Ever since I gained consciousness, the nurses asked me so many questions and tested my cognitive reflexes too many times to count. In a way, I couldn’t blame them. From what I could understand, the hospital’s own resources were limited, but they would neither allow me visitors nor tell me much. Not as the news talked about things I didn’t understand or as I tried once or twice to leave, only to be guided back to bed.

The nurses and doctor did their jobs too well. Especially the she-bear, who I’d later learn was named Marie. They wanted to make sure the concussion I’d sustained during the yacht’s crash didn’t cause more serious damage. At first, they wouldn’t budge until I offered a *quid pro quo,* that for every question they honestly answered, I would also give my own honest answers to their queries. Fair trade in my humble opinion.

I complied, thereby earning updates on the state of things. We were in Sudbury, a city in Ontario over forty miles north of the Georgian Bay, and a few hundred miles west of Canadia’s capital of Ottawa. The C.A.F. deemed us safer away from the border, especially regarding our public identities as anti-Devout rebels, and how every government-funded militia group from Minnesota to New York were patrolling the Great Lakes’ waters. Many still wanted that $2 million reward, actively searching for or destroying any suspicious boat in their way.

Yes, Canada was freed. With the combined help of underground resistance and Western Republic forces, the Canadian Armed Forces reclaimed Ottawa. Pockets of Devout military were still being clamped down along Minnesota’s border, and enemy forces still held Toronto with an iron grip, but the other major cities were already back in Canadian control. Before Dr. LaCroix had me take another long nap, Marie managed to show me pictures her sister sent her, of people in Montreal taking to the streets, celebrating with fireworks, laughter, dancing, and repeatedly singing Canada’s national anthem. Some even reported Devout-built structures being demolished, including statues.

Much of their gains were directly helped by our coordinated attack on major airports during the summer, as well as the List of Tithingmen being leaked, thereby forcing Devout America to bring back its forces to deal with the bleeding back home.

No, nobody knew what NATO planned to do next.

No, nobody knew just how much territory the Western Republic was taking.

Yes, Texas did secede from the Devout States of America. So did Oklahoma and parts of Louisiana as well as Arkansas, with self-proclaimed ‘true patriots’ and independent militias taking advantage of the chaos to form their own country: the Union of Greater Texas. As far as the Western Republic was concerned, the enemy of their enemy was their friend. As far as the Devout States government was concerned, it wasn’t even occurring.

Yes, the Defiant were all but extinct. Most of the resistance cells within my former country had been wiped out by Archangels, with only a few groups managing to escape either north or into international waters. When I asked Marie if she knew about a Defiant cell from Springfield, Illinois having survived, she wasn’t sure. I also asked her if she could tell me how Blu was doing, and the she-bear promised to ask if she ran into the Doberman again.

Yes, everyone else was recovering from minor injuries and bullet wounds, but unfortunately, Hector could not be saved. The mental image of his cracked cranium splattered all over the floor almost made me want to vomit the hospital food provided to me.

No, he didn’t remain with the Evanescent’s wreck. It lay in Sudbury’s overpacked morgue. A memorial wake was being planned. It took Lowell, Olivia, and eventually Johanna Cardinal herself to strongarm a poor C.A.F. helicopter pilot in returning them to St. Joseph Island in order to recover his body, then transport him back to Sudbury for a proper burial. I wish I’d been there to witness the exchange. From the way one of my nurses described it, Johanna was absolutely mental about it happening. She didn’t care if she angered a higher up or two. She had meant her words, that no one would be left behind.

The knowledge of it caused me to start crying. Worriedly, Marie stood up to offer me tissues, and I appreciated it, but it didn’t help me with remembering…Hector was dead. He died in my arms, smiling at me, telling me he was honored to fight with us, with the Defiant. I didn’t even know which part of Mexico he came from, let alone if he had any living family members.

I remembered the blood, the tears in his eyes, his pale face, and the pain he felt while choking out his last breaths. Then, I remembered his final words to me. Before the crash and before he died. ‘Take care of yourselves. For me, destroy them…Destroy Devout America’.

As I wiped tears flowing from my eyes, Marie went about offering her condolences multiple times, and patted my weak shoulders as I stared numbly up at the hospital’s damaged ceiling. To distract me from the pain, Marie asked me about my life before I joined the Defiant under Mrs. Cardinal, which I hesitantly did so. It helped greatly, but nothing could erase the agony of knowing Hector was gone.

