



Migratory Birds
Chapter 14

ONE

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Hey, not so fast!”

With a joyous cry the boy jumped down from the rock, dashed through the brook and then jumped onto a rock on the opposite shore, grinning mischievously.

“Hey!” With an angry expression and pursed lips the girl had stopped at the brook, staring at the dripping wet boy.

“What? What?” With a yelp a younger boy pounced into the girl who instantly took him under her arm so that he would not fall down the slick rock. “Ooooh!” The young wolf looked at the brook with eyes wide open.

The otter boy at the other shore was still grinning.

“Do you really think you can shake me off that easily?”

The boy just smirked, knowing well about her aversion to water.

“Hm!” She lowered herself and tensed, the boy by her side stepped away from the girl. With a loud cry and a daring jump the bunny girl was off the rock, flew through the air and attired on all fours at the other shore. For a moment she struggled to get hold on the slick rock but then she was safe and stood up straight again, grinning at the otter who looked somehow disappointed now.

“Wow!” the lupine boy at the other shore exclaimed.

“Yeah, see!” the girl said loudly. “That’s what a bunny can do.”

“Except that they drown when they fall into water,” the otter boy grumbled.

With herbivorous teeth she growled at him. “I can swim!”

“You can?” he asked and stood up.

She stepped right in front of him. “Bet ya!”

“Let’s see!” he said and pushed her over.

She screamed, desperately swung her arms about, but it was already too late. With a loud splash she fell into the brook.

The otter boy laughed heartily.

With a ferocious growl the girl broke through the water’s surface again, soaked to the skin. If looks could kill the boy would have dropped dead. “Ilies, you are so dead!” she hissed.

The otter was still laughing, almost rolling on the ground.

The young wolf on the other shore smiled too although he was anything but sure if the anger of his protector meant anything good.

Literally seething with rage the girl walked out of the cold water that had soaked her thin dress that stuck tightly to her young body and now rather unveiled than covered it. She approached the boy who was still laughing and without a moment of hesitation she slapped him as hard as she could.

Instinctively rubbing his hot cheek he stared after the bunny who had turned around on the spot.

“Doyo!” she shouted.

“Yes,” the young wolf on the other shore replied, still slightly confused by what he had seen.

"We are going home!" She hopped over a couple of rocks that looked out of the water and when she had joined the other shore she grabbed the young wolf's hand and pulled him away by his arm.

"Kasha!" the otter shouted after her.

She did not react instead walked away, alongside the brook, pulling Doyo with her who was still looking at the otter boy from time to time.

"Kasha!" The boy sighed and then quickly ran downstream, after them, although on the other side of the brook. "Kasha!"

The girl did not look at him.

"Kasha!" he insisted. "Come on!"

She stood still and turned towards him. "Why don't you leave me alone, blockhead. You don't seem to need me."

"But..." He wanted to contradict but she was already walking away again. "Hey!"

Nimblely he jumped over the rocks on his side of the brook. "Come on, Kasha, it's been a joke. I am sorry, okay! See: I apologize."

She ignored him.

The young wolf who had been observing the otter while he stumbled over the ground, being pulled on by the girl, looked at her again. "You won't marry Ilies?" he asked with disbelief.

"Forget it!" she replied coldly.

"But everyone says..." he wanted to contradict.

"I do not care what everyone says," she interrupted him. "That's nothing but rumours and besides Ilies has not even passed his rite of passage yet," she added loudly.

The otter hmpghed noisily. "You know that's not my fault," the boy at the other shore contradicted instantly. "I just do have to wait for winter solstice."

"Oh, yes?" She stopped and turned towards the otter again. "As if you did not have a chance yet."

"That's not fair," he replied angrily. "It was pretty hard! So what could have I done about it?"

"Make an effort!" she snapped and with an additional grunt she walked away, pulling Doyo on who was still observing Ilies.

The otter gritted his teeth. She was right: It had been his fault. If he had taken care of this matter before he had reached adulthood it would have been no problem to find someone who would have been willing to guide him, but now- he sighed- he would have to wait until winter solstice.

"Hey, Ilies!"

He looked up.

