

## Part 2: Old Ghosts

The silence was so thick you'd need a machete to cut through it. Samson sat opposite to me at a table at a cafe in the University Student Center. It was still summer, so there weren't many people around. The cafe wasn't even really open during the summer season, but they had small metal tables people could sit at that they never bothered to put away. Samson had wanted to talk and Xavier mandated we do it outside the Dorm Room, so here we were. In the only place on campus large and empty enough for the two of us to properly have it out.

"So... how've you been?" Samson made the first thrust.

"Fine. And you?" I parried and riposted.

"Fine." He leaned back against his chair, tail twitching behind him through the hole on the chair.

Neither of us said anything for what felt like a few minutes. I couldn't look him in the eye. To be fair, I don't think he was making an effort at eye contact either. Wow, the big fight I had been expecting was certainly the most intense thing I'd done on campus. Two nervous gay guys in an empty room. Oh the drama.

I let out a dreary sigh and buried my head in my front paws, propping them up against the table. "Why did you come here, Samson?" I looked up at his eyes, staring into those cool hazel pools. "What did you possibly hope to accomplish? The last time I saw you was during the most absolutely terrible time of my life. Not just because of you, mind, but made it WORSE, not better."

Samson frowned and folded his arms. "I did what needed to be done. For both of us." He narrowed his eyes, turning his head down to stare at the tile on the floor.

"Gggh!" I snarled and threw my hands forward. "How the HELL do you think you can justify saying that?!?"

He took a sip from the soda he got from the machine nearby. "You were trying to depend on me instead of standing on your own two paws." A soft sigh escaped his lips.

"Oh, so somehow the better alternative was to leave me a homeless emotional wreck?" My ears perked up. I was growling at him now, even baring my fangs. "I needed you! I needed you and you dumped-" I clenched a fist, feeling my hand shaking. I was just a moment from slapping the hell out of my ex-boyfriend.

"That's exactly the problem!" Samson scowled at me. "Teri, the thing that happened with your father BROKE you." He folded his arms. "You had given up on college, given up on traveling, given up on

everything you told me you wanted! I saw the death of ambition in you. All you wanted was to cling to me. To follow me around and help me with my life. Had I let you, you might have just become an extension of what I wanted."

My ears flattened against my head. "I needed something, no, anything to cling to. Some sort of hope..."

"I hear you're studying therapy and psychology now. I'm sure you heard of a thing called emotional dependency?"

That stung, but I wasn't going to admit it. I looked over towards the empty student cafe and thrashed my tail around. When he saw I wasn't responding, Samson went on. "Look at how strong you've become on your own. Without anyone to cling to. You went to college. You're studying something because you wanted to do it, right?" His tail twitched. "You've made friends, I'll bet. You rebuilt your life. You might not have tried to do any of that if you'd just followed me around." He combed his hair back, doing his best to return my gaze.

"Bitch!" I snarled. "You really think that's a reasonable excuse for what you did? You flushed me into oblivion like soiled toilet paper!"

"You think it was easy for me?!" Samson opened his eyes, locking his hazel eyes with mine. They were moistening up as he leaned towards me. "I didn't want to let you go! But you needed to learn to stand on your own power. And I..." His face fell, his ears drooping. "I wasn't ready to have anyone depending on me like that."

I leaned in and pointed a finger at him. "You're a pompous ass and your reasons for dumping me are horseshit. You think once I'd had some time to work through my feelings I wouldn't have started trying to rebuild?"

He scowled. "I wasn't thinking too clearly myself, I'll have you know!"

I narrowed my eyes and leaned in closer. "You haven't even apologized!"

He leaned in to match me. We were close enough that I could feel his breath against my face. "You're being unreasonable."

"Oh, I'M being unreasonable?" I growled, my right eye twitching. I slammed a paw into the metal table. At some point I'd pushed my claws out. "You know, you're right. I must be, since I'm sitting here listening to an asshole who dumped his boyfriend at the worst possible time in his life 'for his own good!'"

He glared into my eyes, a sneer on his face. "Spoiled brat!"

"Uncaring jerk!" I retorted.

I'm still not sure which one of us initiated the kiss.