

Catching Up

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Maximilian Ashford, by the grace of his people and the trust of the king, Duke of the City of Southcliff and the surrounding territories, guardian of its citizens and lands, representative of its subjects, and upholder of its laws and traditions, heaved a long, tired sigh as he retired to his personal chambers. The halls of Castle Southcliff were wide and vaulted. The grandeur of the imposing structure made it seem like his walk was more of a parade, an illusion not hindered by the handful of servants, advisors, and guards that shadowed him wherever he went. Finely-woven tapestries depicting acts of valor and nobility warmed otherwise cold walls of grey stone. Intricately-patterned rugs softened his booted footstep. Polished brass sconces reflected candlelight from tapers that never seemed to dwindle, so meticulously were they maintained.

He still managed to feel delighted, boyish pride in his city and his people, even after all the years he'd spent on its throne. He'd been blessed by the gods to be granted a duty that could be his passion. He loved his people; he strived to better their lives and encourage their prosperity, and not only because when they prospered, so, too, did he. But some days left him drained. Hours spent in audiences with his subjects hearing grievances and organizing solutions, hours more spent seeing to the needs of his vassals and the upkeep of his lands, building and repairing bridges and roads, keeping the militias trained and armed. It was an endless flow of letters and report and demands, and he was lucky if he managed to steal a moment from his people to sneak away to the gardens for a moment of calm and contemplation.

One of his staff jumped when he let out a dry laugh. Perhaps he was just getting old. The wings of silvery grey that decorated his temples were a testament to that, and they certainly seemed to be spreading through his dark, black hair with each year that passed. But what was far more telling of his age were the demographics of his subjects. In the two-and-a-half decades of his rule, he'd seen a gradual, but inexorable shift away from what had once been the norm. Less than a fifth of the citizens of Southcliff remained as unmorphed humans, and he had begun to wonder if he was still an appropriate representative of his people as he was, tall and broad-shouldered, but still plainly human. If his immaculately tailored wardrobe and the words of his advisors counted for anything, appearance was important when dealing with one's subjects. People were far more likely to focus on differences than similarities, and he'd been vastly different than all but a handful of the people with whom he'd met that day.

His laugh dropped into a chuckle. Perhaps he wasn't just getting old, but old-fashioned. Surely no one would respect a leader who dwelled on the past more than he planned for the future. And how could he expect that of any of his subjects? Luckily for him the solution was a simple one. The only problem was his own stubborn resistance to change. With a wave he dismissed the small group that seemed set on fussing over him for the rest of the night, though he did it to a chorus of sardonic, "Yes, Your Grace. Of course, Your Grace. Please sleep well, Your Grace." He just grumbled his thanks and shooed them away with assurances that he could see to his evening rituals perfectly fine on his own.

A couple of them didn't seem entirely convinced, but they dispersed without too much extra cajoling, and his guards took up positions in the hall with wordless salutes as he pushed open the door to his bedchamber and shuffled through it. The room that awaited him was just as grandiose as the rest of the fortress, with high, angled ceilings that made the space seem almost

cavernous, but unlike everywhere else, it looked lived-in. It wasn't perfect and orderly, mostly because he had to forbid his staff from making it so. The drapes had been partly pulled apart, letting a slice of moonlight in through the window to contest with the illumination given by the candelabra that filled the room with a low, warm glow.

With a more gratuitous sigh, he slid into a plush chair and kicked his way out of his boots, only to attract the attention of the room's other occupant. "I trust your day was as productive as it was long, then?" murmured Gloria Ashford, the Duchess of Southcliff.

His wife was sitting across the room in front of her mirrored vanity, smoothly running a brush through her long, honey-blond hair. She turned her head, looking at him out of the corner of a single, dark blue eye, and the edge of her mouth quirked upward in a subtle smile. It was one that he couldn't help but return. "Bones and Ichor, I can only pray for it to be so. I don't know how much more of Blackport's whining I can take. My nerves are only equipped to handle so much abrasion. I simply cannot comprehend why he insists on harassing our own merchants with his pointless tolls."

"Not every servant of the crown can be as noble as you, my love," she replied, finishing with her brush and setting it aside. "Surely the gods wouldn't permit such a utopia from existing outside of their heavens. Imagine their ire. No... I'm sure greedy, shrewish men like Blackport are needed to preserve the balance. Though I feel for his wife. If he is as clumsy with his tongue as his oratory makes it seem, then she must live a pitiful life indeed."

He chuckled. "I wouldn't fret overmuch, Gloria. From the rumors I've heard, she not the sort to be stymied by her husband's... deficiencies."

"Oh I'm certain she isn't. She seems a clever and resourceful woman when we happen to speak. I rather like her. I've no doubt that Blackport's success is in no small part thanks to her labors."

With a nod of agreement, he gave his chin a thoughtful stroking. "No doubt at all. Thank the gods one of them has some sense. Perhaps I should entreat her to do more to curb her husband's foolishness."

A light, lilting laugh tilted her head to the ceiling. "Oh, that would likely see more done than trying to reason with that petulant oaf. But that will have to wait for a later time. The bedroom is no place for talk of policy and domestic affairs."

His head bowed at the gentle admonishment, which brought another rich laugh from her chest and pulled a fuller smile across her lips. Just the sound of her mirth was enough to put him at ease. The tension across his shoulders bled away at the dulcet tone of her joy. Pushing back her chair, she stood and turned to face him. She must have retired to their chambers well before he, because she lacked the voluminous dress he'd seen her in earlier in the day. Now she was clad in only her clean, white shift. The scandalously short garment was unfitted at the waist and fell barely past her mid-thigh. It danced loosely around her elegant form but tended to cling to her hips, accentuating the way they rolled with her long strides as she made her way across the room.