At a certain distance downstream Kasha and Doyo stood at the side of Veeleevaya who had joined them while Ilies had mourned his own fate.

The wolf, Doyo's older brother who was a little older than Ilies, made him a sign that he should come over to them.

The otter grunted and then quickly walked over the rocky shore, jumped into the brook, waded through the water and then ran the last part until he had joined the three furs.

“Did you have to anger Kasha again?” Veeleevaya asked. Although he was not that much older than Ilies he was acting like a grown man as he had already passed his rite some time ago and had already been part of several hunts. “It’s no good when she comes to tonight’s feast in such a state.”

“That’s not your fish,” Kasha growled. “I can deal with Ilies myself.”

Veeleevaya gave her a derogatory look.

“Feast? What feast?” Ilies asked.

“Your future husband...” the wolf said, totally unaware of Ilies’ question.

“*My future husband?* Hold your breath!” Kasha interjected strongly. “Are you joking or what? I am going to be a huntress. I do not need a loser like Ilies!”

“I want to see you being pregnant and running after some mammoth,” Veeleevaya stated.

“Ha! Easy!” Kasha exclaimed and put on a derogatory smile. “I am going to marry Doyo, then I won’t have to care about that for some years!” She looked at the young wolf who held her hand. “Don’t you want to marry me, Doyo?”

“Yes!” the young boy answered innocently.

“See!” She looked challengingly at the young wolf’s older brother.

Veeleevaya pulled a face and tousled Doyo’s hair.

“What feast?” Ilies asked once again.

Veeleevaya looked at him as if he was surprised that he was still there. “Well... The vanguard has picked up some roamer who has shown a large herd of chokotha¹ to them and their hunt has been pretty successful, so the elders have decided that there is going to be a feast.” He stopped for an instant. “They will even perform *The One* for him,” he added.

“*The One?*” Ilies asked in disbelief.

“Cooooo!” Doyo said happily. “I wanna see it too!”

Veeleevaya kneeled down and took the younger wolf on his arm. “I am sorry, Doyo. Only grown-ups are allowed to participate.”

“But I’m old enough,” Doyo said with utter conviction.

“Let’s Mum decide about that, okay?”

Doyo looked somehow disappointed as he was obviously certain what his mother’s decision would be.

“Good. Let’s go now. They will certainly need your help,” Veeleevaya said to the bunny and the otter and they pushed off.

Ilies eyed Kasha from the corner of his eyes but she was walking straight on without looking at him.

The highland of Ghere was the largest in the Midlands. Beyond the Valley of Rumainent River the highlands descended towards the bed of River Rtellyion. Uncountable small brooks flowed down the nearly endless meadows that waved in the wind like an ocean of grass and flowers. Just here and there a larger brook

had dug its way into the flat soil and had created a small valley of its own which could usually hardly been seen until one was already falling into it. Down there, a few furs' height beneath the ground of the highlands, small trees, bushes and fern grew where the brooks rushed and gathered the water that would fuel River Rtellyion, provided him with the water that rained down on the highlands where many herds of wild chokothas¹, mammoths and black four-eyed antelopes strode.

It could have been the perfect hunting ground. But it was a fooling idyll that was not meant to last any longer than a few months during late spring, summer and early fall. During wintertime the land would transform into a white desert where the cold winds from the north blew across with unimpeded power. Once when the Midlands' Guild had tried to colonize this land, many small farms had been build in this deceitfully peaceful surrounding. But few of the daring pioneers, who had just been searching for their own little piece of luck, had survived the first winter, even less had lasted the second and the few remaining had abandoned their farms and had joined together in their small towns which had started to protect themselves jealously from anybody who tried to penetrate their chosen territory, such as the tribes which traveled across the highlands of Ghere.

Much like the tribe who had build up its camp at the border of the small valley of the nameless brook Ilies was climbing out of.

