

A Predator's Moon

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Venata marched confidently through the woods, feeling disturbingly calm considering the circumstances. She didn't really know where she was going, but her feet were taking her somewhere, and she didn't bother fighting it. It was instinctual, and she felt no fear or worry as she was guided somewhere. She had been into the forest before, but never this deep. The twilight darkness shrouding the air under the trees was quiet and brooding, and Venata could almost feel it on her skin.

It had happened under these trees, nearly a fortnight prior, and Venata had panicked at first. She had heard stories, stories of those who disappeared into the forest, but no one really believed them. But she had thought she had seen one that night and curiosity had overcome her sense of caution. She understood now why they had disappeared.

For a time, she had regretted the decision she had made to follow the shadowy shape, huge and dark, deeper into the forest. She had stumbled home, blood dripping from the fresh wound. It had been simple enough to hide. Venata lived alone, in the small building she could barely afford on her meager wage as a seamstress, and by the morning, the ragged gash the creature's teeth had torn into her shoulder had completely healed over. There hadn't even been a scar. The blood-soaked rags of her clothing had been the only proof that she hadn't dreamed the whole thing.

She mindlessly steered herself around the bole of an ancient oak as she unconsciously rubbed her shoulder. It had hurt, and the memory of the pain haunted her, faded though it was. The strangest thing was that the beast, black furred and enormous, had seemed almost gentle as it had pinned her against an exposed rock under its weight and ripped into her. It had happened so quickly, but she had understood, somewhat, later on. It hadn't wanted to harm her, or prolong her suffering. It had just wanted her. She could feel its call even now, as her legs brought her faithfully to it. Him. To him.

Tonight was the night of the full moon. It had to be the full moon, she knew. That's what everyone had said in hushed whispers, of the creatures no one really believed lived in the depths of the forest. They took you on the full moon, and you would never be seen again. Venata had been terrified, but after the initial shock, she had realized that she really had nothing to lose if the stories were even half true. She was alone, no children, no close family since her mother had passed away. No one would miss her. She hadn't bothered to tell anyone. No one would have believed her anyway, with no proof other than a bloody, torn shirt. It had comforted her, in a way, to know that whatever was going to happen when she finally got to where she needed to be, she would be better off.

She wasn't sure what to expect; the stories never said what happened when you stepped under the boughs of the trees, just that it was unquestionably horrible. The old crones who sat on porches and screeched at children to beware the ghouls and goblins that supposedly lurked in the shadows of the wood never gave any evidence for their claims. Venata supposed it was because no one was willing to venture under the green leaves and find out anything. People were afraid of what they didn't, or couldn't, understand. Venata had heard the occasional traveler tell tales of real goblins, vicious little green-skinned creatures with a penchant for mayhem and trickery. No goblin waited for her, that much she knew.

Venata had been walking for hours, since well before sundown, and the forest was filled with inky black shadow. Not a single beam of the full moon's light pierced the forest's canopy, but she didn't need to see to move. She walked with the confidence of someone who knew the woods like the back of her hand, stepping easily around unseen pitfalls and the upraised roots of the giant oaks.

Abruptly, the trees came to an end, opening up into a large clearing, ringed by the enormous trunks, their branches reaching out, leaving a perfect circle open to the sky in the exact center. Picturesque, she thought as she reasserted control over her legs, stepping slowly toward the center of the clearing. She wondered if he was there, watching, waiting to see what would happen, what she would do. He wouldn't be seen unless he wanted to, just like that night. He had shown himself to her, daring her to follow him into the trees, and she had, and now here she was.

She reached the center of the clearing, peering up through the hole in the canopy. The cloud cover was dense, low and misty, but was beginning to break up. She could see the glow of the moon behind a fleeing cloud. She had a few minutes to change her mind, to run to the cover of the dense foliage, to turn tail like a coward and hide. She didn't know what would happen if she did, but that didn't matter.

The dress she wore was simple, but well made. She knew it was because she had made it. Venata slipped her fingers under the ruffle of cloth that hid the buttons that held the comfortable fabric to her body. It wasn't hot, but sweat had begun to bead on her skin, and the sturdy dress she had worn nearly every day since she had made it was suddenly unbearably confining. She opened the fabric at her throat, and the relief she felt was euphoric. She quickly peeled herself out of her clothes, letting them fall where they may. The next things to go were the thin, restraining undergarments she couldn't believe she had ever found comfortable. A light breeze picked up, and she let out a satisfied sigh, finally bare to the cool air.

She was hardly athletic, but the long walks from the village where she lived to the small town where she sold her wares had kept her plumpness confined to her healthy curves, and Venata took pride in the way her dress had hugged her body. She was alone because she had never run into a man she found even vaguely interesting, rather than any fault of her shapely form. She reached down and caressed the skin of her belly, feeling clammy, wet skin suddenly flush with a wave of heat that welled up from within her.