The tawny-furred wolf's paws padded nearly silently across the floor, and she didn't slow when she arrived at her destination. Without ceremony, she simply allowed herself to glide into his lap, joining him in his chair and draping her lissome arms around his shoulders. He appreciated the warmth of her body against his. So close, he could smell her perfume, delicate and floral and fearlessly feminine. His hands went to her slim waist, and she granted him a more subdued, private smile as she dipped her head and brushed her muzzle lovingly against his

cheek, letting it tease the line between an affectionate nuzzle and a tender kiss. "You are much too tense, Max."

He wanted to laugh at the absurdity of the statement. At her touch, he most often likened himself to a waxen figure in the summer sun, always on the verge of melting. Her flawless, blue eyes however, glinted with sincerity and concern, so he lifted a hand to tickle at the base of her tapered, lupine ear. It flicked at his touch, but she leaned into his palm. "And yet I never feel more relaxed than when I'm where I belong."

Gloria's eyes slipped closed, and her chest vibrated with a throaty, "Mmh..." before it could resolve itself into her intended words. "With me."

"With you..." he confirmed. With shameless admiration, he let his eyes traverse her. She possessed an allure of uncommon quality. Not very long after he had married her, the kernel of her captivating, youthful appeal, the compassionate young woman he'd fallen in love with, had blossomed into a figure of arresting beauty. She stunned ballrooms into silence at her entrance. She was the envy of ladies in courts across the country. She had a voice that begged to be savored, delicate features that pleaded to be cherished, and a voluptuous form that demanded to be admired, respected, held in awe. Her eyes called for attention, halting servants and lords alike in their tracks, her smiles warmed hearts and inspired greatness, and none knew that more intimately than he.

His finger trailed down from her ear and along the line of her jaw. Her head turned with the slightest of pressures, and he guided her into a lingering kiss. One of her hands pushed fingers through his hair and ran claws against his scalp, seemingly eager to simply touch more of him, and she leaned forward into his mouth, pressing him back into the chair with the weight of her generous bust. Her breath was warm against his lips, and her bushy tail flitted from side to side in a clear indication of her happiness and excitement, one that was further supported with the longing look she shot him as she pulled back and, licked her lips, and playfully twirled his hair around her finger as it spun in lazy circles.

Twenty-three years at his side had done nothing to dull her appetite. Perhaps it was a testament to how much she enjoyed him, perhaps to her youthful nature. He assured himself that it was the latter, because age seemed to have only further accentuated her sensual magnetism. Slowly her hands took hold of his wrists and guided them down her body to the swells of her hips. Her breaths deepened and she toyed with his ear with her teeth, intimidating fangs nipping at his skin as his fingers gathered up the hem of her chemise and carefully worked it up the long, pleasing contours that lurked beneath it. She encouraged him with low, half-growled words in his ear, some promises, some threats, all of which titillated his imagination. As her undergarments rose up past her waist, she leaned back, dragging a kiss across his lips in the process as she lifted her arms up over her head and allowed him to pull the gauzy piece of clothing completely off of her body.

Her coat paled at her belly. Her full, shapely breasts were heavy globes of creamy white that were stamped with the florid pink of her erect nipples and pebbly areola. Her slender abdomen carried her upper body with admirable grace only to give way to the girth of her womanly hips in a swath of sensuous flesh. She wriggled, her tail flicking all the more eagerly, as she ground her curvaceous backside into his lap and swung her proud, womanly endowments such that they swayed enticingly from side to side, inches from his face. He basked in her erotic glow, taking ample time to appreciate his most beloved of vistas before he let a hand drift over her hip, caressing the graceful curve. "I think I've made up my mind, Gloria."

She must have known exactly what he was talking about, because she stilled, eyes wide and attentive as she stared down at him. "Oh?"

Gently, his fingers kneaded at the plush mass of her hips, working a little vitality back into her and leaving her fidgeting pleasantly against him. "Yes. And before you remind me, yes I know I should have listened to your advice from the start. I just... didn't want to rush into anything so drastic."

Her ears drooped, and her lips curled in a most theatrical pout. "I understand, Max. I only wanted you to be happy with whatever you decided. I suppose it just took me less time to figure out which option would make you the happiest."

The corner of his mouth pulled upward in a rueful smirk. "When did I become so predictable?"

She dismissed his tone with a wave of her hand. "The moment I truly realized how much you care about this city and the people that call it home, how much they occupy your thoughts. It didn't take long, although the decades spent with you certainly helped to hone my understanding of your desires. You are a simple, honest man, Max, with simple aims. Only the foolish, ignorant, or already duplicitous would suspect anything else of you."

Perhaps he *was* as transparent as she suggested, but to hear her compliments filled his chest with hot pride, and he gave her a halcyon squeeze in return. "I pray I still have your blessing."

Gloria leaned forward enough to pressing her lips into his forehead. It brought her warm, soft breasts against his chin. He returned the favor, pushing his mouth against her collarbone, filling the entirety of his vision with an expanse of pale, golden fur. He could feel her voice vibrating in her throat. "You make it sound as though you've not always had it, Max."

His laugh bounced her on his lap and ruffled the fur at the base of her neck. "I suppose that is fair enough. Perhaps sometime this week I'll find the time to go through with it. I imagine it will take some getting used to."

The look she gave him when she pulled away from him was full of delighted amusement. "Oh it most certainly will, my love. Which is why I believe you must do it as soon as possible. Tonight."

Cautious suspicion lifted his eyebrow. "Oh is that so? Where is the loving, beautiful woman that so often urges me to have patience?"