Veeleevaya, Doyo and Kasha had left him and now the otter stood at the edge of the tiny canyon and inhaled deeply when he saw how far his tribe had already proceeded: Almost all of the large tents had already been build up and except of some smaller ones which would- with no doubt- stand soon too. He overlooked the camp which consisted of about twenty large tents, inhabited by the largest families with all their kin, and at least the same number of smaller ones where smaller families, newly-weds and different people used to live. At his left they had tethered the mammoths, their large pack animals which were now grazing peacefully, pulling up tuft after tuft of grass with their trunks. The tribesmen seemed to be busy preparing tonight's feast. Although Ilies was still standing at the outskirts of the camp he was certain about what the men were about to gather (firewood) and what the women were preparing (meals for the feast). The kids were all hopping around in anxious anticipation of tonight's festivities.

Ilies sighed while he walked over to the camp. Of course he was enjoying looking forward to a feast (there were much too less) but on the other hand it meant...

"Ilies!"

He had just walked past one of the larger tents, made out of rawhide and light wooden piles, when he was being addressed. He looked around.

Next to the entrance of the tent sat Voela in front of a small fire and in between her kitchen utensils. She was busy gutting fish. "You are passing by just at the right moment," the otter woman said without looking up, skillfully cutting through the fish with her knife. "You could get me some water!"

"Why? Is your husband busy running after kitties again?" Ilies asked sarcastically.

"I heard that, young man," an angry voice shouted from inside the tent.



Kasha

Voela smiled to herself. "As you can hear he is attending more important business," she said. "Now can you get me that water?"

Ilies pulled a face. "Actually I suppose that I got to help mum."

His older sister looked at him from below. "As far as I know she has got more than one pair of paws to help her," she said while shaking her head slightly.

Ilies sighed noisily just when Voela's husband was coming out of the tent, carrying a young otter baby² on his arm. Gently the large lupine man pat on the young boy's back. "Now, that ought to keep him quiet for some time," he said with more than just a hint of relief.

"Have you dried his backside," Voela asked with concern.

"Yes, I have," the wolf answered humbly and held out his son who was gurgling happily when his swirled about in his father's paws.

Voela looked at the two of them with a happy smile.

"And you, young man...," The wolf looked down on the smaller otter boy. "...I do not want you ever to accuse me again! I remember having said that already," he said without even the slightest trace of sympathy. He glared at Ilies.

The otter boy resisted his glare.

"Understood?" the wolf asked harshly.

Ilies inhaled and nodded unwillingly.

"I hope so," the wolf replied and then turned towards his wife again. "I will go over to help the others with the decoration. I will take Gillion with me."

Voela just nodded.

The wolf took up a small wickerwork cradle that had stood next to Voela and carefully placed his son in between the whitish sheets while his cub was just about to fall in a slumber. Cautiously he took the cradle under his arm and walked over to the middle of the camp, not without glaring at the otter boy once again.

Ilies sighed while he looked after him. "I still don't understand how you could marry this wolf," he said.

Voela looked at him. "No matter what you think he is a good husband," she said instantly. "He has changed since our marriage and you can see how proud he is of Gillion, although he is an otter²."

"I don't understand how mum and dad could agree in such a marriage, there are far too much crossbreeds³ in this tribe anyway."

"Ilies!" Voela said sharply. "Do not call my son that!"

Ilies looked away, trying to avoid her glare.

"Now can you get me that water?" she asked him coldly once again.

"Yes," Ilies said, grabbed the largest of the leather water bottles that lay around and walked into the direction he had been coming from.

When he came back again Voela was just about to finish with the fish.

"Thank you," she said when Ilies put down the water bottle.

As he did not know what to do now the otter boy looked around, observed his older sister for a while who was just about to wrap up the strips of fish into neatly washed, big leaves. "I cannot understand why they are making such a fuss about a single roamer," Ilies mentioned.

Shortly Voela looked up and then shrugged her shoulder. "They just needed a pretext for a feast anyway. You know how long it has been since the last one," she stated. "By the way, did you meet her yet?"

"Her? That roamer? She's a woman?" Ilies asked in surprise.

Voela nodded, licking her fingers clean. "She's really something special. I have never seen anyone like her."

"What's so special about her?" Ilies asked.

Once again Voela looked up shortly and smiled lightly. "Besides beating up Beelau?" she asked.

"She's beaten up Beelau?"

Voela nodded while she put her finished work into a small cloth that she folded and tied up.

"He definitely deserved it," Ilies stated.