Venata huffed out a shaky breath. That felt good... very good. She let her fingers dip lower, sliding softly over smooth, damp skin. She tugged free the simple ribbon that held her shoulder-length, blonde hair behind her, shaking it loose. It tickled her neck, her skin suddenly divinely sensitive. Long, lonely nights left Venata no stranger to her own body, and she teased expertly at herself. Her sweat wasn't the only thing moistening her skin, and she brought her hand back up, slipping her finger into her mouth, tasting herself. She was sweet.

There was something blissfully erotic, standing naked in the shadows, letting the wind kiss her as she touched herself. She quickly grew impassioned, excited. She felt beautiful, sexy, and her agile fingers tenderly coaxed soft, private moans from between her full lips. It was empowering, and she slipped a finger inside of herself with a quiet gasp. She was breathing more heavily, but that didn't mar the light, girly sounds bubbling up from her throat. One hand slipped up to cup the swell of her modest chest. She liked how soft she was, and she delighted in the feeling of her perky, desire-darkened nipples stiffening against her fingers as she fondled herself.

She had never felt this way before. She had sought release with her fingers many nights, but it had always felt like a chore, something else that needed to be done so she could feel relaxed. This was different. She wasn't doing this out of a desperate need to feel fulfilled, to run

from the loneliness that had pulled at the recesses of her mind without her knowing what it was. She was doing this because it felt right. She was doing it for herself, not to prove a point, or reassure herself, but simply because it felt good, so, ecstatically good.

Venata whispered to the Gods, to anyone who would listen, to the trees around her and the earth beneath her. She murmured sweet nothings into the ear of nature, encouraging the building heat within her as she fingered herself. She pumped languidly in and out of herself, she was in no hurry. The dissolution of the clouds in the sky, the call of the moon, they were all distant concerns compared to the need that swelled in her.

Her hand caught some of the hot fluid that began to run down the insides of her thighs. She had never been this wet, but then again, she had never been this hot, throbbing with panting desire. With another gentle moan, she slipped another finger into her depths. She forced herself to take long, slow breaths, letting her passion build slowly, smoothly, each patient thrust into herself piling wood onto the slow-burning bonfire that slowly roared to life deep in her core. Tremors quaked through her legs as she let her head fall back, staring at the clouded sky. It felt so, so good, and it seemed her prayers were being answered. The clouds were disintegrating, but the sheet of cloud that hid the face of the full moon seemed to be holding onto a tenuous alliance with the wind that tore the other clouds to ragged strips. She would have a few more minutes.

She closed her eyes, working her hand in slow circles over the skin of her breasts, even the lightest touches felt heavenly, and she prolonged the ecstasy that her aching buds funneled into her as she tweaked them between dexterous fingers. She thrust into her folds with the first two fingers of her hand; she slipped her thumb up, teasing at the engorged nub of her clit, peeking shyly out from under its hood. She massaged it like she would a pet, cooing with pleasure as she bucked her hips into her hand, groaning when that dragged sensitive flesh over flesh.

Her heart beat fast and hard against her ribs, and she couldn't stop herself from picking up the pace of her ministrations. Beads of sweat dripped from her skin. She slid her finger into her cleavage, feeling how slick with lust her sweat had made it. Her skin burned like a furnace, and she welcomed the delightful heat as it dripped freely from her throbbing womanhood, soaking her hand. She mashed the pliant flesh of her breasts together in her fingers, no longer worrying about tenderness. The time for that was over, and she shoved another finger into herself.

The clouds shielding her from the moon were beginning to break up, and she reserved no mercy for her delicate flesh. She ground her palm against her crotch, smashing the bud of her clit into her hand, and she squeaked out a sharp moan. Her traitorously trembling legs wanted to drop her, but she stood her ground. It felt like she was racing against something fierce and primal, a force of nature, as she watched the glow of the moon grow brighter beyond the thinning cloud. Venata gritted her teeth in a snarl as she furiously worked her fingers in and out of herself. She urged herself on, her voice gruff with ignored tension.

The inferno scorching at her soul raged through her veins, and she could practically feel the throbbing in her bust as she crushed her breasts in her hands, pinching her nipples as hard as she could stand, and then some, because with the pain came pleasure, pleasure that tore it's way free of her body in a hoarse cry of wanton lust. She hissed and grunted, bucking her hips again and again as her womanhood clamped down on her fingers. She choked back squeal as she continued to masturbate through her orgasm, pumping her shuddering pussy with savage, unforgiving fingers even as it tried to squeeze them dry. She growled, a deep, guttural sound that rattled in her throat, a sound that she had never heard come from her body before. She liked it, and let it continue as she giddily humped herself.

