Chapter 10

Dreams came to Leon, of a bleak landscape of filth and spires of clay. There he strode, his limbs absolutely cacked in the off-brown residue. The air was tainted with the smell of decay, forcing him to endure the nose wrinkling aroma or be unwilling to breathe. Nothing dwelled around him except this bleak landscape that stretched out for as far as he could see. Above faired him no better; just a sky inundated with lead grey clouds, each crackling with lightning.

He blinked, rubbing at his eyes, certain he could see shapes and figures within the cloud’s ever shifting form. Faces that he knew would press against their prison, bleak, eyeless copies shrouded in despair. When he turned from them, unwilling to face them, they instead called to him. Their voices were raspy and lingered, seeming to grasp and claw at his ears.

“You’ll die alone Leon.” Grunted Losanas, “Reaching out for something a backstabbing dog like you could never understand.”

“Should have never left me.” Whispered another voice, ending with the familiar snort of a ceullus, “Weakness has invaded every pore of you, corrupted the *fine* piece that you were. With me you would have been strong, respected, honored beyond measure, and most importantly of all, mine.”

Leon collapsed, the earthy, seductive smell of that particular ceullus coming to him. It was overpowering, shameful, he was everywhere, permeating every breath, sinking his hoof like fingers into the half-elf’s flesh. Memories came of those salacious nights, where nothing mattered but doing whatever that beast had wanted.

The ceullus chuckled, “You can run as far as you like, you’ll always want to be in my arms, riding my dick.”

“No.” He cried, his voice but a whisper as he dragged himself through the ground. Muscles ached as the mud sloshed around him, clung to his flesh, threatening to drag him down. As his muscles ached the voices continued to taunt him, reciting every failure that he’d ever endured.

“Do the gryphons know Leon? That you got your first adventuring group killed? All because you’re *stupid* decisions. Melted away into a bubbling pool of acid, all screaming for you come. You ran.”

Don’t listen. The mercenary clenched shut his eyes, unsure how long that he could keep this up. They were certainly toying with him. The answer came as a shaft of brilliant light broke through the clouds above.

It put a calm to the chaos and despair that was on display around it. Pristine, ivory stairs rose from the mud, glowing with a faint angelic light. They were gilded with gold and jewels, the air smelling thick of vanilla and spice. There was freedom, escape, it whispered for Leon to come and embrace what would be his salvation. At it’s highest point was a gryphon he knew all too well, Olas sitting in attire befitting that of a king.

“Come here Leo.” The gryphon cooed, gesturing with a hand for the merc to obey.

The mercenary hesitated, turning to face the landscape of despair behind him. One filled with mud monsters and moaning voices, each clawing away at his spirit. Back to Olas brought a sense of order, a feeling of certainty. He’d be this gryphon’s plaything, a toy, but in that fact there would be peace, serenity. There was no denying it.

Like a siren he complied, dragging his weary body to the safety that was alluded. With his first step, what mass of mud that had caked onto him was whisked away, replaced with vest and trousers of the finest silk. He was groomed, his hair combed back, not a speck of dirt upon him. What weariness had afflicted him had vanished, replaced with the need to ascend. He blushed, looking into the hungry of his gryphon lord, his master.

“That’s right my dear. Come to me…Be mine.”

The next step came without his prompting, the gryphon practically beauty incarnate. From his ears to his tail, every inch of him was captivating to the eye. He was speechless, stunned, wishing to hear more come from this gryphon’s beak. One after the other he drew closer, paying no mind as a golden collar sealed around his neck. This is where he belonged after all, collar chained up, held by this handsome beast.

“Right where you belong dear.” Olas chuckled, tugging on Leon’s chain until the man was held ever tightly within his grip. With a predatory smirk on his beak he kissed the man, invading his mouth with his sinful tongue. Eyes hooded as his wings grew to twice their size, soon wrapping them both and enveloping them in a choking darkness.

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Consciousness returned to Leon, tugging him back from the tormented darkness of his nightmares. Instead of a bleak landscape, he instead found his vision being dominated by onyx fur. His face was mashed up against it, a great weight resting upon him. Not enough to be in pain, but enough to prevent escape. Every breath was musky and warm, and by his second breath he knew *just* where he was. Cheeks flushed as his blood burned.

“Krantor? I assume this is you?” He growled, shifting his palms to press against the gryphon’s belly. He was face first in the gryphon’s sheath!

“Oh, Leon you’re awake.” The onyx gryphon shifted, lifting his thigh so that he could gaze upon the half-elf’s face currently being held in his musky prison. With the way his beak was parted, ears perked, eyes gleaming with mischief, he was more than pleased with himself.