Voela grinned and stood up, wiping her paws clean. "It's even better," she said. "She broke his arm."

"She broke his arm? What species does she belong to? Tiger? Horse? Or is she a bear too?"

The young otter woman shook her head. "You would never even guess. She's lynx," she answered.

"A lynx?" Ilies shook his head. "You're putting me on!"

"Oh, trust me, she is! After all my dearest husband has witnessed this historical moment." She smiled at him and then looked around, searching for new work to do.

"Well..." The otter boy paused for a moment. "How did she do that?"

"I don't know exactly," his sister replied while taking up the water bottle he had filled up earlier. She drunk some of the water before she went on. "She kicked him or something like that. When they met her Beelau tried to attack her and she fought back. Don't ask me! The hunters can tell you the whole story. Guess, Beelau expected a lynx roamer to be an easy prey." She dried her muzzle with her forearm's fur.

"Bet you," Ilies replied. He inhaled deeply. "kay, I guess I better go over to mum now."

"Do that!" Voela replied. "See you!"

Ilies rose his hand and walked away.

Meanwhile the camp had progressed furthermore and there was not a single tent missing anymore. All of them had been build up by now. The tribesmen and tribeswomen were busy with the preparations for tonight's feast, just like Voela: Either they had to skin today's prey and to make it ready for drying or else they had to pickle it for the feast tonight. Some men had already build up a small oven and now some young men and women were baking bread and some men were about to squeeze Likatta⁴ roots, so that tonight they would have a decent drink too. There was noisy talking all over the camp, it was buzzing with activity. Men, already drunk from joyous anticipation, were shouting their lewd jokes all over the camp, eliciting laughter from grown men and women alike. Just the children were listening without understanding, despite not lacking curiosity.

“Hey, Ilies!”

Before the otter had even been able to do anything he was pounced by the larger, stronger feline who grabbed his head and got him in a headlock.

“Let me go, Gralla,” the otter shouted.

“Oh, no!” the tiger exclaimed. “You are still owing me something!”

“I am not owing you anything, Gralla,” Ilies said as hard as he could in his uncomfortable position.

Actually the tiger was supposed to be younger than Ilies but because of his species he was already much larger than the otter boy and much stronger too and the tiger did not miss a single opportunity to show this. But this time he had been a little bit too overeager as Ilies used a moment of distraction and with slick movements freed himself from the tiger’s hold, simultaneously using the weight of the tiger to throw him on the ground. Gralla sat on the ground and watched Ilies in surprise. Then the tiger broke out into laughter and Ilies held out his hand to help Gralla stand up again.

The tiger poked the otter when he was standing again. “Cool move! It’s a shame Kasha did not see it.”

Ilies growled. “What’s about Kasha all the time? Kasha here, Kasha there! Damn Kasha!”

Gralla shrugged his shoulders. “It’s not like I would not be willing to marry her,” he said. “She’s hot!”

“You can have her!” Ilies said and started to walk into the direction of his family’s tent again.

Gralla walked by his side. “Come on, you’re together all the time, everybody knows that you are as good as married.”

“Shut up!” Ilies replied harshly. “First of all she’s a pain in the ass and second I refuse to marry a bunny or whatever. There are already much to many crossbreeds in my family.”

“So who are you going to marry then?” Gralla asked provocatively. “Do you know any female otter your age in this tribe? There’s just Fellyone and I guess you do not want to wait until *she* has passed her rite.”

Ilies grunted.

“Besides... What’s so bad about Kasha, hm?” Gralla leaned over to Ilies and watched him with a lewd smirk. “She’s skilled, she comes from a good family and don’t tell me you haven’t seen her titties? I’d say she is pretty well stacked...”

Ilies pressed his lips together.

Gralla poked Ilies. “Don’t play innocent, Ilies! If I remember correctly you tailed the bathing girls too. You can hardly have overlooked her...”

The otter was blushing just because of the thought of it, but his dark fur hid it pretty well.

“She was making quite a good impression there: All waving tail, flying hair, round butt, bouncing titties...,” Gralla said with a smirk.

“Shut up!” Ilies intervened hard.

Gralla just smirked. “Getting moody? Do you already have a hardon or what?”

The otter glared at the tiger.