Then, with one last, titanic throb that promised so much more, her orgasm stopped... just, cut off and disappeared. The fires that had burned at her skin were quenched, and in that moment, Venata felt something change, and she knew she could never go back. She looked up on instinct, and immediately saw why. Like a shining, silver disk, the full moon hung huge and heavy in the sky, burning down on her with a solid lance of mesmerizing light that washed over her drenched skin.

There was an endless second of nothing, blissful, potent nothing as she looked up at the pale orb, sitting silently like a judgmental god. "Alright..." she panted up at it, "Do it. Take me. I'm ready."

The moonlight on her skin sent electric tingles down her spine, and she shivered. She stood in the center of the almost perfect circle of wan light that drifted down to her from the moon, suddenly so enormous and close in the sky. Apprehension, or something like it, tightened in her gut, and quickly spread to the rest of her body. It felt to Venata almost like a physical pressure was pushing in on her skin, and her body tensed, pushing back against the pale illumination that threatened to crush her. She couldn't get enough air into her lungs, and she gasped as she clenched her fists into defiant balls.

She couldn't stop staring. The moon had never been more beautiful, more utterly entrancing. She felt heat blossom in her chest once again. It crept through her body, filling her, supporting her as she fought the nearly overwhelming force of sheer, vivid radiance that tried to squash her flat. Venata thrust her chest out proudly, standing tall under the harsh lunar judgment, daring it to find her wanting. She didn't know what was going to happen, but she had never wanted anything more in her life, and she was willing to take on the moon if she had to.

It seemed like the moon was getting bigger and bigger in the sky. Venata shook her head, it couldn't be, but when she looked up again, the unforgiving, silver sphere filled the gap in the leaves completely. She could see every scarred crater, every dark swathe in fantastic detail. It took Venata's breath away. The grim light washed over her, bathing her in its cold, watery luminescence. It soaked into her skin, pouring in through her pores, shining through the beads of sweat that ran in rivulets from her body. It was cold, and burned her at the same time. She stood in the middle of a frozen inferno, being torn at by the lance of silver light that shot down at her through the trees. It burned at her eyes, but she couldn't tear them away.

Beneath the frigid heat, though, there came calm. Confident assurance settled her mind, even as the light threatened to peel away her flesh. She felt at peace, and she relaxed, letting the light pour into her, drinking it down greedily, throwing her arms wide as if to welcome more. Her upturned face split into a giddy grin, and she could feel the moon smiling down at her, enveloping her with its own, welcoming arms. It infused her with its strength, and she could feel it sinking into her core, taking root so that something beautiful could grow. She felt it meet with the fire that foolishly tried to resist its advance into her body. Instead of snuffing it out, it caressed it, mingling with it, bolstering it so it too could burn brighter. Venata took comfort in the moon's embrace, letting it do what it needed to. The disk of the moon filled her eyes, ringed by the dense, leafy foliage of the wood around her. It was all she could think about, how hauntingly beautiful it was. She felt like she could almost reach out and touch it, the way it was touching her. She fought fiercely for a time, but eventually, and very much against her will, she blinked.

Like a spell being broken, reality snapped back into place. Venata gasped, looking around her as if to make sure the earth below her was still there. She looked pleadingly upward, but the moon had returned to its proper place, and gazed down at her fondly from its silver throne on

high. She reached a hand up, trying to beckon the moon back down to her, but it stayed where it was. She let her hand drop, and for a few seconds Venata was alone with her heartbeat and the sound of her breathing.

Then her world went white.

She screamed. It rattled in her lungs and tore its way through out of her throat as her entire body was caught in a vice of agony. Her legs wobbled, and she dropped to the grass below her, able to do nothing but wail in torment. It hurt. It hurt more than anything she could have ever imagined. It felt like having her bones crushed in a gristmill while her skin was peeled from her flesh. Her hands sought out anything to find purchase on for stability as her body convulsed, flopping uselessly with her spasming muscles. Then she felt it.

With a resounding crack that resonated through her body, the first bone of many snapped. Blinding, ice cold shock washed through her body, shoving her further into the well of torture in which she was trapped. First one leg, then the other, Venata was being shattered so she could be remade. Miraculously, she managed to force her hand down, slapping it down on her leg. She could feel her flesh writhing under her skin, changing and reshaping. The pain forced her knees into her chest as she curled into an anguished ball. She could see her body begin to change, if she could only get a glimpse past the tears in her eyes.

With an explosive, meaty popping, her spine shifted against her skin, and Venata's embattled muscles suddenly tightened with everything they had. It felt like something was roiling in her guts, clawing and tearing, struggling for freedom. Venata couldn't even hear her own screams through the sounds of her bones grinding against each other as she moved. Her pain was savage and unforgiving, and ripped through her like lightning with each anguished second.