*I hope you’re watching over us in Heaven*, I prayed later that night, when they left me alone to nod off asleep, *and I promise to take care of myself, of my family, my comrades, and Lowell. I bet he misses you too.*

Two days later, I was allowed visitors. The first three to see me were of course, my mother, my father, and Lowell—he immediately went for launching me into a strong hug.

“Adam!” he whined. “Adam, I’m happy you’re awake!”

“Ow!” I yelped over his shoulder. “Easy there, Low! Easy, easy!”

He pulled back before Marie stepped in, apologizing to her and me, “Sorry.”

Mom and Dad were the next ones to envelope me with hugs. Mom in particular refused to let go of me until Dad coaxed her away, only for him to be the one to take over for a few seconds. All four of us began to cry, in relief, joy, sadness, uncertainty, all at once.

“I-I’m s-s-sorry for worrying y-you,” I wept to my parents, occasionally stammering.

“We’re just happy you’re okay, Adam,” Dad squeezed my shoulder. My gaze followed his towards Lowell, who was holding in his own tears while proudly smiling at us and folding his ears in embarrassment. “Lowell’s been driving the staff here nuts since we arrived. Nearly got kicked out for trying to break in the other day.”

I groaned at the wolf, who cheekily tried to hide behind a charming grin.

“What? You’d be doing the same thing if I were in your shoes?” He nervously looked away when Marie glared daggers in his direction. When she left to five all four of us her privacy and closed the door behind her, Lowell cleared his throat, then stepped around on the other side of the bed He caressed my paw. “We were worried sick though, Adam. You had us really worried, me, your folks, and everyone. We almost thought you wouldn’t…wouldn’t make it.”

A heavy, uneasy silence filled the room, until I spoke up.

“Where’s Johanna?” My ears perked high at my own question. “And the others?”

“They’re fine,” Lowell reassured me. “Jeannie’s on the other end of the hospital, recovering. She really worries about you. Kevin and Abigail took some bullets and a few broken bones, but they’re already taking it easy. As for Johanna, she’s at some building in downtown, currently talking to Canadian military about what’s been going on, debriefing ‘em about our ordeal, and such.”

“She wishes to see you though,” Mom interjected, her tail wagging behind her. “Mrs. Cardinal stops by whenever she can to

“Meanwhile,” Lowell continued explaining, “they’ve been having us stay at another hotel near downtown. It’s got even more luxury than the Mavericks ever had, and they’re talking about having us either stay here until we figure out what’s going on down south or have us go to Ottawa. Give our statements to some big wigs from The Hague who wanna know more.”

Another person came to mind. “Where’s Stephen? Did he…?”

“Oh, he’s alive. He didn’t die back at St. Joseph,” Lowell spoke up for my parents. “As far as I know, he’s being kept at the local prison. Nobody but those Hague big wigs I mentioned are allowed to see him.”

“So…what now?”

“What now?” Mom echoed my question, then leaned in close to hug me again, only gentler. “For now, me and your father want you to get better, Adam.”

Lowell nodded affirmatively. “Me too.”

Nodding back, I told them I would.

Later that evening and over the course of the following morning, I got more visitors besides Lowell and my parents. All of them brought flowers of various sizes and shapes. Johanna finally stopped by along with Abigail. The latter formed a quick friendship with Nurse Marie, fussing about my health and how much ‘young people like to go through punishment’. Even so, she didn’t hesitate to give me a hug, and said Jordan wished me a speedy recovery.

“Where is the ferret anyhow?” I asked her.

She chuckled, “Already bothering the doctors downstairs.”

“They’re wary about hiring him due to a revoked license,” Johanna rolled her tired eyes.

“That sounds like him,” I laughed. Then, I looked to the leader of our resistance cell, wearing new, conservative clothing, yet the hotel showers and our freedom from Devout America couldn’t wash away years of stress. Let alone the events of the previous week. “Gonna try to convince them to hire Jordan?”

“They’re actually more interested in your father,” she mentioned, “but maybe I can vouch for them both? There’s only so much I can do though.”

“Fair enough.” I shrugged.

We talked for around an hour or two until night fell, and the hospital no longer accepted visitors. They apologized for not showing up sooner, but I let their explanations slide. Instead, we briefly grieved over Hector’s death, and the doe informed me they planned to have a memorial wake the following Sunday, and that I should attend.