Her blunt, canine claws kneaded at his shoulders, and her eyes glimmered with subdued energy. "She is only eager to see your majesty, Your Grace. Though she is wondering where the bold, proactive man she married might have disappeared to. It is unlike him to put off action once he has made up his mind..." She finished with a playful bat of her eyelashes.

True... that did sound like him, and he reinforced her perception by kissing her, vigorously and without warning. His hand clutched at the spacious curve of her rump and his other arm curled about her shoulders as he stood, hauling her up with him. The magnificence of her figure was a joyous weight in his arms, but he was strong, if anything, and she only let out a soft coo of glee her limbs twined around his chest. Her tail was slapping rhythmically against his side, and when he pulled his lips from hers she squeezed him aggressively, suggestively compressing her body against his chest. It made his voice come out as a muted wheeze. "I had a potion made for this occasion, and I believe it is still in the care of my illustrious wizard. If you'd like, I can have it fetched for us."

She brought her mouth back to his for a brief instant before wriggling from his arms and dropping lightly to her paws. "No need, my love." With a gay bounce in her step, she trotted

across the room, and pulled open a drawer in her vanity. She bent low to rummage through it, flashing him the full, rounded hills of her backside and the lurid, pink cleft nestled below it. He started his stroll over, but before he could make it to that scenic vista, she popped back up and pranced over to him, meeting him half way and clutching a small crystalline vial in her delicate hand.

Pushing it into his palm, she then threw her arms around his waist and looked expectantly up at him, cheeks flushed with excitement. He looked at the diminutive flask with a critical eye. It was full of a bright, magenta fluid that oozed like syrup as he swirled it with his wrist. It was certainly the same distinctive potion that he'd commissioned from his court wizard. "Gloria... How... This is... I was certain I'd-"

"Oh I hope you hadn't meant it as a surprise!" the duchess exclaimed through her coy grin. "Although you should know me better than to think you can keep secrets from me, my love, especially after all these years."

A defeated scowl worked its way across his lips, and his fingers closed over the vial. However, his sigh was one of willing surrender, and his other hand dipped to caress the convex curvature of her thigh. "You're right of course. But this just means that I'll have to make a more determined effort next time."

"I look forward to it, Max. But I believe we've got more pressing matters to occupy our attentions until that time comes. I do hope you're not planning on teasing me. I'm not certain I can take the suspense."

The look in her eyes, that of total, adoring acceptance and excited anticipation, wiped away all doubts that might have formed in the recesses of his mind. With an arm behind her shoulders, he popped the stopper from the vial with his thumb and murmured, "Then let it not be said that I am a man without mercy." He then put the little flask to his lips and upended it. In spite of its viscous nature, the potion poured readily from the container, leaving the smooth crystal clean and empty in a mere second. And yet the liquid was thick enough to almost be chewy, like cold molasses. It tasted much the same, cloyingly sweet and viciously potent. It left his tongue tingling while he managed to maneuver it to the back of his throat and swallow it down.

A wave of prickling effervescence washed down his spine, and he shivered as he smacked his lips. "Gods' Blood, that was... rather bizarre." Gloria nodded sharply, only watching him with an expectant smile. He didn't take much notice of it, however, because it felt as though the potion was simmering in his gut. It was as if there was something bubbling in his belly, bringing with it a peculiar tingling sensation and a feeling of subtle, spreading warmth. It crept outward through his body, taking with it the ominous bristling that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end. All while he was still trying to place the indescribable taste that lingered on his palate.

But eventually the heat stirring in his body became too intense to ignore, and he looked down at himself. A tightness on the border of discomfort was bleeding through him, making him feel stiff and strained, and he let out a muffled, involuntary grunt as he pressed a hand against his stomach, balling it into a fist as his expression twisted into an uneasy grimace. Gloria released him and stepped away, her fingers knotted into an excited ball that she pressed over her belly. Her eyes were wide and alert, her ears perked up and listening to his breathing grow heavier.

The heat crawled through his veins, pulsing along with the beat of his heart. Each second saw it grow more unforgiving. And yet... he couldn't exactly call it unpleasant. He hummed,

confused and intrigued, even as perspiration began to bead on his skin. "Gloria, I... I think something's happening. I think-"

"Hush, Max." she interjected with a shake of her head. "Don't talk. Just experience it. I want to watch."

He didn't have time to acknowledge her desires, because it had already begun. Invisible sparks danced under his skin, through his muscle and bone, each arriving at his extremities with a rush of raw sensation. His skin grew sensitive. He could feel each fiber of his clothing clinging to his damp body, chafing as he shifted restlessly. He lifted a hand to pull his doublet away from his throat. The snug garment was unusually confining, and he felt he needed a little air, anything to soothe the heat cooking him from within. His fingers stopped halfway up his body, however, because what he saw startled him into stillness. His fingernails were darkening. Thin threads of color were bleeding from his fingertips and into his nails, staining them a dark, coal-grey tint, and the process was being mirrored on his other hand.

Before he could process much of the curious phenomena, his focus was scattered by a sudden, burning itch that manifested on the back of his palm. The viciousness of it drew a hiss through his clenched teeth. By the time he'd put his altered nails to his skin, the sensation had taken up residence on his other hand, and he quite abruptly felt the patch of short, fine hairs that was sprouting from innumerable new follicles. Each was dark and soft, and they thickened as they grew into the beginnings of a coat of sleek, black fur that quickly spread across his hands and started up both of his arms, pressing up against the cloth of his shirt. He hurriedly jerked his sleeves up to his elbows, watching the sea of jet hairs hungrily devour his skin, blanketing it with the sensation of more insufferable itching that made him bounce on the balls of his feet.

