rush of air into his lungs.

Having elicited the very first positive response from a fellow male, Victor continued, encouraged and with a growing sense of confidence. His tongue traced the bottom of Miles' sheath, inundated by tastes and scents perplexingly strange and familiar, as if encountered before albeit through much more diffused concentrations. He could feel cock swell between his lips, its smooth glide into his muzzle, and the occasional pulses conducting through it. Miles' tip dragged along his palate, into regions deeper in his muzzle where it became difficult to perceive its mass.

Victor slid his muzzle along Miles' cock, beginning the first of many motions borrowed more from pornography than experience. It felt weird and somehow inexpressible being on the receiving end of those movements, but also exhilarating. He let his tongue perform the flicks and flourishes he knew, or thought he knew from dirty pictures, quickly learning of their ineffectiveness. He found himself inventing moves of his own, seeing how well the pleasure points of his own anatomy translated upon that of his friend and experimenting from there.

Miles occasionally issued a stimulated huff through parted lips. The sounds of his young voice uttering tones hushed by anxious self-restraint carried into the corners of the small room, but not beyond. Patches of fur rose on parts of his naked body. A trembling paw played with Victor's ears and ran through the fur of his scalp. His eyes stood fixed on his lap, on Victor's face and tongue touching every part of his maleness. Shivers turned to twitches, gyrating through hips in the slightest of thrusts.

Victor found himself considering Miles' details as it seemed like the fox cock in his mouth reached its apex. Like Miles' body it was probably more slender than his, perhaps with an added inch or so. He only had his own to compare against. His tongue swirled around the bulb at Miles' base, savoring the unique canine features he himself possessed. His lips squeezed at the beginning of Miles' knot and drew along his length, his tongue pressed against the ventral

shaft. The flow of a certain essence surprised Victor. Miles' pre began to coat the inside of his muzzle, adding another layer of musk to those circulating through his mouth. Victor's free paw brushed against his own arousal, discovering its familiar shape wet with more than a trace of pre. The find was evidence confessing more than he dared contemplate. His fingers curled around the appendage and issued a sequence of slow, cautious strokes as a self-reward.

His movements grew faster, seeming to have shed some of his apprehension. His bobbing shifted to a litany of broad-tongued licks, exposing every inch of Miles' glistening pink cock to his tongue's textures. He lapped along shaft, over tip and slit, down over knot and sheath, retreating into its confines for a breathless moment. He matted pubic fuzz, tasting the salts embedded in fur. Miles' orbs also found their way past Victor's lips, left wet and warm from their brief stay in his muzzle.

Victor's muzzle buried itself in every aspect of his best friend's gender, pushing the boundaries of taboo which each foray into previously unexplored nuances. Victor found himself immersed in the flow of movements and within the inexhaustible stream of thoughts unfettered by the remnants of doubt. His actions harnessed the cresting tide of his young libido, wearing away at borders with the ebb and flow of every breath. His nose led the search for further boundaries to erode, dipping below balls, following the narrowing band of white under Miles' body.

His nose wedged itself into Miles' crevice, burrowing into the confined space beneath the fox. He sensed body warmth and followed it with a needy push, reaching a bare patch of skin he knew he would find, yet contact surprised even himself. Victor's nose perceived the dual textures, smooth with wrinkles radiating from its center. It felt pliant beneath his nuzzles. He let his tongue dash against the naked spot, over the most intimate part of Miles' body before doubt rationalized itself into the equation. Only after the irretractable act did he comprehend its finality, the sheer illicitness that went well beyond the contract they set. He pulled his muzzle from beneath the fox, not sure what kind of reaction to expect.

"Someone's awful full of surprises," said Miles, his voice uncharacteristically quiet, a shyness to it as if he too underwent some sort of transgression. His muzzle never fully closed, panting shallow breaths through narrow lips.

"I'm sorry, if..." Victor paused.

"Don't be, keep going," said Miles in two hasty breaths. "Here," he continued, shifting where he rested, raising his legs and hips to expose the most personal part of his body, "it's alright."

The bare patch came into view. Victor beheld the pink skin bordered by uneven wisps of fur, the white corridor disappeared into copper just beyond the curvature of his crevice. The little

aster stood there too, the opening to Miles' body, his utmost intimacy. A glance double-checked with Miles. Miles nodded. He took a deep breath and returned his muzzle to his friend's rear. His lips went for tail-hole. Fur tickled his nose. Muscle moved beneath his kiss. He closed his eyes and sent his tongue past his lips.