Why wouldn’t I?

Mrs. and Mrs. Lange were the next to visit me in the morning, along with Lowell who practically begged to be let back in the hospital if he behaved. Apparently, the previous night, he’d been trying to turn one of the empty rooms next to mine into a makeshift home for himself. He wanted to be close to me, despite the fact the Canadian government gave us all free lodging at the city’s biggest hotel. The lovable dork.

Following closely behind them were Lucius, Oscar in a new wheelchair, guided by Olivia, the latter of whom told me she was tempted to smack my head for nearly getting myself killed. Afterwards, Old Nick stopped by and so did Bluford, the latter of whom sounded distracted despite his attempts.

“Still no word about Vox the Fox?” I asked, referring to the Springfield cell.

“No!” Spiked anger flashed across the Doberman’s eyes, until they rested on mine, melting into regret and embarrassment. “Sorry,” he apologized quickly. He groaned. “Sorry, Adam. I didn’t mean to. I just…I’m getting tired of people asking me that…They’re all…All of ‘em are likely at this point…”

He stared out my window overlooking a neglected garden courtyard, half of the plants already overgrown and dying due to approaching winter. Sitting up in my bed, I asked if he wanted to discuss something else. The canine did, and we spent a good thirty minutes talking about how antsy Blu started feeling without anything to do once we crossed the border. I knew the feeling too. By the time he decided he needed to leave, Blu wished me a strong recovery, apologized again for snapping earlier, and left after patting my shoulder.

“Hey Blu?” I asked before he walked out the door. “Can I ask…how Stephen is?”

His eyes narrowed, and the dog sighed. “Far as I know, he’s not causing anymore trouble, but the fox wouldn’t quit asking about how you were doing, last I heard. Why?”

Surprised by the response, I shook my head. “It’s nothing,” I said.

Honestly, the fact the red fox wanted to know about my status in the hospital made me frown once Blu closed the door behind him. Either the tithingman wanted to exploit it for his benefit, perhaps to escape, or maybe he did care about me. Whichever way it went, the thought made me wish his jail cell didn’t have a working toilet.

I tried distracting myself with the news, only to ignore them when the broadcasters started telling the same updates ad infinitum. So, I decided to see what Canadian television had to offer following military occupation. Half an hour into watching an old movie on the mountain TV screen (a historical drama about Canada’s involvement during the Second World War), Abigail returned to my room with a surprise. A tigress in a white gown, with long, braided headfur, weakly walking with crutches under both arms. It was hard to recognize her standing, or teary-eyed as she lay in a makeshift hospital bed, but the newfound smile immediately let me easily recognize her.

“A-Adam!”

“Jeannie?” I gasped, smiling behind my whiskers. “Oh my God, you’re—”

“Finally walking?” She laughed, glancing down at her legs and the wooden crutches supporting both of them as they touched the floor. “Doctor LaCroix is telling me not to put too much support on my left leg, but it feels great to be out of those beds. He says I just need some physical therapy.”

“That’s great to hear!” I purred happily.

“Jeannie dear’s making stellar progress,” Abigail said.

She came forward, assisting Jeannie like a watchful parent as their child walked. “How are you doing, Adam?” the tigress asked, looking me over and the bandage on my forehead. “I have heard you were concussed but recovering.”

“It will take more than a head injury to put me down,” I smirked, tapping my cranium.

“Don’t tempt fate, Adam,” Abigail reminded me. “Lowell does it enough on a daily basis, and I don’t want him badly influencing you in that regard.”

“No worries, ma’am,” I reassured her.

Speaking about Lowell, I was more than a little surprised as well when Nancy joined Lowell in visiting me an hour after Abigail left with Jeannie. They were cordial for the most part, only making passive-aggressive remarks at each other when they thought I wasn’t listening. Nancy gave me daffodils, then awkwardly asked Lowell if he actually did try to hide in the neighboring room.

“Will everyone stop bringing that up?” He growled in annoyance.

Nancy laughed. “So it is true?”

“Gonna make a snide comment about me hiding something somewhere?” he questioned the red she-wolf.

“No, you tend to make an ass of yourself on your own,” she smirked.

“Says the lady who wouldn’t quit lusting over my ass—”

“Hey,” I informed the two provocative canines, “if you two are gonna start shouting at each other, I’ll get the nurses to pull you two lovers outside.”