With a fascinated purr, Gloria watched him fidget. He felt fur prickling across his torso, and none of it was doing anything to abate the heat that was roiling under his skin. He sucked in an alarmed gasp when the first hairs poked up from under his collar and crept up his neck. Grinding his fingernails into his palms to stifle the urge to claw at his own face, he shivered and pinched his eyes shut as fur swept in an onyx wave up along his jaw and chin, over his nose, and around his eyes. It tickled, of all things. It made threatened to make him sneeze. But when the spreading layer of hair reached his ears, he froze at the sharp, pulling sensation that overwhelmed his other senses.

His shaking hands flew up to the sides of his head. His fingers brushed over the once-familiar shapes of his ears only to feel them shifting at his touch. A noise like the continual ringing of a fine chime sounded in his head as they slowly rode up his skull and stretched further into his waiting fingers taking on a decidedly inhuman point. Ridges smoothed, and they bent inward on themselves as they rode up and out past the top of his head, a pair of long, sharp, concave organs that stuck up through his hair and would have looked perfectly at home on some woodland deer. Nascent muscles swiveled them around at new sounds of their own accord, and the alien feeling of being unfamiliar with his body threatened to overwhelm him.

At least until the shocking sounds of the bones of his face crunching under his skin shocked a stiff grunt from his lungs. He blinked rapidly, slapping his hands over his cheeks and nose and trying to puzzle out what had just happened as everything under his touch shifted with frantic urgency. With a few more unnerving pops, his nose and jaw jutted an inch into his palms, and then ground out a few more. He groaned, slurring drunkenly as his tongue bulged and clumsily ran over numerous reshaping teeth. Panic welled briefly up in his gut, but the waves of blinding, euphoric sensation stamped it out. As worrisome as the sounds his reshaping face was

making, it felt unabashedly good, like a warm bath after a long day that expertly released all of the tension that was mounting under his skin.

His dark, enlarged nostrils flared around a huge breath when his nose and mouth finally stopped pushing forward from his face, finally terminating a strong, triangular, and most certainly cervine profile. For a moment, he could only blink down the length of his bony muzzle while he explored it with reverent fingers. He opened his mouth, licked his lips, and clicked his teeth as he popped his jaw, working the newly relocated tendons and muscles around their range of motion. It all felt overly large and clumsy, and he dreaded hearing how his new lips would mangle his words. But he didn't bother trying to muddle his way through voicing his awe. He just reveled in it. It was only feeling better and better, a dull, throbbing ache that pounded through his body and sent the corners of his mind buzzing with distant, indistinct pleasure.

His fur had made it past his knees, and the thickness of it was making his well-tailored clothing feel more and more snug across his body as it finished growing in. In fact he was beginning to regret not disrobing before embarking on this particular journey. The constricting discomfort was beginning to grate on him, detracting from the bizarrely pleasant experience. He shook his head, grunting as the seams of his clothing began to creak in warning. Across his body, his wardrobe was complaining at being made to contain what he was becoming, and the air left his lungs in a sharp, breathless grunt when violent realization poured ice through his veins. It was not just the added cushion of his fur that was stressing his outfit, and it was certainly not shrinking. He felt it, the slow, pulsing burn in his muscles and sinew. His entire body was expanding outward, stretching at his bones and tendons with unrelenting and deliberate pressure.

When a button snapped from his doublet and flew across the room, he staggered backward, stumbling as his feet deformed with the sounds of cracking bones. "Wh-what?! Gloria!"

With a start, the wolf darted forward and latched onto his arm, giving him something at least somewhat stable on which to lean. "I honestly don't know what you expected, Max. Vandan deer are not small or meek creatures. Besides, Southcliff deserves a ruler to match her grandeur. Come; walk while your feet still work. Over to the bed. Come now."

With her guidance, he managed to lurch across to the room to their bed, and he transferred his weight to one of its sturdy posts. His wife seemed smaller, more delicate. Of course she did. Her eyes ravaged him, and her grin steadily widened as small rents opened up along the seams of his shirt, allowing smooth, sable fur to taste sweet freedom. More buttons were lost as his chest pushed free, splitting his doublet and undershirt down the middle to the pops of tearing threads. Gloria's fingers touched him lightly, poked under his dying clothes to feel along the firm muscle of his chest as it swelled to keep up with his powerful, masculine proportions.

He ground his teeth as his legs trembled beneath him and his wife ogled his swelling frame. Under his stockings, flesh was writhing, shifting and flowing into new and inhuman shapes. "H-help. My feet." he gasped, trying not to pant so heavily that his heaving chest did even more damage to his shirt.

Snapping from her idle appreciation of his body, Gloria blinked, glanced down at his misshapen feet, and nodded, dropping to a crouch and helping to remove his stockings. They were pulled free in time to let him watch as his toes simply melted and flowed together. His nails pushed further from his toe tips and grew thick and hard, taking on a dark, glossy appearance. His entire foot slimmed and elongated, and his ankle lifted uncomfortably off of the ground, at least until his new, cloven hooves could awkwardly take his growing weight. A pair of similarly

tipped dewclaws erupted behind each hoof, and the unguligrade appearance was completed as the last patches of his skin were swallowed up by his now complete coat of midnight fur.

There was no way he could walk like this. He could barely stand. He wobbled threateningly, and the only thing that saved him from toppling into an overwrought heap was his trusty bedpost, but even that was almost rendered insufficient when an abrupt pang of bone-crunching pressure nearly folded him over on himself. Sensation flickered up and down his spine, and as he hunched, his doublet and shirt both split open neatly down the middle of his back. But feeling mercifully cool air caressing his bare fur wasn't enough to distract him from the feeling of something balling up in his pants, behind him. He groaned as a knot of flesh and bone bunched at the very end of his spine, pushing free of his body and grinding down between the cheeks of his butt in a most unnerving fashion.