“Pray tell me. Why is my face being ground into your sheath?”

The gryphon shrugged, “I figured you were used to this sort of thing. Might feel right at home when you woke from whatever nightmare you were having.”

As the gryphon chortled at his *hilarious* prank, the man could only grit his teeth, glaring daggers upon him, “You have six seconds before I’m going to turn your balls into my personal punching bag.”

“That does sound amusing. Better hope I don’t like it though, or else you have an entire *new* problem on your hands…Or well-“ Krantor smirked with a lewd chirp, “Your face.”

“Care to test it?” He formed a fist, aiming it straight back to where the gryphon’s jewels would rest.

Tension lingered in the air for several seconds, both unwilling to avert their gaze from their stare. It was the gryphon however who was the first to break, sliding free of Leon with a heavy sigh. Though to add to his cheekiness, he made sure to drag the entire length of it, complete with his balls across Leon’s face.

“Hope you’re sure about this, the view doesn’t get better than my shaft and balls.”

He spat and wiped his face, knowing that it burned brighter than a red dragon’s scales. “I’ve seen better.” As Krantor responded with an indignant squawk at such an affront, the half-elf sat up, holding his head. He shivered, hating to admit it, the gryphon had been at least a warm blanket compared to the cold that now bit through his attire.

Around him was the bleak confines of a jail cell, with bars thicker than his arms. It smelled of oil and steel, with only a solitary exit across from them. It appeared to be made for multiple gryphons, of which there were three others reclining in the far corners. Each was either preening or watching them with mild interest, their tails flicking against the grassy ground.

Outside the jail was yet another tent, this one’s surface a bright blue and adorned with moons and stars. Torches were spread out to give light to this place, where the trio of Leonin guards from before were reclining. They were playing a game of cards, smirking and laughing as they exchanged barbs at one another’s expense.

“Welcome to our new home.” Krantor said, flopping to his belly at the man’s side. “At least for now. Guess they got *really* upset about you turning that minotaur into cheese.”

Right, the battle with the Losanas. Leon held his throbbing head, “Don’t worry, it’s not my first time in one of these places. We’ll be out of here in no time.”

“Doubt that very much.” Laughed one of the leonine. “Loosing off a weapon in a crowded area? Brutally murdering not one but *two* guests of the bosses circus? They’re going to have a *wonderful* time with you human.”

“Half-elf.” Krantor squawked, gesturing to Leon’s ears, “Are you blind?”

“Whatever.” Replied the guard, “All the fleshy pink humans look the same to me. Point still rings true, boss is going to have your ass.” He licked his teeth with a predatory growl, “Can’t wait to see that happen.”

He groaned and rolled his eyes, his type was a silver a dozen. He put his back to them, eying the other gryphons. “Need I ask why you were laying on me?”

“Protecting you.” Krantor chirped with pride, raising his head.

“You don’t expect me-“

“I had to say that you were my hen to claim you. That way these boys didn’t take advantage of you while you slept.” He gave the half-elf a beak parted smile, “No hard feelings?”

To that he groaned, “Alright, don’t get any ideas between your ears though.” He thumbed his chest, raising his voice to draw all the other gryphon’s attentions, “If anyone in here is a hen, it’s this one. Got it?”

The trio exchanged apathetic looks.

“Good, glad that’s settled.” He rounded on the ear splayed Krantor, “Now for you. Since you came to rescue me, where in the world is Olas?”

“Back with Hekate.” Replied the onyx gryphon before leaving his beak open and touching his chin, “Maybe.”

“What do you mean maybe?”

“I mean, we got separated. She went wherever *he* was flying off to, and I came to rescue you. Which, good thing, cause that minotaur was *tough*.”

“He always was.” He punched Krantor’s flank, getting a clack of the beak and a hiss, “Thanks. You did good.”

“Oh.” His reply was soft, uncertain how to continue. He gave a nod, “Hope to do it again. Sadly the ring he had was taken off me by those thieves.”

As the gryphon proceeded to thrust out his wing to insist the leonine get mounted, Leon was left to stew. If Olas had not retrieved them swiftly that probably meant he was in danger or was busy, or hadn’t cared that he and Krantor wound up in this jail cell. He leaned against the bars, figuring it was the second one. After all, the gryphon might be whimsically and oblivious at times, but he was *vastly* powerful.

“I’d be letting us out if I were you!” Krantor thrashed his tail, “We’re being employed by Lord Olas Mysticfeather. Wait until your boss finds out your keeping his friends captive.”