Both Lowell and Nancy stared at me like I’d volunteered to assassinate D.S. President Nessen herself, and it was Nancy herself who was the first to snicker. Lowell then groaned as I sat back in bed, laughing as my tail wagged under the blanket.

It felt amazing to have things return to semi-normal. If only Hector were there to see.

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The doctors and nurses let me out of bed later the next morning, then out of the hospital a day later when they were sure my concussion healed. When my parents—Lowell unfortunately not included, because he needed to do stuff with Johanna—came to check me out, it wasn’t long before I got to see Sudbury with my own eyes.

The city certainly experienced better days. From what I’d been able to gather from both the news, nurses, one of the doctors, and my comrades, Sudbury didn’t face as many restrictions during the Devout’s annexation. At least, compared to the larger metropolises. However, it didn’t prevent underground guerilla fighters and protesters from trying to make the occupying soldiers’ lives as miserable as they could.

During the drive out of the hospital, in a car provided by the local Canadian government, I witnessed the aftermath for myself. I saw it all outside the back seat windows; damaged cars abandoned on the side of the roads, and at least two tanks blown to bits—one of them being dismantled by a group of mammals—and another crashed into a burnt-out building. A group of teenagers used graffiti to tag the metallic ruins. Pockets of litter and overgrown grass filled the fronts of some suburban houses, but the closer we drove down the highway to downtown, the more damage could be found on the streets.

“Hey Liz, Adam, look!” On the highway, Dad pointed outside to the skyline. A massive Canadian flag hung from the side of a tall office building.

The car’s driver, a lynx resident whose name I couldn’t remember, commented, “First thing the armed forces did when they retook Sudbury was place it there. You should’ve seen it, but children and families wouldn’t stop dancing outside their homes until the ass crack of dawn.”

“I’ve heard,” I mentioned. “It must have been a relief, when the Devout left.”

“Oh, it was,” he sighs, wiping his right eye as he drove us in momentary silence. “It was hard, but it made the fight all worth it. Me and the wife dropped everything—our jobs, our social lives, everything—to smuggle weapons and news pamphlets across Greater Sudbury. God…if only she were here to see it…”

Heavy silence filled the car as he drove us down another block.

“You were in the resistance?” Mom asked the unnamed driver.

He eyed her and the rest of us through the rearview mirror. “Everyone was in the resistance.”

The lynx further mentioned things we didn’t know. During the occupation, Sudbury and the surrounding towns were essentially cut off from the rest of Canada and the world. Greater Sudbury essentially relied on airlifts for supplies that arrived directly from Devout American bases across the Great Lakes. It left some residents rationing desperately for food, clean water, and toiletries, which the Devout-installed officials never ran dry of.

Also, Devout military personnel didn’t start officially cracking down on resistance until a month into the occupation. Sure, uncooperative city officials disappeared without a trace, and ‘heretical contraband’ was immediately destroyed whenever a Devout soldier found them, but it wasn’t until July that mass purges began. Any civilian suspected of aiding local resistance fighters were tried without a jury, but the list of enemies gradually grew until the penalty for treason included a person rolling their eyes at a Devout soldier. Those not put to death became indentured servants, forced to do manual labor until their bodies could no longer take the physical toll. The lynx driver spoke of his neighbor becoming one of these servants but didn’t mention what ultimately happened to him.

When the car slowed down in front of our destination, the lynx grew quiet.

“Thank you,” he said.

“Huh?” My ears perked, along with my parents’.

“What do you mean?” Dad asked the feline.

“Thank you, for doing your part in Chicago,” he clarified to us. A soft, bittersweet smile formed across his darker-furred muzzle, and he turned to look at us in the backseats. “What you did at the airports…it really helped us out. Made the odds a little easier for us. So, thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” I replied, “and thank you for the drive, Mister…?”

“Call me René,” he shook my paw. “And welcome to Canada. You three take care of yourselves, okay?”

My parents gave affirmative thanks as well, and we exited the car. As it drove off down the road, we stared up at our new home, the Marigold Suites Hotel. A several-story modernist building staring out onto a boulevard of half-closed shops. People walked around much more openly than they ever did back in Chicago.

We walked inside while Mom discussed with Dad about what they’d heard about on BBC, regarding the European Union lifting sanctions against Canada enacted during the occupation. Meanwhile, I couldn’t help but marvel at how clean the air felt against my whispers, sighing happily at the lack of Devout soldiers or Archangels or propaganda posters everywhere.

