

Sketchie: Council Call

by Cerine Hero

“Hey, Cerine... there's someone at the door for you,” Erin called down from the top of the laboratory steps.

The pink fox sighed, rolling her eyes above the rim of her glasses. She'd just sat down to work after breakfast and already she was being interrupted. Pushing herself up from her chair, the heavily-endowed fox felt her breasts lift off the desk in front of her and she adjusted her shirt underneath her lab coat as she headed upstairs to see what was going on.

There was a city page at the door, stiff and uncomfortable in his suit with his council badge pinned to his breast pocket. The gray wolf gulped as a tall and irritated fox loomed over him, sighing.

“Are you the alchemist, ma'am?” he asked, paws crossed above his tail behind him.

“Yes,” she replied, raising an eyebrow. Erin watched curiously from behind the kitchen doorway. “What does the city want now?”

The wolf fumbled with a folded paper and handed it to her. “A summons. You are requested at today's council meeting.”

Requested was an interesting way to put it. Cerine took the paper, unfolded it, and skimmed the text. The meeting was in less than two hours. “Hell,” she sighed.

“So we will table the discussion for repaving the roads in the industrial district for next session, following a treasury meeting.”

The city council meeting was as exciting as ever. Cerine was practically melting in her seat at the back of the council chamber, uncomfortably braced on a folding chair not exactly big enough for her curvy hindquarters. Her enormous tail was threaded underneath the seat back and tucked against three other chairs to avoid being stepped on any more than it already had been. The chamber echoed slightly as the councilors continued with their business, and the scattering of local journalists, retired citizens, and weirdos waiting for the open comment segment to start were whispering amongst themselves. A few eyes turned Cerine's way, since she stood out rather prominently, with her odd costume and large bust. The alchemist crossed her legs knee-over-knee, feeling her chest press down onto her left thigh. She ignored the stares, scrolling through updates on her phone.

“-and as I understand it, the alchemist has graced us with her presence today?” one of the councilors said into the microphone. Cerine's ears perked and she glanced above her glasses towards the head of the chamber. The councilor, a lion with a thick mane beginning to go gray, was leaning forward onto his elbows and glaring daggers at her from across the room. Above him hovered the city's emblem of crossed spears over a tree cast in bronze on the back wall. “With our official business concluded, I believe she could come up to the bench and answer some questions.”

Cerine put her phone away and stood up, excusing herself as she squeezed past other people in her row and avoided knocking some in front of her in the head with her chest. Once she reached the aisle, she straightened her lab coat over her casual, low-cut t-shirt with a game logo stretched out too much across her bust and a pair of summer shorts lightly squeezing her thick thighs. She'd slipped on her dieting a little, so while they still buttoned – barely – they were very snug on her legs.

She headed to the front of the gallery, where a lectern and microphone was set at the focal point of the curved councilors' bench. Like much of the rest of the chamber, it was made from rich wood logged in the local area, polished beautifully. It was also at *just* the right height that Cerine's chest would slam into the edge of the topper if she leaned for the microphone. She paused in front of the lectern and adjusted the microphone to be closer to her muzzle. Audio pops crackled through the room's sound system, and some people grumbled in annoyance.

“I would like to take a moment to remind everyone in attendance that there is a recommended code of dress for the council chambers,” the lion mumbled as the clicks and pops died down. “We ask

that exposed fur be kept to a minimum...”

Cerine made a show of reaching up and adjusting her bra through her shirt, her cleavage jiggling above the neckline of her top. Her tail wagged through the slit in her lab coat, and she gave it another tug against her chest, making it clear that it didn't close. “With all due respect to the council,” she said into the microphone, “I was given very little advance warning for this meeting, and no: It doesn't button in any way that would matter.”

The lion snorted as stares from his fellow councilors suggested he should get on with his business. “We have called you here because of concerns about the health and safety of your *concoctions*.”

“If there is an issue with my work, it can be brought to my attention directly,” Cerine exhaled.

“I believe it is in the public interest that we discuss them here and now,” the councilor pressed. “The city tolerates you and your predecessor's archaic hedge wizardry enough as-is. If I had my way, that old witch would've been—”

“If you have a point to make, please make it,” another councilor, a gray-muzzled wolfess, told him.

The lion grumbled. “It has come to my attention that your potions can have dangerous side effects. My son-in-law purchased one of your elixirs or what-have-you for my daughter. And she drank it last night and she—” the lion looked visibly upset, bunching his shoulders and leaning over the desk in front of him— “she ballooned up! She's obese now! What do you have to say for yourself?!”

“She'll be fine,” Cerine answered flatly, taking her glasses off her muzzle and cleaning them on the hem of her shirt.

“Did you not hear what I said?” the lion growled. There was a murmur of voices in the gallery. “She's enormous! Gigantic! Over four hundred pounds! And your potion did it to her in seconds.”

“If the potion made her fat, then that's what the potion was supposed to do,” she explained. “It's not a side effect. At least not one I've ever encountered.”

“Are you telling me you make fattening potions *on purpose*?” the councilor asked. “I thought you made... healing elixirs and creams.”

“I do, but fat potions paid for my house.” Cerine just shrugged at him, putting her glasses back on her muzzle and straightening her hair. “The effect wears off in twenty four hours. If you desperately need her slimmed down before tonight, I can provide you with a counter-agent that disaffects it immediately. Either way, she'll be back to normal. I believe the person you should be questioning over this is your son-in-law for – and I am conjecturing here – not being forthright about his interests before buying one of my potions for his wife.”

The lion sat back in his seat, mouth hanging open but (finally) not producing sound. He was thinking long and hard about this revelation, she assumed. There was an awkward silence in the council chambers. Cerine reached out and pushed the microphone back to its old position with one finger, the audio crackling again.

“I believe you can go now,” the older wolf councilor told her.

Cerine bowed politely as much as she could manage behind the lectern and happily turned to leave.

On the way out of the council hall, she fished her phone out of her pocket and ran her thumb down her contacts until she found a goober of a midnight wolf sticking her tongue out at the screen. She tapped Megan's face twice and the phone started to ring.

The line clicked. “Mmmphello...”

“Are you still asleep?” Cerine asked, stopping at the top of the council hall steps and looking down them. All of them. Her back hurt thinking about it. The Northend Central Plaza stretched out in front of her at the bottom.

“I was up late.”

The alchemist sat herself down on the stone barrier beside the long staircase. “Well, I happen to find myself inside town today. I’m at the council hall. At the top of these fucking stairs.”

“Do... you want me to come carry you?”

“If you could.” Cerine grinned. “I’ll treat you to lunch if you do.”

“Be there in five minutes!”

“Good girl,” the fox teased.