Daring to risk his stability, he peeled a single hand from his bedpost. When he reached behind him, he pulled his trousers and underclothes far enough down his backside to free his stubby, furred tail. He couldn't quite get it in his vision as he strained to look over his shoulder, but it was certainly there. He could feel it, feel the hair finish growing along its short length. However, he shouldn't have moved his head so much, his shifting perspective as his head was forced further from the floor by his elongating limbs and spine left him suffering from vertigo. And he closed his eyes, trying to focus on something other than the pounding ache in his head or the way his frame was shredding his clothes, pushing muscled limbs free.

As if his body would let him ignore what was happening to it. No, with a sudden crack that sounded like a bolt of lightning had struck within his skull, he shivered and collapsed sliding down the post and to his knees to scramble for purchase on the bed. His back arched as his spine ached with the force of the sharp, merciless sounds that filled his head and pushed a pair of bony spurs up through his scalp from the rear of his bestial head, freeing his antlers to begin their growth up through his hair. Like a sapling viewed for years in but a handful of seconds, glossy, dark grey bone creaked from his head a few shuddering inches at a time. All the while he writhed. His skin burned under his fur. His blood roared through his ears and throbbed through his veins, and his body continued to grow.

With a spastic flex of his arms, no more effort than that required to push his stunned face from his mattress, the sleeves of his shirt split up to the shoulder. His strong arms refused to be hidden any longer. The rest of his garment was not much longer for the world. Tears merged, becoming gaping holes in the fine fabric as his lungs pumped like bellows to feed both his shock and awe. His legs were bunched clumsily beneath him, but as they thickened into their proper proportion they split seams like a cocoon destined to birth a large, imposing cervine. And still, inch after inch of antler poured from his skull and rose up above his drunken visage like a natural crown of branching prongs. One hand touched them, feeling each dangerous point as it sharpened itself in his touch, the other worked to push him further upright, trying to keep him from just contorting on the floor as he had been frightfully close to doing.

After what seemed like an eternity, the heat that had seemed to drive his metamorphosis began to dwindle. His antlers ceased their growth, stopping at a span that any trophy hunter would have called "prestigious." The aching stretching that had bloated his entire body to absurd proportions fell off, leaving much of his sweat-dampened fur exposed to the cold. He worked just to breathe. It felt as if he'd just sprinted a circuit of the city walls, and rather than make any feeble attempt at standing up, he decided to just flip himself over, sliding down onto his butt and leaning back against the bed to wobble like a drunken man.

Blinking blearily, he scrubbed his eyes with a fist, trying to clear his vision somewhat. He nearly punched himself in the muzzle, and the movement alone was enough to pop a few more threads of the remnants of his shirt that clung stubbornly to his chest. His head hurt as his slowing heart rate allowed his blood to drain from it. "Gods preserve me. That was intense." he muttered. The pitch of his voice had fallen slightly with the depth of his chest, but his ears swiveled inward as he lifted his head in surprise. He'd managed to speak without too much trouble, and that small victory was enough to bring a little smile to his cervine features.

With a growl, he hooked his fingers under the remains of his collar. The blasted thing had managed to cling to his throat, and was making it a task just to inhale. The half-sundered cloth shredded in his grip, and he pulled it away, finally taking a deep, unobstructed breath. The fur around his neck had grown long and shaggy, and without his collar to restrain it, it spilled down onto his chest. Sheepishly, he poked a few fingers through it, marveling at it retained softness and lustrous, raven coloration. He looked so dark and-

"Magnificent." Gloria hissed between reverently parted lips. He jerked his head around at the sound of her soft voice, having nearly forgotten she was still there, kneeling just a few feet away. The wolf crawled over, pushed herself boldly under his arm and slapped her own around the barrel of his chest. Her mellow, blue eyes were wide with delight, and she seemed incapable of keeping her tongue from her lips as her hand glided up the firmness of his muscle and joined his in his mane, lacing delicate fingers through the soft hair.

"Look at yourself, Max." she continued, breathing into his side as she pressed her lips into his fur. "Just look at you. You were never an unimpressive man, but look at what you have been hiding from your people all these years! Take in this majesty!"

She laughed, squeezing him with fierce prideful strength, and he couldn't help but share in a small portion of his wife's excitement, especially with her supple body pressing so intimately against his. Everything felt heavy and awkward, but it also felt far from inappropriate. His antlers made moving his head feel ponderous and unwieldy, but in spite of his changes, it still felt like his own body. It felt right and natural, and contentment welled up in his chest, pushing aside some of his alchemically-induced fatigue. And he stared down at his feet as he wiggled his hooves, trying to accustom himself to the alien sensation of controlling something so inhuman.

His wife once more pulled him from his wandering thoughts, this time with a pat on his chest and a soft murmur. "Let me help you stand, my love. I want to see all of you."

With another doubtful glance at his hooves, he gave her a careful nod. "Yes. Of course. Let me get my feet under me."

He rolled over onto his knees, and with a firm grip on his trusted bedpost and a little of Gloria's assistance, he managed to tuck a hoof under him, and then, miraculously, the other. With a grunt, he pushed his wobbling legs straight, and he only recoiled slightly at the sensation of standing on his toenails. "Gods above, how to people do this?!"

"Practice, my love." Gloria assured him. "Give yourself time. Just take a breath. Relax."

He did just that. He forced himself to pull in another languid breath that puffed out his chest, and then his cheeks as he let it out slowly. "Better?" mused the wolf next to him.

"Much." he tried to convince himself. "Although it occurs to me that I'll be attending court tomorrow wearing nothing. I don't believe anything in my wardrobe will cover me now."