Venata's skin felt hot and tight, and sweat slid off of her skin. She felt like she was going to burst, and as she squinted through her tears, she realized why. She raised a shaky hand up to her face, gritting her teeth through her agony as she bent her fingers experimentally. They were getting longer. Delicate nails were growing thick and tough, sharpening as they pushed further out of her fingertips. She marveled at it, even as every nerve in her body screeched its distress. She had to look away as another spasm rocked her body, pulling another hoarse scream from her throat, but she fought to return her gaze to her hand.

It was entrancing. Tendons popped, letting her hand creep outward, and she watched it, mesmerized, until a horrific crackling sound erupted from her shoulders, snapping her from her alarmed trance. She couldn't straighten herself from her fetal position in the grass, but she could see her arms, how they too began to inch longer. Muscles that had never shown themselves on Venata's dainty arms before suddenly surged forth, rippling, pressing urgently at her skin as they bulged, flexing in her pangs of misery. She clapped a hand on her swelling bicep, squeezing it in her strengthening grip. Her forearm tensed as she clamped down on it, and the muscle fought back, growing irrepressibly, shoving her desperately clenching fingers away contemptuously, insulted that they would try to contain it.

Venata whimpered. She hurt everywhere, and her swelling body seemed to be doing nothing to dampen her torment. She was wearing her voice ragged. She wasn't certain how much longer she could cry out, but that didn't stop her from screaming again as her shoulder blades popped and her collarbones bent dangerously under her skin as her shoulders abruptly rushed wider, pushing her side off the ground with inches of bone and sinuous muscle. Venata had never been more than average of build, but the muscle that pushed her fingers apart rivaled that of even the strongest men of her village. She had seen those men effortlessly carrying load that weighed

a hundred pounds or more, and her body didn't seem intent on slowing down as she rolled onto her back, writhing wordlessly.

She grunted as the vertebrae of her neck ground against each other as they reshaped, forcing her head up awkwardly as her neck lengthened. Tendons in her neck snapped taut as the muscle of her shoulders swelled, taking advantage of the new space and giving her a thick, hulking stature. She groaned, and she could hear it in her voice. Once soft and light, it had now taken on a metallic timbre, as if she were speaking with two voices, instead of one. The remnants of her voice were still there, but they had been overlaid with a new voice, deep and harsh, that rumbled with wild aggression.

She sounded rough and inhuman, and her agony only soared to new heights as more and more of her body was taken and reformed into something huge and bestial. She was going to die. She couldn't imagine taking any more pain. It tore at her soul and threatened to overwhelm her mind. She wanted to run and hide, but wherever her consciousness could flee, the pain followed her, snapping at her sanity like a rabid dog. She couldn't do it. She couldn't fight the pain, and despite her agony, her muscles relaxed as she felt her mind be swallowed by the icy jaws of torment.

Venata opened her eyes. Of course it hurt. What was happening to her was primal and violent beyond belief, and pain was only natural. Even then, in her moment of clarity, she ached, wanted to scream out at her mind-numbing torment. And she did, because that too was natural. She cried out, raging against her pain with her new voice. She wasn't going to die. She was going to live. And life came with pain, sometimes horrible beyond belief. Venata had never felt more alive than she did in that moment, and she welcomed what was happening, including the pain that came with it.

She laughed, a ragged, labored sound, and groaned as her skin suddenly burned like it was on fire. Like millions of tiny needles that pierced her skin from within, a thick coat of tawny fur sprouted up, sweeping along the length of her body. She could feel each hair stabbing up through her, and she growled threateningly at the sudden sensation. It sounded right to her ears, that growl, and she continued it as she felt a sharp tugging on her scalp. Her hearing went momentarily haywire as her ears slid up the sides of her head, pushing through her thick, blond hair as they changed shape, growing long and tapered as they twitched at each new sound she could hear.

The first sound she heard was the cracking of her ribs as her chest widened to match her shoulders, growing deep and cavernous. Her voice, both of them, deepened as her spine stretched, inching her taller and giving her muscles more and more room to swell. She struggled to get an arm beneath her, and Venata pushed herself up to a half-sit so she could watch the changes that continued down her body.

Suddenly, a warm glow bloomed up within her, and she moaned. It wasn't like the pain that wracked her body. It was low and throbbing, a pulsing heat that centered itself in her breasts as they started to swell in slow, protracted bursts. She finally found words as her ample orbs blossomed on her chest. "Oh Gods!" she moaned through the haze of agony mixed with lust that clouded her thoughts. "Yes! Please!" Her free hand found her chest, and she ravaged her growing bust with savage strength born of blinding need. They grew large, more than a match for her broad shoulders. They spilled out over her fingers, growing fat and ripe as she begged, "Yes! Yes! More! Bigger!"