Victor let his lips encompass all the bare skin, passing over every wrinkle. His tongue probed the tender folds, slid over their surface and into their recesses, over the shallow dimple at their center. Victor felt every spasm conduct through his tongue, responding with warm caresses. Broad strokes bathed the opening, slowly spiraling to its center. A flick with the very tip of his tongue found the innermost furrow and teased it. To his surprise the indentation relaxed as if to allow egress into the shallows of Miles' body. An inexplicable urge dared his tongue to slide through the ring, into the flex and spasm of virgin confines.

Victor's paws moved to Miles' buttocks, spreading the lean cheeks apart with trembling fingers. Victor could see very little beyond the balls hanging in front of his eyes. He could feel tension in Miles' body, a perceivable trembling under his paws and sensed more than saw the swivel of Miles' ears toward him, as if to perceive every wet slurp emanating from his crevice. One of Miles' paws slowly slid to his belly and took hold of his slick maleness. A few quick strokes traveled its length.

It became hard not to entertain the sensation of self consciousness he got from wallowing his muzzle in the crevice of another boy. He had to admit a little too much satisfaction, knowing that what he was doing probably went against some rule in an unwritten dating handbook. He wondered whether the hungry enthusiasm he poured over Miles' pucker confessed his ongoing fascination with the little opening, but didn't care if it did, feeling strange vindication in his performance. He was right where he wanted to be, muzzle in crevice, tongue in tail-hole, doing something he spilt a lot of cum fantasizing about.

Victor pivoted his muzzle over Miles' tail-hole, approaching it from every angle, exposing it to the more than curious pressure of nose, lips, and tongue. The wet appendage writhed its way into Miles' passage, pursuing tactile exploration past the illicit boundary. He tilted his head, spread the fox's cheeks wider and pushed beyond the quivering band. His tongue twisted and squirmed. Straining his jaw, Victor urged his tongue as far as he could, relishing in the sensation of its tip passing over Miles' innermost walls, obtaining an unspeakable goal. Both foxes emitted similar moans, experiencing the sweep of tongue over the smooth and vascular surface of never before touched passage from different perspectives, pleasure certainly mutual.

He heard the slick slide of Miles' paw along his shaft, proud to have elicited such a response, however noticing the hastening pace with a hint of alarm. The fox's tongue slipped from his companion's tail-hole. He peered up, over Miles' balls and arousal whose strokes were slowed

with his departure. Their eyes met. Miles appeared glazed over, yearning with an urge Victor didn't need to be clairvoyant to recognize. "Why'd you stop," he exhaled.

Victor cast his glance off to the side. His weary tongue asked to grow comfortable back within the confines of his muzzle, laden with the essences of manhood. "Do you want to?" he asked, offering no further explanation.

"Okay," said Miles in a surprisingly quick reply, seeming to have forgone the need for reflection. Only after the word left his lips did he appear contemplative, nonetheless making no attempt to recant his consent.

Having not expected the affirmative, he waited for Miles to reconsider. No such attempt came. "Um," he said, giving voice to the logistics, "How are we going to do this?"

Miles refrained from speaking. His lips hesitant to ask the question Victor assumed he wanted to state.

"You can do me," said Victor, claiming the opportunity before the chance lost itself.

"You serious," said Miles, tilting his head.

Victor nodded.

"My, you are full of surprises, aren't you," Miles said in a soft voice, forcing a twitch of laughter at the tail end. His lips took on a nervous smile.

They looked at each other; no one dared make the next move. Their ears pivoted on their axis, as if expecting to be overheard by some unknown party.

"How are we going to do this?" Miles asked.

"Umm," Victor uttered, having not planned that far ahead. He looked around. Looked at the bed; its squeaky spring lattice a less than discrete option. "On your sleeping bag?" he suggested.

Miles silently moved his body to the edge of the bed. His arousal stood between his thighs fully knotted and as firm as ever.

Victor looked down, finding himself in a similar state. He remained on his knees not quite sure of how to proceed. His paws felt clammy, slick with blend of both their pre. He wasn't quite sure what to do with them. He turned, sliding on his knees and coming to rest on the palms of his paws, his fingers curled into the synthetics the sleeping bag. He took the position he deemed

most appropriate, borrowing it from his limited experience, or rather exposure to more sultry media.