She laughed, rolling her head back on her shoulders as she shook with explosive mirth. At the same time, he realized just how much he'd grown. He hadn't been a small man, but neither was she a small woman, and she once stood with the top of her head level with his nose. Now she came up to the middle of his chest, meaning he's put on at least a foot and he knew not how

many pounds of muscle, bone, and sinew. "I'm sure we can think of something come the morning," she declared with a savage grin, "but I say let them stare! It would do some of them good to see what a real man looks like! Besides, how will Baroness Seris believe any of the tales I tell of your prowess without seeing what you have to offer for herself?"

He chuckled. "So am I a trophy buck now?"

She had to reach up to curl her fingers over his shoulders. "My trophy buck." she corrected. "And at... fourteen points, quite the take, I must say. But I've known that all along."

Her lips twisted up into a sly smile, and he leaned down, much more deeply than he was accustomed to, to kiss her. His shredded shirt complained and ripped further down his back as he bent, and as his mouth met hers and an arm looped around her back, caressing her softness, the other hand grabbed at tattered fabric, using his new strength to tear it from his muscled torso. Gloria purred, clutching at the back of his neck and digging her claws through his mane. His lips were heavy and clumsy, and his tongue doubly so, but her mouth opened in quiet supplication, a breathless invitation that pulled on him just as much as the earnest desire burning in her half-lidded eyes.

She quivered against him, letting out a muffled moan as he filled her mouth with his tongue. Hers danced around it, lusting wetly over him. Her breath was hot on the fur of his cheeks, and they spent a moment sharing the bulk of his unwieldy organ between them. Eventually, and very much to his dismay, she pulled away from him, sinking back down his chest from where she had strained to reach him. "You've grown, Max."

As if it was possible to ignore his new stature. "Somewhat, yes." he said through thoughtfully pursed lips.

Baring her fangs in a hungry, predatory grin, her hands slid down his arms, fondly kneading his dense musculature. "It makes one wonder what else might have grown with you..."

He glanced downward, following her gaze to his loins. His trousers hung loosely on his legs, ripped apart by the girth of his sturdy thighs, but they clung resolutely, desperately to his hips, with only a few stubborn strips of cloth to ensure the crotch of his pants preserved his modesty. Even then, it was quite literally a stretch. His beautiful and shamelessly nude wife was pressed against him, her shapely form rubbing fur to fur, and he was rightly excited, a notion that was supported by the alarming bulge between his thighs. Gloria wriggled against him, pushing forward, blocking his view of his groin with a splash of lewdly compressed cleavage as her breasts squished suggestively against his stomach. She licked her lips and pressed them against his chest, lingering on his hard muscle while her hands dropped to the remains of his trousers.

Her mouth dipped to the uppermost reaches of his rigid abdomen, tracing the cobbled muscle that divided his stomach into a network of ridges and valleys. His sharply-defined physique had been smoothed by the fur that had blanketed it, but that only seemed to excite the wolf further as her lips glided across the sleek, sable coat. As she steadily lowered herself, bending her knees and sinking further and further down his body, her claws poked through the holes his lower body had made in his clothing. Lazily, she pulled, widening the rents and adding to them until slivers of loose cloth could drop from his legs and flutter to the floor between his hooves.

One of his arms was curled around the bedpost, but he supposed that didn't mean he couldn't help his love in her self-appointed task. With his free hand, he finished the destruction of his shirt, pulling the loosely hanging cloth from his chest and making sure it wouldn't get in the way of her wandering lips. The wolf looked up to him, meeting his gaze as she dragged his ruined trousers down his legs and let the last of his clothing hit the floor. The cool air wafted

over his bared flesh as his excited manhood sprang free of its vanquished prison and pushed against her chest to throb fitfully.

A pleased coo warbled in her chest as she pondered his boldness, but she eventually peeled her body from his, letting a little air between them and allowing him to steal a glance down between his legs. "Gods' Blood..." he hissed, his eyes wide with awe. He had never been a poorly endowed man, but the turgid column of flesh that pulsed against his wife's chest was intimidatingly large, and it strained upward as it grew increasingly rigid. He bit down on his lips as, with a playful smirk, Gloria's clawed fingertips grazed lightly over the throbbing flesh and she let out a moist, pent-up breath over the angry, florid organ.

With twist of her head, her tongue lashed up over his swollen crown, and he felt the fur lining his spine bristle at the sensation. His taut manhood felt raw and overexposed, sensitive almost to the point of discomfort, and his fist balled up at his side as she did it again, leaving stripes of saliva on his tight hide. She then paused to flick her eyes up to his. "Most impressive, my love." purred the tawny she-wolf, lifting a hand to his inflating manhood. "It's been some time since I've had a big, savory piece of venison. I pray you don't mind if I savor it."

Hiding her eyes beneath heavy, lusty lids, she proceeded to run her tongue over the meat of his glans, circling it with slow, swirling motions as she explored the rest of its burgeoning mass with a delicate touch. She gave his shaft a long, lazy stroke, letting her fingers dawdle on prominent, twitching veins as she encouraged blood to pour into his thickening flesh, stoking the fire that sped his heart and pulled a soft groan from his lungs. She held it to her lips, letting them meander down its length, and she left a trail of slick moisture that her fingers were quick to put to use. Her mouth caressed it from crown to root and then retraced its path, coursing along every inch.