Venata had never felt that her body was inadequate, but in the midst of her transformation, she found her old body pitifully lacking. She slid her hand down over her

stomach, digging her fingertips into herself as her abdominal muscles pulsed larger until she could see them through her fur. They thickened as her waist stretched wider, just enough to give her powerful muscles room to grow, but still looking almost waspish compared to the bulk of her shoulders.

Her breasts were still ballooning over the dense muscle of her chest. They felt good. They throbbed with need, and Venata wanted to tear into them, to grind them into something hard and rough. She still hurt, but her agony was quickly being overcome by a tidal wave of lust that built within her. The heat that had ignited in her chest crept south, and she groaned as her breasts slowed their relentless march outward. The hand on her abs followed the tendrils of heat down the length of her torso until they met at the cleft between her legs.

The heat started to build, and Venata found herself urging it on. "Do it!" she commanded through a strained grunt as her growth continued, "Make me big and beautiful! Give me something fit for a beast! A huge, strong animal! Give me something to tear into! Come on! DO IT!" To emphasize her point, she shoved a long, thick finger into herself, stretching the walls of her throbbing pussy wide around the intruder. She worked her claw against the lining of her needy vagina. It was just a finger, but she was so full. She gasped, having evidently proven her point to whatever force was powering her transformation.

She grunted as her pelvis cracked, spreading wider, pushing her hips out with it as smooth, hard muscle sprang into existence on her formerly soft curves. Her rear swelled, pushing her further off of the ground with round globes of firm flesh, and she marveled at the delicious agony of her spine lengthening further, pushing her tailbone out of her body. It grew longer and longer, feet of new bone and skin eventually taking shape into a bushy tail the same color as her fur.

New muscles spasmed, and her tail wiggled behind her. She ignored it. She was focused on the slow throbbing of her walls as she pumped her finger in and out of herself. Her body teased her, leaving her tiny and tight as muscle exploded outward beneath the skin of her thighs. She growled through the pain of her legs growing longer to match the rest of her body. They were bent at an awkward angle, thin and spindly, but not for long. She huffed a long groan as her ankles shattered, moving up and changing shape. Her heel followed, disappearing as her whole foot bent. Her toes grew longer and thicker, and a thick pad replaced the skin on the bottom of what was left of her foot. She clenched her teeth at the sharp stabbing sensation of her nails growing long and curved.

Her calves bulged, and Venata could see the incredible definition in her legs through her sleek fur. She would need that strength to carry herself on the pads of her new, canine feet. She felt huge and heavy, but easily strong enough to move with inhuman, predatory grace. She still grew, in smooth bursts, to the beat of the throbbing in her pussy, and she brutally thrust into herself, desperate for release. "Yes!" she pleaded, "Bigger! Stronger! Make me enormous! Don't stop! More! MORE!"

She bucked her powerful hips into her hand, crushing her pussy into her palm as she came harder than she ever had before. It shuddered through her body, and her claws tore strips from the earth beneath her as she thrashed her legs. One last scream erupted from her throat as her entire body throbbed larger explosively. Her orgasm quaked through her still-dainty womanhood, and her scream died off into a long, need moan as she bloomed larger around her finger. Her mound engorged with blood as her lower lips puffed out, swallowing more and more of her finger until she had to cram another inside herself to achieve the same effect.

Her walls clamped down on her hand even as they spread out. She could feel her passage growing within her, making room for something truly enormous, and another finger wormed its way into her billowing folds. Eventually, even her long, powerful fingers couldn't reach far enough, and she pushed in as far as she could, dragging her claws along the sensitive flesh, trying to prolong her ecstasy for as long as she was able. She let her back flop down onto the ground and dipped her other hand to her crotch, using it to tweak her clit. The sensitive bud stood proudly out from its hood, and as Venata stuffed all four fingers into her dripping pussy, her other hand ravaged her stiff button.

Another orgasm exploded out of her, soaking her hand with girlcum that matted into the fur around her throbbing womanhood. She was so lost in her bliss that at first she didn't even notice the horrible crunching sound of her bones shifting beneath the fur on her face. She no longer felt any pain as her face pushed slowly away from her skull, stretching her nose and jaw out into a vicious lupine muzzle. Her teeth sharpened and grew longer, her canines morphing into long fangs that stabbed from her gums.

This was it. Venata could feel it. It was almost done, and she attacked her womanhood with renewed vigor, stretching her last orgasm out into a fit of prolonged thrashing. She arched her back as her face finished, and a long, wolf-like howl poured from between her fangs as she shuddered with euphoric bliss one last time before collapsing in a heaving, exhausted heap.

She lay on her back for a long time, staring up at the disk of the moon as she regained control of her frantic breathing. She lifted her hands over her head, bending her clawed fingers, watching the tendons in her arms move as she did. "Gods' Blood..." she whispered in awe. Her voice had kept its metallic, two-toned quality, but sounded less gruff than it had when she had been screaming herself raw. She hummed experimentally, smiling. She sounded deep and alluring, the softness of her old voice combining perfectly with the low, underlying power of the new.