The sleeping bag polymer crinkled as the other fox's weight slid upon it and shifted toward Victor's tail end. Miles had the foresight of muting the television, its incessant cycle of dynamic music long since having become unpalatable. Its light remained the room's primary light source, bestowing upon their bodies a pale-blue hue. Miles corrected Victor's posture, directing his knees further apart and his butt down via the gentle pressure of his fingertips. Some confusion arose regarding the placement of his tail, its anxious left-to-right swooshing impeding the imminent. Miles took the appendage by the base and directed it off to the side; its tip writhed with a life of its own. "Keep this here, if you can," he whispered.

Victor nodded, only then growing conscious of his inexperience, the appearance of which he had hoped to circumvent. The cool fabric beneath his fingers and knees felt a little more real than before, concrete unlike the conflux of urges and drives intertwined like scenes out of sequence, which until that moment all seemed like a good idea. The taste in his muzzle seemed a little more real too, evidence he couldn't wish away, something that would persist in his memory even after its traces vanished. There was safety in knowing he could probably back out without too much awkwardness. Miles, he assumed, was also out of his comfort zone and would probably understand. However the desire to back out seemed subject to his desire to proceed, the prior perhaps fueling the later in some bizarre inverse of logic.

Paws passed over the curve of Victor's behind, brushing flat the auburn fur bordering the white, which like Miles', lined his crevice of his butt. He felt a breath exhale upon the presented patch of intimacy, a distinct trace of body warmth, a premonition. Victor inhaled a sharp and sudden gasp, ears and eyes darted back. His muzzle swept over his shoulder, toward Miles with his muzzle half hidden behind the wisp of his tail, nose pressed beneath its base. Miles paused with his lips gently touching his bare opening, quivering over the spot in nothing other than a kiss. The kiss escalated into a nibble and the first of many licks.

In seconds broad laps wet his crevice, passing repeatedly over the tiny star of his tail-hole, bathing every inch in sultry warmth. He felt both sides of Miles' tongue; the smooth and coarse surfaces touch every wrinkle and recess. Nose, whiskers, and exhalation swept beneath his raised tail, contributing to the intrigued experience of the taboo. He felt tip flick over the folds of his pucker, the tantalizingly slow search for its center, and the inevitable push into his unexplored interior.

Fur stood on end. Joints weakened. Muscles twitched in response. Suppressed breath rushed from his lungs, departing his muzzle in a shudder. He lacked the vocabulary to describe the sensations, a strange merger of fullness and erotic slip, the surge of nerves unaccustomed to the

peculiar blend of stimulation. Signals rushed through limbs and spine, telling of a foreign entity occupying an untouched space, teasing it, subjecting it to what decoded as delight. His friend's lips encompassed his tail-hole, his tongue writhing within. He felt its textures twist through the ring, its tip probe at its limit. Victor lifted his hips toward Miles' muzzle, pressing his rear end against his friend, urging him deeper. Whatever trace of doubt still lingered vanished with the thrust of tongue, sweeping in and out of his body in rapid strokes, skillfully brushing over parts of himself he could only imagine.

Promiscuous shifts between lick, suck, and nibble left Victor's tail-hole gaping and wet with saliva. Miles pulled back into view after moments of indeterminate duration. "That was... um... advanced," he said, circulating Victor's flavor through his muzzle.

"Why'd you do it?" asked Victor, a little too timid to look passed his raised tail.

"Returning the favor, I guess. Plus I think I'm more turned on than usual. Tell no one of this," he patted a gentle slap on Victor's butt cheek, incriminating him as accomplice, a certain degree of irony implied.

Miles scooted between Victor's legs, wasting no time in bringing his painfully erect cock to Victor's crevice. Victor felt the warm shaft touch his intimacy, sliding skin to skin at the cusp of union. "Take it easy," Miles said, moving forward, not waiting for a response. Victor noted Miles had not asked for consent to proceed again, as if he needed to, his conscientious nervousness seemed to have suspended itself for the moment. Perhaps the fox was too far gone, too enticed by an urge to consider going back. Miles massaged a few droplets of pre onto his best friend's tail-hole, zeroing his tip in along the folds, touching the very center. The curved point disappeared into the recesses. Wrinkles vanished around crest and shaft, stretched thin by Miles' size.