“Oh well, maybe you are not interested in girls!”

“What? Do you want to seduce me?” Ilies replied scornfully.

Instantly Gralla wrapped his arms around Ilies. “Oh yes, my love, let’s build a tent and have a lot of cubs. I can’t wait for the wedding night!” he exclaimed ironically.

Ilies could not help smiling and poked the tiger who was still grinning broadly.

In the meantime they had finally strolled through the camp and had reached the tent of Ilies’ family. His mother was already about to skin a large chokotha with the help of his father, his youngest sister and a neighbor.

“OK, guess, I oughtta go home now too,” Gralla said. “See you tonight!”

Ilies nodded and went over to his family.

“Ilies! Where have you been all the time?” his mother asked the moment she saw him getting closer. “We would really appreciate a little help here.”

“Voela needed my help,” he answered.

His mother nodded. “Well, she does need it these days,” she admitted and leaned over again and buried her knife deep in the animal’s flesh in order to cut the resistant hide off.

His father rose and looked at Ilies for a moment. “Ilies, replace your sister!” he ordered.

“Yes, dad!” The otter boy went around the large animal and got his sister’s knife and started to help his parents. He did not like the scent of a freshly killed animal but he had no choice.

“Dad, who’s that roamer the feast is for?” Ilies asked while working.

The otter man shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. I was not there. You mother accompanied the vanguard.”

“Mum?!”

“Well, she is something that’s for sure,” his mother said. “You should have seen how she defended herself against Beelau. He had attacked her the moment she had showed up. Beelau never hesitates much. But this time he got his share.” She was smiling while she spoke. “She’s a lynx,” she added. “And a pretty good fighter for a feline. Especially for one her age. But a terrible hunter if you asked me. However we were pretty happy when she indicated the herd to us. Their were hiding in a ravine. We would have chased them away if she had not told us about it. That’s it.”

Ilies nodded and while his hands duck deep into the steaming flesh to tear off some parts of the hide he tried to imagine what this mysterious lynx could look alike.

The sharp teeth dug deeply into the steaming meat and with a pull of her head she tore off a large piece and gulped it down without chewing much.

“Do you approve?” the chief, a large and powerful lion who sat right next to her and almost overshadowed her, asked.

With a full mouth, meat juice dripping down from her lips, she nodded.

“Good!” the lion exclaimed as loud as he could. “Then let the feast begin!”

And instantly the uncountable men and women of the tribe pressed towards the fire where two entire chokothas were being roasted, the delicious scent of the meat waved all over the place, an empty space in the very middle of the camp, surrounded by the largest tents. There was a lot of pushing and shoving, especially because the women, who owned the right to decide about the size of the portions, had to remind the men of their manners as those just tried to get the largest pieces possible. In the end the women asserted themselves and succeeded in serving the children first while the men had to watch, playfully grumbling about this disgrace.

Except Ilies. The otter boy was still standing at the edge of the crowd, his gaze fixed on the carpet the important men and women sat on: There was the chief and the tribe's elders on one side and the shamaness, her maidens and the wise women on the other side. In between these sat the lynx, looking terribly small in comparison to the huge shape of the lion and the shamaness, a proud, slender antelope whose antlers made her look even bigger than she was. The lynx was looking somehow lost, as she was pretty small for her kind, despite her muscles and her tomboyish looks. There was hardly anything female about her and if Ilies had not know about her gender he would not had recognized her as a girl.

"Here!"

Before the otter even knew what happened Kasha had pressed a clay plate with a large piece of meat into his paws and the very same instant had disappeared in the crowd again.

Ilies knitted his frowns, not knowing what he was supposed to think about this unexpected favor. "Thanks," he mumbled more to himself and then looked towards the lynx again: Despite the attempts of the chief and the shamaness to talk to her the lynx was eating hungrily and did not seem to be interested in anything else.

Ilies let go a sigh and looked around to find a place where he could sit down. He saw Gralla who made him a sign. The tiger was sitting with some of their friends and Ilies walked over to them.

During the meal the whole tribe was relatively silent, there was not much talking as everyone was enjoying the exquisitely spiced meat, they did not get this often. Lots of Likatta root beer was flowing freely and the more the roasted chokothas were being decimated the louder the whole tribe became and soon there was noisy talk, cheerful laughter and happy shouting all about.