Grunting, she sat up, shaking leaves and grass out of her hair as she did so. She was glad she had kept her flowing blond tresses. She liked them, and her old hair color went with her new tawny fur so magnificently. Venata looked down at herself, grinning wolfishly as she cupped her hands around the heavy globes of her breasts. They heaved with her deep breaths, and Venata took a minute to just hold them in her fingers, gently squeezing the supple flesh. Eventually, though, she peeled her hands away and rested her forearms on her upraised knees, wondering idly what she was supposed to do now.

She peered down at her feet, thinking about how she would have to walk. That was as good a first step as any. Getting her feet underneath her, she pushed herself to a stand, nearly falling again as she wobbled on her new, digitigrade legs. Hands out to her sides, and her tail sticking straight out behind her, she took a careful step, and then another, hobbling in a slow circle, sticking to the pool of moonlight that poured in through the gap in the trees. "Okay..." she muttered to herself, "I can get used to this." Despite her bulk, she felt light and quick on her feet, and she moved her thick, muscular legs with effortless ease.

She staggered over to where she had discarded her dress, her steps growing more confident along the way. She cautiously stooped to lift the fabric from where it lay. She held it out, and almost laughed. It would have had no hope of containing her in this state. Venata guessed that she was now more than seven feet tall, and far broader than she had been in the shoulders and hips. She held the pitifully tiny cloth at her side as she continued her exploration of her new body, her tongue probing the sharpness of her new teeth as she hummed thoughtfully.

She bounced up and down on her feet, feeling her muscles flex obediently, lifting her into the air, and briefly wondered how far she could push her body. Monitoring her balance carefully with her tail, she hopped, floating a few feet into the air before her feet caught her faithfully. She grinned and jumped again, this time higher, clearing her full height before she dropped to the ground again. With an exultant chuckle, she bent her legs, crouching low to the ground placing her palm flat on the grass as her thighs trembled in anticipation. She took a steadying breath, then, with an excited cry, she launched herself into the air. The wind whipped through her hair as she sailed upward, ten feet, twenty feet. She caught herself on a sturdy branch and spun herself up onto it, using it as a platform for her next jump.

She let instinct guide her, and she vaulted upward through the canopy of the ancient oaks. One jump, two, three, and then she was crashing up through the thinning leafy cover. For an endless second, she floated weightlessly over the thick, green carpet that stretched out to the horizon, the sheet broken here and there by a particularly ambitious tree that towered over its companions. The wind billowed through her hair, stretching it out behind her, and a plethora of scents assaulted her new nose, carried to her by the light breeze. And then she was dropping through the hole through which the moon shone.

The ground hurtled up at her at a frightening velocity, but she only laughed. Her legs flexed as she landed, easily catching her, and she straightened, unable to pull the excited grin from her face. She looked around her at the trees lining the clearing. Her new eyes peered into the darkness and found the shadows lighter, less oppressive than they had been before. She could once more hear the sounds of the forest around her. Nocturnal animals dug around in the undergrowth for food and an owl hooted off in the distance. The forest was suddenly full of life, and she chuckled lightly.

Then she froze, the smile dropping from her face. There he was, leaning idly against the trunk of one of the innumerable trees. He just stood there for a few more seconds, but eventually he spoke. "Good evening," he said nonchalantly. Venata shivered. His voice was metallic like hers, but so much deeper that it rumbled in her ears for what seemed like forever.

"You..." Venata whispered, "It was you..." She blinked, looking him over. He was gigantic, putting her suddenly frail-seeming body to shame. Thick arms were crossed over a broad, barrel chest that was covered with slabs of dense, heavy muscle. He shifted his weight casually, and she could see his immense thighs ripple under his coat of jet black fur. He gave her what she could have sworn was a warm, friendly smile despite how it revealed the tips of the vicious fangs that filled his long, lupine muzzle. It was hard to tell by the way he was leaning, but he must have been more than eight feet tall, and his wide, bulging shoulders spoke of a strength that boggled Venata's mind.

The memory of that strength filled her mind, the way he had jumped her, shoved her down and held her there as he had sunk his fangs into her shoulder. The pain of it was only a ghost of a memory, but her hand went to her shoulder anyway. He grimaced, dropping his wickedly clawed hands hesitantly to his sides. "I... I hope I didn't cause you too much pain..." he stammered, flexing his titanic arms for her, "It's... hard to gauge how strong I am, sometimes. I didn't want to hurt you any more than was necessary."

"Than was necessary..." echoed Venata numbly. The idea of pain now seemed laughable to her, and she sighed. "No, not too much, I suppose. But why? Why me?"