“Hey Adam?” Dad asked, “you coming in with us?”

I scratched the back of my head. “Sorry, just…thinking.”

Dad smiled, and so did Mom. “Let’s go inside,” she suggested. “I don’t want you catching a cold.”

Chilly wind suddenly reminded me to ask for long-sleeved shirts in the future. The hospital had been kind enough to keep my clothes and shoes, but the lack of a coat made it difficult to walk through late autumn weather outdoors.

“Agreed,” I chuckled, and joined them in entering the Marigold.

The modern hotel’s interior was cleaner than I initially expected. A decorated lobby with red plush couches surrounding a brick fireplace, a mounted TV playing reruns of an old Canadian sitcom, and another on the other side of the lobby playing what looked like footage of the ongoing street parties in Ottawa and Winnipeg. Otherwise, it greatly resembled the Maverick Hotel we once operated from, but with a different color scheme and layout.

It wouldn’t be until days later that I learned how Devout soldiers and high-ranking personnel were housed at the Marigold Suites and another luxury inn near the lakefront. So, the staff were required to prioritize cleaning for the guests more than usual. It certainly helped that some of the local resistance was already employed there and spied for important information.

No longer though. Not when the Devout fled. Instead, it housed political refugees. My parents shared their own private room while being kind enough to recommend Johanna have me share one with Lowell. They were quick to remind me again about being safe, but thankfully, it didn’t go beyond recommending a drug store down the street.

Mom and Dad each gave me a quick hug, told me they were so proud of me, then informed me which room to go to when we reached the top floor. I thanked them, promised to join them for dinner later that evening downstairs, and left for my hotel room.

Walking down the corridor brought up memories, both good and bad. Except none of them mattered when I knocked on the last door on the right. I didn’t need to wait long for the door to swing open, and Lowell’s eyes widened when they met mine.

“I just got out—Hey!”

The timber wolf yanked me into the room, slammed the door shut, and hugged me tightly. Even harder than when he did back in the hospital. Almost instinctively, I returned the hug.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” he murmured between my ears.

My tail curled around his legs, and I sighed happily. “I am too.”

Hotel rooms reminded me of a church sometimes. At least, what a church was supposed to be, and not what the Devout transformed them into, a place to prove one’s national pride and religious loyalty on a weekly basis. To me, a church was supposed to be a place where one could feel safe and sound. A location to find peace of mind, like a sanctuary to be yourself in front of nobody else but God.

I wasn’t completely sure if God entirely approved of our homosexuality. However, it would always be a part of me and Lowell’s beings. Our love couldn’t go away from prayer. Holding him close, nuzzling my whiskered nose into his broad shoulders, purring as I inhaled his masculine scent, and pressing my lithe form closer to his never felt so divine. It felt right.

So did kissing him. Spending the previous week on the run and recovering in a Canadian hospital left me pent up. My wolf and I could see it in the glint of each other’s eyes. It was even more obvious as our kissing turned deeper and desperate, overflowing with yearning male need. Frustrated at the world and what we’d lost, I needed to let off steam, and Lowell provided that for me as I backed him up against the bed, and we feverishly started undressing together.

I pushed everything else away, except Lowell. No more geopolitics or grieving for those we lost. At least, not until later. For now, I just wanted to make love to my boyfriend after a harrowing series of experiences. Was that too much to ask for?

Lowell’s tail thrashed behind him when I dropped my pants to the floor, and he practically drooled at the sight of my erection tenting in the white briefs the hospital donated to me, to replace my damaged ones. I too started panting at the familiar sight of my wolf’s growing member just begging to be freed.

Lowell’s thumbs gripped the waistbands of my undies. He slowly pulled them away from my hips. Meanwhile, my fingers toyed with his also. We peeled down our final articles of clothing and kicked them aside on the floor without looking away. Rays of sunlight peeking between the closed window blinds nearby reflected off his amber irises. They stared down at me with such intense desires that didn’t feel wrong. Neither did stepping close to him for another prolonged kiss.

Pushing at his chest with both paws, Lowell fell backwards onto the used bed, and didn’t have time to make a remark when I suddenly pounced on him.

“Oof!” He grunted, then moaned when I thrust my hard cock between his balls and thigh. “Oh god…”

“Praise be,” I purred, chuckling as my lips roughly reconnected with his, our foreheads almost colliding with each other in the process.