Ilies joked about a lot with his friends and Gralla and for a while he completely forgot about the past day. But somewhen one of his friends, who had passed his rite when Ilies had been supposed to pass his rite too, started to talk about his wife and instantly a shadow was cast over the otter boy and he became much less talkative. Soon his friend's wife joined them too and the whole conversation was about marriage, men, women and love only.

Ilies did not pay any attention to it anymore and looked towards the lynx again: She was enjoying sucking bone marrow out of large bones she broke with her bare hands. The elders who observed this nodded in admiration of her strength.

Ilies looked about, eyeing his friends one by one and unnoticed by these (by now they were busy talking about the children they wanted to have) he stood up and walked away. He walked through the sitting tribesmen and tribeswomen, studied the expressions of happiness on their reddened faces. He was in a gloomy mood by now as his mind was still turning about the incidents of this day. The constant talk about his failed rite and a future marriage of his annoyed him although he did not really understand why. Thoughtfully he leaned against the pole of a tent and observed the lynx again: Somehow he envied her, she was free to go where she wanted to go, there was no rite, no mate, no family, no tribe holding her back. Maybe he should consider roaming too.

He did not notice how Kasha approached him. She followed the direction of his look and now saw very well at whom he was looking all the time. The bunny girl scrutinized him, trying to make a sense out of his expression that was basically just showing fascination but not the origin of it. "Yeah, dreaming of what you can't get, right?" she asked sarcastically.

He looked at her, surprised to see her by his side.

"What's so special about her?" she asked him. The fire was brightly illuminating the left side of her face that seemed to be afire. Still he could not make out what she was feeling.

"Did you never have imagined to enjoy a performance just for you?" he said edgily. He noticed that she had changed her clothes, she was now wearing a tight dress made of reddish cloth and leather and she had plaited her hair. He gulped. The heat of the close fire had dried out his throat.

"You envy her," she stated, her voice unveiling a little bit of surprise.

He did not answer, instead sat down all of a sudden.

Kasha eyed the lynx for another moment and hmped, it sounded almost like laughter. She kneeled down by his side and suddenly a smile flitted over her face. Carefully she took his little ear and massaged it lightly, it felt good, soft and warm, between her fingers and she waited for a reaction of his.

The otter boy was not taking his eyes off the lynx: For the first time he noticed that she did not seem to feel comfortable at all. The tribesman around her tried to engage her in a conversation but she did not really participate in it. Nevertheless she was laughing when they were laughing and from time to time something like a smile showed on her lips, at least her teeth showed. But in the end she was hardly talking at all and her tail was almost constantly lashing behind her, her eyes were not wandering about but rather shooting from one to the next as if she was constantly alarmed. The fire danced over her face, illuminated the harsh features with strange flickering that deepened the lines and seemed to bury her eyes in darkness, just occasionally her pupils flashed up when she looked into Ilies' direction. Her dark eyes showed no emotion at all, just the profound depth of a hunter's eyes who was ready to bury her teeth in her prey.

Kasha let go his ear and sighed noisily.

He turned towards her, somehow surprised that she was still there.

"You are a terrible bore," she stated. She had sat down next to him.

"What do you care?" he asked bluntly.

She glared at him. "Yes, exactly! What do I care?"

He needed a moment to understand what her harsh words could mean. Afterwards he started to smirk. "Jealous, uh?"

Kasha's eyes narrowed, she laid her long ears backwards and approached him a little bit. "You are stupid, Ilies," she snarled at him. "We are going to be married, no matter how much we hate one another!"

Her breath waved around his muzzle and he could smell that she had drunken. His face hardened. "What the hell are you talking about?"

She laughed out and fell back on her spot. She picked at her dress, adjusting it again. It stuck tightly to her as she was sweating, partly because of the heat of the fire, partly because of the alcohol. It would had emphasized her still maturing body's curves no matter what, but now sticking so tightly to her it was almost too suggestive.

Ilies noticed this for the first time and for a moment he just stared at her cleavage as he could also see her breastwarts through the cloth. Her paws pulling at the cloth distracted him again and he looked up, just to see that she was still glaring at him.