Miles passed into him with enough natural lubricant to ease the slip of his slender fox cock. Knot struck flesh, hips met tail-end, halting the lengthy advance. Victor half exhaled, half barked a tone muffled through clenched fangs. His face contorted into an expression on the boundary between ache and acceptance, subject to the peculiar intersection of sensations his mind lacked the experience to categorize. The stretch of his ring, the never before perceived filling of his passage, and the uncanny glide of a foreign entity through his innermost confines sent enticing signals through his every nerve.



"There," Miles said, in a voice so soft it could hardly be described as a whisper. His paw tentatively wrapped around Victor's length, acquainting himself with the dimensions of his best friend's cock, the feeling of which in his grasp may have taken some getting used to. "That's all there is."

Victor panted with his muzzle agape and eyes swept back to the fox atop him. His tail curled around Miles, telling his friend what he was far too timid to say. Ears swept back with one tilted up an edge, curious to perceive every sound. "Your big," he said, his lower jaw quivering as he spoke, fully aware of the statements triviality. He couldn't think of anything less trivial to say, but felt that he needed to say something; anything that would allow him to seem participatory in what he well knew was submission.

He heard an anxious chuckle and felt a bucking push, the stiff maleness inside him twitched, depositing a few drops of pre-cum. "Shush," said Miles, residual strain in his voice as he paused to delay what no doubt every fiber in his body stood charged for. Miles leaned over Victor, bracing himself on the other fox's back. An instinctual impulse coursed beneath his skin,

teaching his limbs the mechanics of sex. His hips piloted the slender fox cock along the narrow path into Victor's body, chasing after the texture and tension it interpreted as desirable.

Victor trembled, experiencing the dimensions of his friend's maleness buried deep inside him. His body conformed around the slender length, deep reaches swept apart by the leading edge of Miles' canine tip. It's curved apex tugging and pulling along his softest parts. The firmness pulsed with noticeable tension, shifting his insides, marking them with the viscosity of vulpine pre-cum. Bladder, prostate, and all the hidden aspects of his manhood became subject to the displacing force. Every part of his gender throbbed with an intense urge, pressure only leaving his body via rivulets of pre.

Miles' warm moist breath exhaled against his back and the nape of his neck, catching in the hollows of his fur. The fox above and behind him leaned in, lost to the chase of the indescribable. His hips drove from numerous angles and at different speeds, pursuing a certain spot, finding it, and moving on to the next. A paw braced himself on the floor, the other pinned down Victor's tail upon his waist. That paw slipped beneath Victor's belly, finding his companion well beyond aroused, wet with his unique slickness. His fingers encompassed Victor's member and caressed its similar shape, stroking its more formidable girth and giving due attention the variations of his tip. Victor shuddered a gasp as if a burden lifted from his shoulders, his hips urged his cock forward as far as they could, through the embrace of his friend's paw.

Both foxes carried out their ritual, lost to the mutual search for satisfaction. Four brown tipped ears swiveled towards each other, flicking to perceive the audible effects of their union. Browns and whites of their fur blurred. Details of their anatomy flashed, carried in and out of view via the swift cycles and shifts of mating. Two sets of paws stood stained in action. Victor's dressed in sleeves of dark brown fur braced against thrusts of growing severity. Miles' bare white paw issued a caress not immediately observable, kept to a subtle stroke beneath Victor's belly. Muffled expressions telling of too much of a certain movement also disclosed a craving for just a little more, hidden within the cadence of their tones.

A shift occurred in the dynamics of Miles' movements. Victor sensed the change in focus, away from the momentum of shared experience and into something else, noting the likelihood that the other fox's personal urges had taken charge. He welcomed the change, reveling in the joys of submission, anticipating the moment of breeding. He could feel his limbs weaken, his hips beginning to ache under the duress of Miles' youthful enthusiasm. His tail-hole refused his call to constrict, no longer able to pass on the intentional pressure Victor correctly assumed would please the other fox. Muscles tensed throughout his body, willed to endure into the next moment, and the moment after that. It seemed that cock, balls, and everything that lay within

him retained an overwhelming flood, only Miles' distracted pawing kept him just shy of the edge.

Miles slipped into a loop of motion, having presumably located a perfect conflux of texture and tightness deep within Victor's body. His thrusts grew frantic and forceful, striving for that unique zone in every pass. Victor clenched his jaw, doing his best to bring his body to bear while Miles' knot struck tail-hole with intensifying force, his furry pouch swung against him, balls ready to unload their contents. One fox pinned the other, holding body against body, preventing everything but ultimate claiming. A long sigh left Miles' muzzle and passed into Victor's neck.