From his angle, their proportions seemed even less evenly matched. She seemed almost fragile next to the stiff organ that she casually pumped with her hand. It was more than a foot long, thirteen or fourteen inches at least, and he tensed as her fingers dipped to offer greetings to the enlarged globes that hung beneath it. His sac felt taut and heavy between his thighs, and it too was covered in a cloak of midnight fur. It strained around a pair of churning organs that greatly resembled large, ripe apples in size. She cautiously palmed one of the rotund masses, hefting it with a critical eye and testing it with the most tender of squeezes. He shivered, and the small beads of moisture that were gathering at the end of his mammoth manhood and running into her fingers quickened in their formation, earning her a dollop of clear, masculine fluid that smeared over the end of her muzzle.

Gloria laughed and licked it from her lips before sliding her maw forward for more. The breadth of the shaft before her should have stymied her efforts, but she opened her mouth wide and took his tip between her lips, filling her mouth with steely meat and grinding it against her tongue and palate. He thought he would pass out from the spine-tingling sensation that burned through his crotch at the sensual contact. His loins ached, throbbing thick with desire even as his tender flesh made him writhe as her tongue traced long, looping whorls around his girth. She firmly wrapped a hand around his base as she made him slick, sliding herself further forward and squeezing him deeper into her mouth, past her lips and against the entrance of her throat.

With a purr, she held herself there, vibrating deliciously around him. She couldn't hope to engulf all of him, but her hand eagerly cared for what was left, giving him smooth strokes with easy rolls of her wrist. Lazily, the wolf withdrew her head, dragging her tongue and lips down his shaft with a gratuitously long *slurp* and pulling free with a wet *pop*. It left his first half shining with saliva, and she went back to licking, spreading the gloss of moisture down his

length to ease the movements of her steadily pumping hand. "Nnh..." she mewled, speaking through a relished growl, "You taste as delightful as ever, my love. Heady. Strong."

She continued to purr, her chest rumbling with needy growls. He only focused on remaining standing under the weight of his encroaching bliss. Under her devout attentions, he swelled, throbbing to his fullest extent and girth. It was almost monstrous, and he was certain, though he'd grown at least a foot in height, that he had received more than a proportional boost between his legs. His pride seemed nearly dangerous, a rock-hard, fleshy cudgel that his wife worshiped with half-lidded eyes and cheeks that burned red through her soft fur.

He let out a shaky breath just to hiss as he sucked in the next through gritted teeth. His transformation had left him so sensitive that even his wife's reverent attentions were almost painful in their intensity. His loins felt tight, and he was unaccustomed to the weight that jutted proudly from them. Gloria savored every inch, lapping lustfully along each thick vein and throbbing contour until his gruff voice began to quiver in his chest. Only when the wood of his trusted bedpost started creaking under the frantic strength of his grip, did she slip her tongue back into her mouth and push herself away from the object of her delight. She simply grinned up at him through her lashes. "It looks as though your ordeal has taken it out of you, Max. You should lie down, relax, let me take care of you."

She didn't really give him a choice. With one hand on his hip and the other wrapped around his furious shaft, she guided him back and plopped him down at the edge of the bed. She then stood, pushing him further, forcing him to retreat toward the center of their plush mattress as she climbed up and followed him at a prowl, on her hands and knees. Her tail excitedly batted that air, and her tongue glided over her lips, leaving them pert and wet as she pushed a kiss against his. "It's my understanding that we wolves usually hunt in packs, and though it would likely take a group effort to tame a creature of such majesty, I would have you all to myself."

He chuckled and threw a thick, heavy arm around her, holding her to him. "I would have it no other way."

She wriggled eagerly in his grip, lingering against his lips as she hiked her leg up over his waist and straddled him, grinding her sumptuous butt down into his sturdy abdomen. His hands fell to her hips, giving her a series of firm squeezes that left her writhing all the more insistently. Where the cleft between her legs met his stomach, he felt dampness wicking into his fur, and the sounds she made as he caressed her left no doubt as to its source. When she pushed herself away, her breath was quickened into a shallow, ardent panting, and she slipped from his hand as she shifted. With rocking hips, and an eagerly flicking tail, she turned herself around, presenting the long, lissome lines of her back to him, the swell of her hips and the taper of her waist. Her tail wagged furiously in the air over him as she scooted herself backward, letting herself splay out over his torso while backing her hindquarters toward his face. Dropping his head to keep the foremost tines of his antlers from prodding at her rear, he helped her ride upward on him, pulling apart her thighs.

Glistening and enflamed with ruddy desire, her bright, reddened womanhood hovered tantalizingly over him as she finished positioning herself. Due to their new difference in lengths, she had to stretch, reaching down his body to put her lips to his steely flesh, but she managed it. He tensed as she devoured him, guiding his girth into her mouth with an eager hand, but her need was clear, and he was certainly not going to let it go unaddressed. She jumped and released a muffled, "Nnmph..." when he clapped his hand down over the curves of her shapely rump, taking up the supple muscle in a firm grip and pulling her downward to meet him. He introduced his new mouth to her bare and brazen loins with a wet, open-mouthed kiss that very nearly engulfed

the whole of her engorged, feminine flower. She reacted much the same as he had, tensing in shock at the abrupt and fearless stimulation, but her felt her moan around his manhood nonetheless, a low, hungry mewl that continued until the breath had been fully spent.

Her familiar taste coated his tongue as he gave her a long, languid sampling that pushed apart her netherlips and let his meaty organ linger against her entrance, and her hands clutched at the root of his thick shaft so she could begin moving them up and down its length with steady, patient pumping. His body flexed urgently beneath her at the sensation that numbed his spine as her mouth bobbed up and down on him, inching its way deeper. But she had him precisely where she wanted him. He just focused on what was directly before him, surrendering his body to her and forcing his mouth against her with yet more focused determination.