"You really don't know, do you?" she asked him.

"What?" he asked impatiently. He was sick of her bad temper.

For an instant her eyes flashed with anger. "I really don't know what I... Aaaaargh!" She cried out in anger.

The sound was drowned out by the noises of the feast. Except for a few furs around them, nobody paid any attention to this.

"Listen, stupid!" she hissed. Now her eyes were truly flashing with anger. "*We - Are - Promised - To - One - Another!* Got it?"

With eyes wide open he stared at her. "What the hell are you talking about?" he exclaimed.

Someone seemed to have heard her cry as he was suddenly standing by their side. Ilies hardly noticed him, but Kasha rose her head and saw her father who was looking down on them. The rabbit man smiled at them.

"Everything alright with you, kids?" he asked with a smile.

"No problem, dad!" she replied with a true daughter's smile.

The man laughed and pat on her head. "Don't do anything stupid, kids," he said. "Tomorrow will be a hard day."

"Sure, dad," she answered, smiling and observed how he walked away. When she was certain that he was not looking anymore her smile instantly disappeared again and she glared at Ilies again. "Listen, Ilies. You were supposed to pass your rite just after I had become a woman. But you had to muck it up. Of course! So the day after your parents came over to talk with mine. I eavesdropped on them and you know what they said...? Guess! They talked how they would proceed with our marriage after this failure of yours!" She waited, watching how her words made their impact on him.

"Rats!" he exclaimed emphatically, violently shaking his head.

Her eyes flashed. "They had wanted to announce our engagement right after your rite. But you had to muck it up..."

"I know that by now," he flared up, interrupting her. He glared at her and she glared at him. It was him who turned his head away first. "That's impossible," he hissed petulantly. "We hate each other, we belong to different species, we..." He fell silent.

"Think again, stupid," she said harshly. "I am second born and you are the youngest of your brothers. Your oldest brother does already have a son, doesn't he? Our families' bloodlines are taken care of. So does it matter?" She looked straight at him, anticipating an answer.

He looked up again, his mouth was nothing but a thin line. "But we can't stand one another."

She was looking at him with eyes wide open, then she was slowly retiring, carefully eyeing him. She had laid her ears backwards so it seemed as if she had gotten somehow smaller. Her anger seemed to disappear, her expression changing to something like exhaustion. "Yes," she sighed. "We can't stand each other."

For a moment they were both silent and in this moment of silence the feast around them seemed to be coming up from below again: The sounds of the drinking men and women, the crackling fire, the laughter of the children who were still running around, trying to escape their parents who wanted to send them to bed. And in the middle of all this happy partying sat the lynx, on one side being besieged by the tribe's most beautiful women, on the other side being besieged by the tribe's most important men and she was laughing out loud, her face crimson red from the little alcohol she had drunken up to now. Her small, strong body was shaking from amusement while one of the man yelled in an attempt to impress her and even the tribe's elders were visibly amused while the women on the lynx' other side had joined her laughter and sometimes whispered their silly comments into her pointed ear. She looked like a strange princess on a throne, laughing, eating and drinking to her heart's content.

Kasha looked at Ilies and slowly the feast around them was disappearing again.

Somehow the otter could feel her look and he rose his head and looked at her too. "I cannot pass my rite until winter solstice," he said. "If you find yourself a husband until then our parents won't be able to do anything about it," he suggested.

Her eyes widened, her ears twitched. "*I hate you, Ilies!*" she yelled, jumped to her feet and ran away, not looking around one last time. In a matter of an instant her bunny shape had disappeared between the darkness of the tents.

He had stood up and was looking after her. He needed a moment. "I didn't know," he finally shouted after her, but it was already too late. "Honest!" He let go a sigh.

A group of men close by broke out in laughter and this noise distracted him and he looked down on them like he was seeing them for the very first time in his life. He rose his eyes and started to look all over the place, the partying men and women. Most children had disappeared by now and a group of young men was just about to fuel the fire again which had burned down considerably. Sparks were swirling all about, the sudden blaze dyed everything in orange light and behind a

wall of flames and dying sparks sat the lynx, looking straight at him, the only standing man in all this crowd. Her dark eyes glistened like the sparks that were dancing around her fur like they were adoring her strangely muscular shape and it seemed as in this strange light her clothes had become transparent.

