

Marlot leaned through the passenger side window. "Remember, don't get anything too extravagant. I don't want us to blow our finances on breakfast."

Trembor rolled his eyes. "I know, I know. And you're hoping I'm doing to stay away from rodents since they taste gamey to you. This isn't the first time I've hunted us a meal. Now you go take care of the office and I'll be back within an hour. And I also know to be careful with your car."

Marlot did a quick look around and, not seeing anyone, leaned in through the window to give Trembor a quick peck on the muzzle. He then hurried inside the building, leaving the lion with a stunned expression on his face. Marlot couldn't believe he'd done that.

"Good morning, Hela'han," he greeted their secretary as he closed the door.

"Good morning, Marlot," the elephant replied. She handed him three slates. "This one is the reports the enforcers made on the Spottedfur case. This one is from Jaxca and this last one came from the Tip Line. It's about the She'avan body." Her trunk sniffled his hand as he took the slate.

"Really? that body's over five years old. We're still getting tips about it?" It was Trembor's body, from before they started working together. Marlot has no expectations they would ever find out who killed him.

"Someone catches an old newsie show and they think they remember something. We owe it to the body's family to look into them even after all this time, right?"

Marlot nodded.

"Where's Trembor?"

"He's getting us breakfast."

Hela'han nodded. "Did you spend the night at his place?"

Marlot almost dropped the slates. "What? No! Why d'you ask?" he stammered, working hard at keeping his ears and tail from reacting.

She shrugged. "His scent is very strong on you today."

How could he have been this careless? "It must be from the car ride." He hurries into his and Trembor's office.

"It's not usually that strong," he heard her comment as he closed the door and locked it.

She knew. He paced around the room. What was he going to do now? For a moment he contemplated eating her, but what would Trembor think? She was his employee too. What was he going to do if she told someone?

He paced, running his hand over his head, his ears flat against his skull. He didn't hear the buzz of incoming calls or even the beep of the door unlocking. He caught sight of the door opening out the corner of his eye and turn, looking at it with dread.

Trembor entered carrying a stag over his shoulder. "Why did you lock the door?" He asked, closing it. Seeing the state Marlot was in,

he dropped the carcass and went to him. "What's wrong?"

Marlot looked at him, eyes wide in fear. "What are we going to do? what am I going to do?" he repeated over and over.

Trembor grabbed him by the shoulders. "Please calm down.

Marlot pushed him away. "Don't tell me to calm down! she knows!" he pointed at the door.

Trembor looked at it and then at the wolf in confusion. "What does she know?"

"That I spent the night at your place! She caught your scent on me and figured it out. I shouldn't have stayed. I should have gone home like I usually do."

Trembor growled in annoyance. his tail lashed behind him. he grabbed Marlot by the shoulders again. "Calm down! Who fucking cares if she knows, she works for us. Do you really think she'd go around talking about us?"

Marlot didn't try to break out of his grip. "What if it just slips out and someone else finds out?" His face was a mask of worries.

"Will you get it through that thick skull of yours that no one cares about that anymore?" Trembor roared at him.

Marlot started shaking. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," he whimpered and Trembor pulled him in close. "I just got so scared when she said it. I couldn't think of anything else."

Trembor kissed the top of his head. "It's okay. Everything is going to be alright." maybe it had been a mistake to force him to spend the night after all. Even after being lovers for over two years, there was a lot he didn't know about his wolf's past.

He knew he'd grown up in a backward town where anyone who didn't conform to their view of what was 'right' was ridiculed or even lynched without repercussions, but that didn't explain his reaction. Something had to have happened very close to him for him to react in such an extreme way to something this inconsequential.

He held him at arm's length and look at him for a moment. The black fur under his deep brown eyes was matted from his tears. he let go of him to wipe the fur dry. "Are you feeling better?"

Marlot nodded and opened his muzzle to say something, but Trembor silenced him with a finger.

"No more apologizing. The important thing is that you're feeling better." He broke into a mischievous smile. "But you should consider yourself lucky this room is soundproof. You were pretty loud with your hysterics. If Hela'han didn't know before, she would have now."

Marlot's ears went back down against his skull and he buried his face in Trembor's chest. "Eat me," he whispered, "just eat me now and put me out of my misery."

The lion laughed. "And ruin breakfast?" He hugged him. "I don't think so."