Hips met hips in a final thrust and a knot already twitching under the effects of climax struck tail-hole, irrevocably pushing Victor past a threshold of metaphors. A grunt left his muzzle. Warm fox cum shot into Victor's passage, marking his interior in white substance, flooding folds and recesses with an essence possessing the power to breed. He pressed his body against the pulsing knot, a perverse craving compelling him to do more than endure, to eagerly take Miles' young seed into him. He distinctly felt each forceful pulse, soothing the friction-burnt flesh of his passage with a fluid that seemed comparatively cool, its potent qualities lost in his male body, left to seep and absorb wherever it reached. Within the cascade of thoughts and sensations Victor seized the notion that he had been taken.

The flood tapered with the last and most desperate gyrations, hips pushing forward in a reckless drive to unload his fertile contents as deep as possible, only ceasing and relenting following the last spurt of cum. The fox collapsed atop Victor, panting into his fur and back-swept ears, all eagerness turned to exhaustion after the most illicit of acts. He spent what little energy he had on a final and purposeful sequence of strokes. Only a few passes brought Victor to climax. His tail-hole flexed wearily around his friend's embedded girth, struggling against its impassible features, hugging cum and softening cock. His body shuddered. Every muscle pulled into tension. The reservoir of pressure behind his knot finally allowed itself to drain, driven through his shaft in straining pulses, jetting in long ropes from his cock-slit, staining the fabric where it pooled in a lake of translucent white.

Both panted as the transfer of fluids ceased, leaving the after effects of sex, traces and stains with the power to persist even after their marks faded. Miles surprised Victor with a kiss planted on the back of his neck. The touch sent a shiver through him, a peerless feeling of comfort and security, warmth exceeding that deposited in his body. The touch as brief as a heartbeat made the ordeal seem a little less compromising, and a little more rewarding.

Victor's arms eventually gave out from underneath him. His body lay contorted, tail end in the air still filled with a softening fox-cock, subject to the languid ooze of cum. His chin crashed into

the sleeping bag, fox scented air filtered through the fabric. Miles rested on top, breathing into his neck. "You okay?" he said, speaking into the tufts of fur.

Victor murmured an ambiguous tone into the sleeping bag fabric. Miles shifted some of his weight off the other fox, upon which Victor strained his chin up just above the polymer shell, "I think so."

"Hopefully I didn't break ya."

"I'm pretty sure you did."

"Didn't hurt did it?"

"Not exactly, just intense. I don't think my tail-hole will ever be the same though."

Miles exhaled a tone of amusement though his nose into Victor's fur, careful not to shift too much as to keep Victor plugged as long as possible.

It took a few minutes before Miles' cock slipped from Victor's body, preceding a slight trickle of vulpine seed Victor's weakened tail-hole failed to catch. He gasped, finding the sudden void more uncomfortable than the warm displacement of being filled. The fox climbed off of the other and heaved himself with his back against the bed. Victor remained with his tail in the air for a few more minutes, a little too sore to move despite the unease he felt showing off his used parts. He eventually rolled over, coming to rest beside Miles, avoiding the little puddle he made on the sleeping bag. He took care to make sure his tail tucked against his crevice, cautious of the slickness there. Both sat a few minutes catching their breath. Their legs spread apart revealing two semi-soft fox-cocks, coated in self-made slickness.

A dull soreness emanated from Victor's tail-hole. It felt empty, just a little bit broken from the rigors of its first use. He brought a paw beneath himself to find the furrows of his star slick, loose, unable to maintain the taught seal he expected to find should his paw ever chance to venture there. A fingertip easily slipped inside himself, returning to his view marked with a trace of white binding two fingers in a viscous thread. His paw-pads swept over the substance, feeling hardly any friction. It was difficult not to perceive Miles in its scent, a vestige of the fox the majority of which rested inside of him.

A sensation of disbelief wanted to refute the material evidence coating his paw-pads, a tiny touch of doubt whether its presence marked loss or gain. Scents, soreness, and the sound of post-coital respiration lingered, giving rise to the awareness of certainty. Neither spoke, though questions began to displace baser instincts now that the fog of horniness began to lift itself. Both avoided eye contact, though peripheral vision betrayed enough glimpses to determine the

other's state. The slender fox didn't move, sitting with his muzzle downcast as if fascinated by the curves and details of his slick, now assuredly no longer virginal cock.

"I can't believe we just did that," said Miles.