With a tight, stabilizing grip on her pliant rump, he dug himself in, grinding the end of his new muzzle between her delicate petals, butting himself up against her entrance and letting the girth of his tongue splay out over her tender skin. He savored every fraction of an inch, finding the firm little nub of her clit and rolling his flexible organ around the diminutive point of pleasure. Her grunt was choked off into a thick, strained gurgled around him, but it was there, not a meek moan but a coarse vocalization of her bliss. It was his only duty to bring forth more.

But the wolf was not about to be so simply outmaneuvered. With the apex of his manhood throbbing forcefully against the beginning of her throat, the full length of her tongue was free to caress him, to glide ravenously around his great size. She accepted the thin rivulets of precum that trickled from his loins, mixing it with her saliva and coating him well with a single hand that moved continuously along his bared length, eager to ensure that his entirety was tended to. The other remained cupped around the dense mass of his burdened sac, massaging his swollen testes with tender care. He could almost feel them churning, aching ominously within their taut, black-furred prison.

It became a race, one he tried desperately to win. His tongue lashed her succulent cleft with as much artistry as he could muster. He treasured the little bead of ecstasy that she seemed dead set on grinding down into his lips with each jerk of her hips, and not without some small result. Her chest was filled with long, grateful moans, and her thighs shuddered, squeezing down on his head with urgent, mindless force. But besting her was a hopeless endeavor. His metamorphosis had left him so receptive to her touch, to her impassioned ministrations. He felt utterly helpless against her onslaught, and he stiffened and arched his back as his bliss boiled over.

Her head bobbed up, withdrawing until only his tip remained within the wet, suckling warmth of her maw. He grip tightened, clamping down on him even as he surged in her hand. As he dilated, her fingers flew viciously along his length, and his body rewarded her efforts with a long, gooey rope of pearlescent seed that splattered across her palate and over her tongue. It was joined by another a split second afterwards, and then another, enough to fill her cheeks and break the seal she had on his spasming flesh with her lips. The volume of it seemed to surprise her, but not concern her. The wolf's head flew back, and she eagerly milked him with a rolling wrist while she caught a few sticky strands along her chin and throat. It matted into her burnished fur as she returned her mouth to him, letting his seed spill from her lips and drool down his length, adding only more slick lubrication to her earnest efforts.

He could barely focus enough to draw breath. The dire, pounding throb in his loins erased all thought, and the lightning bolts of pleasure that ripped up his spine left his powerful frame heaving under her. It trapped him, and he could only groan under the strain of pumping his essence into his lover's accepting maw just for it to stream down over his loins in a tide of

pearlescent white. It felt as though his entire being was vibrating with the intensity of it. The peak of his ecstasy consumed him, and he was still fitfully oozing gobs of translucent cum when, an eternity later, the wolf pulled her well-used mouth away and peeled herself from his torso.

She peeked back over a shoulder at him, making a show of licking her lips clean. Not that it did much. Her cheeks, chin, and chest were splattered with his leavings. She was a mess, and he could only imagine what their bed looked like between his thighs. None of it even slowed her down, however, and she dismounted him with a shaky moan to flop bonelessly down into the mattress next to him.. "You... have certainly not lost your touch, my love."

He dizzily lifted his head from the bed. The event of the evening had left him wholly drained, and his antlers made his skull feel even heavier than it already was. Still he still mustered the fortitude to raise his arm enough to trail a finger down his sagging length and then roll onto his side to throw an arm over her. His hand fell over her trim belly, and he gave her a fond rub as she inspected her cum-plastered chest with an easy grin. "You and I both will have to rise early in the morning, Max. It will take an age to get us in a passable state." she added with a rueful shake of her head.

Unworried about the remnants of his seed that coated her lips, he reached over and pressed a kiss over them. His own taste was potent on his tongue; it clung to his palate in a manner that wasn't entirely unpleasant, if certainly odd, and he hummed deep in his chest as he cupped his palm over a full, rounded mound of her chest. Her puffy nipple was like a little nub of diamond against him, and he rolled it gently between two fingers as he shook his head. "We will worry about that on the morrow, and no sooner. Besides, I am far from done with you, my dear. You've merely whetted my appetite."

She purred and tilted her head toward him, peering up at him with soft, glimmering eyes. And then she laughed. "That's good, my love, because I believe I see something that might give you some trouble."

His eyebrow lifted, and he followed the line of her gaze. "Wh-what is it? Did something not go as planned?"

"That depends on what was planned I suppose, Max. It seems that, in your eagerness, you neglected to remove your circlet."

His hand flew up to his head. From the bizarre restructuring and enlarging of his skull, his circlet, a band of intricately wrought silver studded with ruby and jet, had ridden up from its usual place on his brow. Its weight was such a familiar one that he'd not even considered it. It was when he attempted to remove it that he saw the issue his wife had pointed out. With a tiny, metallic *clink*, the symbol of his office struck the lowest tines on his antlers and stopped dead, refusing to move any farther. "Oh dear." he said, blinking dumbly at his predicament.

Gloria laughed again and rolled to face him. Her hand pulled at his arm, drawing it away, and the other wrapped around the breadth of his chest, drawing them together. "It's not as though you frequently remove it anyway, my love. Ignore it. And you'll eventually shed in preparation for the next year. I believe you were speaking of an appetite left unsated?"

He frowned, furrowing his brow in an attempt to see his forehead, but her lips pulled him away. They danced along his, down his neck, and she quickly pushed him over onto his back once more. She crawled back up, plopping down firmly onto his stomach, and pulled his hand back to her chest. He sighed, feeling pulsing vitality once more flooding his loins, and pulled her down by the shoulder, splaying her out along his body. She squirmed between his arms, but her tail was flicking excitedly back and forth as her breasts compressed lewdly against him. "Yes." he whispered into her quivering, lupine ear. "I believe I was."