Our tongues clashed for dominance. Rolling around until I lay under him, my back pushed into the admittedly soft mattress and pristine white bed sheets that smelled of timber wolf, Lowell pulled away, panting. “Be careful. You just recovered from a concussion.”

Without thinking, I joked, “Thanks, Dr. Farthing.”

Lowell froze at what I said. An awkward and uncomfortable pause threatened to derail the mood, leading me to nearly give a quick apology. Except Lowell shrugged it off easily, giving me an eye-rolling smirk.

“If I’m a doctor,” he laughed, “then you wouldn’t mind if I gave you a physical, right?”

A relaxed smile formed across my muzzle. “No, I would not.”

“I love you, Adam.”

I easily returned his grin. “Love you too, Low.”

Chuckling and panting, his canine muzzle trailed beneath my chin, and his digits caressed her up and down my side during his tongue treatment. Then, Lowell started lavishing my chest and nipples with vigor. He made me purr louder and giggle when his fangs scraped against the hardest nubs on my pectorals, aching and as sensitive as my leaking dick frotting against his. Lowell decided to tease me further, biting and licking ad nauseum at each of my bare nipples until I began to squirm beneath my wolf. By the time they were left soaked in saliva and begging to be bitten further, Lowell reached down to stroke my neglected cock, giving the attention it deserved.

I bucked my hips into his wondrous fingers, shaking from how his calloused palm felt along my shaft. It wasn’t enough though. Leaning up, I stole yet another rapturous kiss from my wolf, catching him by surprise enough to let go of me. I rocked against his body, feeling his number flirt with my tail hole, then my taint, causing us to grind against each other in wet ecstasy.

Lowell whispered against my whiskers, “No lube.”

Disappointment almost replaced desire, until he squeezed my ass cheeks with both paws. “Ahhhh!” I gasped, then felt his length slide repeatedly against mine, and I understood. A single exchange to look between us communicated what we could do without lubrication. “F-Fuck me, L-Low.”

“Hehehe.” He thrust faster and faster until my tempo matched his. Soon enough, he could barely catch up with my grinding. “Grrr! F-Fuck, fuuuuck, nngh! A-Adam!”

Neither of us tried to keep the volume down. I hoped the Marigold Suites’ walls were better insulated against sound than the Maverick’s.

“Oh, Lowell!” I whimpered, “L-Low, oh! Nnfm! Ngh, ngh, mmfh!”

We were lost in each other. The world outside melted away into nothingness, leaving only us, our love, and our needs. Nothing but pleasure registered in my brain as I felt our cocks rub and our bodies shudder in bliss. It went on for what felt like an hour or two before Lowell suddenly gripped my sides, then gave a rising growl. It wasn’t long until my panting turned into hissing, and as one, we bucked against each other a final time, letting out a unison grunt. Within seconds our cum spurted everywhere, staining our stomachs and torsos, and Lowell collapsed beside me on the bed.

I choked out a lustful gasp, suddenly remembering to breathe. I weakly raised an arm to wipe the sweat from my forehead, turning my head to give a beaming smile to the panting timber wolf struggling to catch his breath.

“Yep,” the canine smacked his lip, giggling. “I think we’re both definitely tick-free.”

We laughed at the memory of our first morning, following the first time.

“Mmm, remind me to get us some lube the next time we go out,” I said between heavy breaths. “I wanna…try more stuff…if you’re okay with it?”

The wag of his wolf tail indicated his curiosity. “Like what?” he asked. “Topping?” My lack of a direct response made Lowell smirk. “If that’s the case, then you’re gonna need to go pray in a church next Sunday.”

My ears turned to his direction. “Why?”

Lowell’s paw clasped mine. “Because I wanna do some more sacrilegious shit to ya too tonight.” My fur stood on end when I felt his muzzle tickle the side of my neck.

“Hey, Low?” I murmured, glancing at him. “Can we…just…Can we just lay for a bit?”

My boyfriend paused his teasing, then gave an understanding nod. Scooting his naked body closer to mine, I leaned my head against his shoulder and let out a sigh. I squeezed his paw, then relaxed against him as Lowell steadily breathed through his nostrils. I felt a smile form on his muzzle after resting it against my cheek, and we simply enjoyed the moment. We enjoyed the uninterrupted quiet of our little world. We appreciated it, together.