His smile returned. "You were alone at the edge of a forest anyone who thinks they have any sense stays far away from. Night after night, I watched you probe the forest with your walks, and you always returned, even when you were frightened by some noise or moving shadow..."

Which, in all honesty, were mostly me. Sorry about that. But you always came back. It felt right, and I knew what I had to do when I was sure you were the right one." He shrugged. "You'll learn to trust your instincts more as you get used to your new body, and mine were screaming at me to take you when I knew you were unlike the others." He hesitated for a moment, and he twined his fingers nervously together in a display of insecurity unfitting for a creature with such a savage appearance. "But... but I didn't want to force it on you, not like that. So I showed myself to you, in the hopes that you wouldn't run away. And you didn't. You followed me, as well as you could, at least. And then I... I gave you a little nip..." He gave her another apologetic look. "Or at least I tried to."

Venata was unsatisfied. "But why? So I like to take night walks around the edge of a scary old forest. Why were you even watching me like some creepy voyeur in the first place?"

He dipped his head, and his wolf-like ears drooped with what looked like embarrassment. "I... I just... There aren't many of us. And while these trees are great listeners, they're not really the best conversationalists. It gets very lonely out here without someone to keep you sane."

Cocking her eyebrow, Venata put a hand on her hip and gave him a dubious hum. "That's it?" she said in a skeptical murmur, "You just wanted someone to talk to? Nothing physical? Just companionship?" She swept a hand down, gesturing at her body, "This doesn't do anything for you?"

He laughed, pushing himself off the tree to stand, and Venata gaped. The eight feet she had guessed at was closer to nine, and his god-like musculature heaved beneath his skin as she stretched his arms out to the sides. "Don't get me wrong. You've been beautiful every time I've seen you, then and now." His eyes took on a hungry gleam and his voice deepened, growing dark and menacing. "And there would be nothing you could do to stop me if I decided I wanted to take you, here and now." He growled low in his throat as he took a threatening step forward, and Venata's pulse quickened when she saw the thick, animalistic sheath at his crotch bulge suddenly. His heavy scrotum held a pair of orbs the size of Venata's balled fists, and the way her looked at her promised that he would not be gentle.

But then he relaxed, stepping back to slouch casually against the tree once more, the growl dying in his throat. "But..." he continued as if nothing had happened, "That's never really been my thing. I'd like to let a relationship form so my lovemaking will have meaning, rather than rut mindlessly for worthless physical pleasure."

Venata relaxed as he did. "You're rather... progressive and well-spoken, for a giant, hulking wolf-beast." She mused through a wry grin.

"So are you," he retorted. "And I must admit, I like you so far, so if you were up for some mindless rutting, it would be unchivalrous of me to refuse. But, at least for now, I'd just like someone to run with. And with that in mind, I've brought you a gift." He pushed himself off of the tree once again, making sure to stay partly hunched to appear as unthreatening as possible. He bent over behind the tree, and came back up with a limp shape laid over his shoulders.

He approached her slowly with long, smooth steps, keeping a wary eye on her, until barely ten feet separated them. Venata's breath caught in her throat. He was even bigger up close, and he smelled... dense and heavy. He bent with careful ease, depositing his parcel on the ground, just outside the ring of moonlight in which she stood before he backed away just as slowly, returning to his tree. "Whatever you decide to do, you're going to be starving, and your first hunt is always... awkward, to say the least."

He was right. She was suddenly ravenous, and his gift was looking better and better. She stepped forward, eyeing him cautiously, and reached outside the ring to drag in the deer, a huge

buck that must have weighed hundreds of pounds. It had been killed by a single bite to the neck. She could see where his teeth had crushed the buck's spine.

Venata was normally unnerved by gore, and while she was certainly not a vegetarian, she had studiously avoided the butcher's shop in the village where she lived. The butcher was kind, and had had his apprentice make deliveries to her home. Gone was that trepidation. The deer was still warm, and blood oozed from the wound in its neck. It smelled metallic and enticing, and the ache in her stomach throbbed angrily, demanding she fill it. She looked up at him hesitantly, and he just nodded, waving her on with a clawed hand.

She looked back down, placing her hands on the muscles of the buck's shoulder. Its warmth radiated up through her palms. She slowly curled her fingers inward, and her claws sliced effortlessly through the deer's hide and into the still-bloody flesh. She worked her fingers into the buck's muscle and pulled. With a wet, ripping sounds, a handful of meat tore free of the deer's body. She raised it up to her face, and she watched the buck's blood run down her arm to mat her fur. She carefully shredded it into bite-sized pieces, and daintily slipped the first one into her mouth, chewing thoughtfully.