"Me neither," said Victor, lapsing into silence for a drawn out moment, thinking about what exactly caused him to crawl on all fours so quickly. He asked, "Are you okay with it?" Partly referring to himself.

Miles shrugged, "I don't not feel okay."

"Regrets?"

"No, it felt really good. It's just, well, it's still sinking in. What can I say?"

"What did you expect? You got me naked, got me to give you B.J. and you're surprised?"

"I don't know, I think it's the difference between theory and practice. Been living with this for so long, and now, wow, we did it. Besides, don't tell me you didn't want this too."

"So you've wanted this?"

"Not in as clear of terms as you put it, but yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?" said Victor, casting a glance directly at Miles' face.

"How hard was it for you to tell me?"

"Touché."

"Now here we are," said Miles.

"Now here we are," repeated Victor.

"I'm hungry," said Miles, changing the subject to avoid potential tension.

"Me too," said Victor, not seeing a problem in it.

"Pizza?"

"Sounds good, but you're buying," said Victor, with resolute tone in his voice.

"Fine, but you're going downstairs to pick it up."

"Do I at least get my clothes back?"

"We'll see. 'Nother game?"

"Grrr. Fine."

A phone call, a quick wipe down, and a character-select stage later saw the two battling it out over the screen. Neither fox reached for his clothing just yet, having apparently grown comfortable in each other's bareness. Their vulpine features reflected the light cast by the screen, brighter flashes, including the losses of stock lives illuminated the more intimate parts of their anatomy. The sheen of spilt fluids caught the glint as well, it's scent more than dominant throughout the room, perhaps enticing away a portion of their concentration toward undiscussed tasks that need only take place.

A thin layer of snow crushed beneath four boots, leaving two tracks of footsteps in their wake, each set in a similar gait. Victor and Miles walked side-by-side down the path through Rowan's Woods, apparently the first to disturb the freshly fallen powder. Wisps of mist left their muzzles at irregular intervals.

"First snow," said Victor.

Miles nodded. "Not much."

"Everything looks different."

"That's just you," Miles said.

"How so?"

"You got laid last night."

Victor chuckled, casting a smile over at the other fox. "So did you," he said.

"It still looks like snow to me."

"Do you feel any different?"

Miles shrugged. "Yes and no."

"What do you mean?"

"It's weird. I sort of feel like the same person, but also kind of different. I don't know how to describe it."

"I think I know how you feel. Kind of happy, clean..."

"Loose?" Miles finished.

"Shut up," Victor nudged Miles, leaving a strange curve to the left in their tracks.

Miles laughed with a bit more resonance.

"Any regrets yet?"

"None at all."

"Good," said Victor, trying not to tip his hand.

"Looks like I got something started in you, didn't I?"

"Seriously? Strip Smash Brothers? What were you thinking?"

"Worked didn't it?"

Victor rolled his eyes, "Sly bastard." They curved the round into the main quad. Only another couple braved the cold and ice a few meters away. Everything seemed quiet. Their words sounded a little different, seemed to carry further than normal. "So what does this make us?" said Victor, speaking softer on the count of the phenomenon.

Miles shrugged. "Bi," he said. "If you absolutely need a category."

"That's not what I meant."

"I'm not ready to put a ring on your finger, just yet, if that's what you're asking."

"What happened between us then?"

"We both got laid. We both enjoyed it. And we're both still friends."

"Nothing more?"

"Listen. Let's take what we got last night and carry that around with us for a while. If we like it, we can keep it. If not, we let go. You might even want to find it again someplace else. If after a while we can only find it in each other, we can talk."

"I understand," Victor said, speaking mostly the truth.

"Did I mention my roommate is doing some ROTC event down south next weekend?"

He'll be gone a day and a half," said Miles, colliding with the other fox with enough force to knock him off his course.

The fox beamed a bright smile his companion's way, "LAN party?"

"Warcraft?"

"Warcraft."

"You can use my sleeping bag, if you promise to find some way to get the cum stains you left on it out," said Miles, walking up the steps of Milton Commons, attracting the attention of a nearby group of peers.

"Shush," said Victor, "You had a hand in that."

"I heard no complaints. You made it. You deal with it."

Both foxes disappeared through a door with the dimensions of them both, swinging their tails behind them. Victor's tail moved with an enthusiasm it seldom expressed, perhaps still feeling the previous nights strain and finding more than a little pleasure in it. Others filed in behind them, more or less indifferent to the couple. The foxes maintained their secret, because the joy of such is in their nature.

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