Her body shuddered involuntarily, and she distantly heard his laugh. It was divine, the best thing she had ever tasted, still hot and juicy with the cooling life-force of an animal that had been alive moments before. The little nibbles she had carved fell from numb fingers back into the hole she had ripped into the buck's side, and she slapped her hands down on the deer, as if to hold it down while she tried to reconcile the taste of ambrosia with her mortal mind. She couldn't, and any hint of rationale erased itself from her thoughts. She needed more, so much more. Her stomach burned with the fires of haunting emptiness, and she shuddered again.

She grunted and dove teeth first into the deer's flank, widening the hole she had torn in the buck's shoulder with gnashing fangs. She hunched low, gulping down huge chunks of meat she ripped from bone by rocking her head. Her muzzle was quickly soaked with blood and she lapped it up greedily, drinking when she wasn't eating. The buck's shoulder was gone in seconds, and she stripped the hide and flesh from its leg with equal ease. She growled for more as she took its leg in a steely grip and twisted ferociously. The bone gave with a resounding pop, and she lifted the gnawed on limb away, baring the deer's chest to her clamping jaws.

Ribs got in her way, and she lifted her arm high before bringing it down on the cage of bone. They splintered easily, and she tore her way into the buck's chest cavity, fingers searching for organs. She shredded heart and lungs, and they quickly disappeared between her darkly glistening fangs. She lifted the deer onto its back and hopped up to straddle it, pinning it in place between her thighs. She slashed her way back into the deer's chest, splitting it open down the middle before hunching back over to continue her feasting.

There was so much blood, shining in the moonlight as it soaked through her fur, staining it crimson. Venata fed deliriously, focusing entirely on the warmth of the body between her legs. Part of her was glad it had died painlessly, and another part wished she could have been there, been the one to have clamped down on its throat.

Her huge, powerful body's capacity for tender flesh seemed endless, and when she finally straightened her back, there was little left of the deer but snapped bones and antlers. She panted, gulping in air. There had been little time to breathe as she ate, and her clawed fingers opened and closed fitfully as she regained her senses. Venata blinked slowly, looking back up at the dark shape that had watched her take her fill. "I'm sorry," she said with an impish grin as she lapped blood from her maw, "Did you want some?"

He chuckled. "I'm beginning to like you more and more," he admitted frankly.

Venata pushed herself to stand, leaving the shattered bones of her meal where they lay as she stepped toward him, pausing at the border between the moonlight and the shadow of the canopy. She hesitated only for a second before she crossed the boundary. She didn't feel anything different when the moonlight left her body, but she hadn't really expected it to make a difference.

He stayed where he was as she approached him, watching her move. It made her feel... desired, the way his eyes shone when they swept along the length of her body, despite his assertions of innocence. "Like what you see?" she questioned blithely.

He nodded. "I never said I wouldn't look, just that I wouldn't touch without consent."

Venata stopped, perhaps five feet away. If she leaned, she could touch him, run her claws along the muscle of his chest. He just watched her, waiting. "So..." she wondered aloud, "What happens now?"

He shrugged, not leaving his tree. "Whatever you want." He gestured to the dress she had discarded in the moonlight. It was flecked with blood from her meal. "You are free to do what you please. With enough practice, you could hide in your old skin, go back to your old life. Although if you thought it hurt coming out, you have no idea what pain is until you've tried to go back in." He then gestured to the drops of blood that splashed down on the grass beneath her. "But you're a terrible mess, and I know a stream nearby where you could clean yourself. Unless you want me to lick you clean right now."

"My!" she exclaimed, although his expression promised it would feel very good, "Rather forward, aren't we."

"Hardly." he defended, "But you can't blame a guy for flirting with a lovely lady, can you?"

"Oh. Is that what passes for flirting around here?" she said in rebuttal, "Are you going to sniff my butt next?"

He only smiled. "Only if you let me."

Venata couldn't stop herself from laughing. Her voices sounded happy, and she realized she actually was happy, for the first time in a long while. The hulking wolf-beast standing in front of her was right, so long as he had been true to his word. She was free, free to do anything she desired. If she didn't want to, she didn't have to sew another skirt for a thankless lady ever again. She looked up at him, then back at the dress lying crumpled next to the ragged skeleton. "What the hells." she surrendered, "I do find myself in need of a bath, Mister...?"

"Ulric." he informed her with a low bow, "For what it's worth, milady."

"Call me Venata, Ulric." she murmured to him, returning his bow with a light curtsy, which made his shoulders bounce with mirthful laughter. "Shall we be off?"

"By all means, Venata. And it is a lovely name, if I might say so." He stepped off the tree, rising to his full, intimidating height, and gestured off into the trees, "Do try to keep up."

She raised an eyebrow at him. "Oh? Is that how it is? Just try me, big guy. I bet you can't even haul those muscles around without winding yourself."

He spared her a sly grin, and started off into the undergrowth at a fast lope, moving with frightening silence despite his size. Without a second glance behind her, Venata took off after him.