Ilies was just staring at her.

She turned her head away and looked to the woman by her side, the chief's wife who was talking to her, gesticulated animatedly and then she broke out in laughter and on the lynx' face a smile was showing up, a strangely shy expression that she was not controlling. Her eyes had narrowed and her cheeks looked like furry peaches, glowing with inner heat.

He was just staring at her.

"Ilies..., Ilies..., Ilies...!"

Only after a certain time he became aware that he was being addressed. He looked down and saw into the face of a young rabbit man who smiled at him.

"Come on, sit with us," he invited the otter and waved his hand.

Automatically Ilies sat down and found himself among a larger group of four young men, consisting of the rabbit, two wolves and a badger who were all smiling at him.

"Hey, aren't children supposed to be in bed by now?" the wolf asked the other wolf.

Ilies was shocked and he did not even have the power to hide it.

"Uh?" The rabbit poked him with his elbow and looked inquiringly at him.

After a moment the four men broke out in laughter.

"Dear Goddess, Ilies!" Broadly smiling the badger with the messy hair next to him laid his hand upon the otter's shoulder. "You should have seen your face!"

"Come on, Ilies, I did not mean to insult you," the wolf opposite him said apologetically.

Ilies just shrugged his shoulders. "I oughta be used to it by now," he said cynically.

"Oh, come on!" The rabbit laid his arm over the otter's shoulder. "There's just autumn between you and manhood, so what the hell do you care, uh? This time you will do better and everything will be fine. So don't pull such a face, right?"

Ilies looked at him from the corner of his eyes.

The rabbit moved closer and spoke more quietly. "Don't worry, even my sister can wait a little longer. She won't run away." Mosha grinned.

Ilies was somehow surprised.

"Hey, come on," the second wolf who had been silent up to now said. "We were sitting right beside you all the time. There was no way we could not overhear that."

"You heard us...?" Ilies asked, his eyes had narrowed.

"Hey, it's not like I'd not know about my sister, right." Mosha looked inquiringly at him. "No matter how she treats you, I should know how she's behaving at home, shouldn't I?"

For a moment Ilies studied him, then he shrugged his shoulders.

The first wolf smirked at the rabbit. "Yeah, it's hard to have a randy sister at your tail, isn't it?"

"Oh, shut up, Hglo! As if you'd understand," Mosha said harshly.

Hglo sat up straight. "Well, I know what a randy woman is. I've got one as a wife..." He smirked.

"Oooooooh," the three other men howled.

The badger grinned. "So that's the reason why you lock her away in your tent all the time? You're afraid that she's setting upon every man she meets."

"Fortunately there are not many around here," the wolf replied.

The four men broke out in laughter again.

"Look, I..." Ilies started, gulped shortly and went on more insistently: "I just don't know what to make out of this. I didn't even know we were supposed to marry, you know?"

"Surprise! Surprise!" the badger yelled excessively. He was definitely not sober anymore.

"Come on! You don't want to tell me that you had no idea?" Mosha asked him. "Who did you expect to marry?"

Ilies shrugged his shoulders. "I did not know they would accept more crossbreeds in the family."

"Do you know any otter your age in this tribe, Ilies?" Hglo asked.

The otter shrugged his shoulders and looked down. He was feeling like a total fool by now.

"Don't worry!" The badger pat on Ilies' shoulder. "Your marriage will be hell, but you do still have got a reprieve of half a year."

The four men showed him a very toothy grin.

Ilies smiled scornfully too and then shook his head. "I really don't care anymore," he said. "But I guess, Kasha's lost her patience."

Mosha sighed. "Take it easy, love can wait."

The otter looked at the rabbit.

The four men grinned and then broke out in laughter again.

The badger hit Ilies' head. "You just have got to wait a little longer, Ilies! Winter solstice isn't that far from now. Winter will come soon this year."

Ilies who had partly ducked his hit looked up again, rubbing the back of head. "What do you mean?"

"Some birds are already flying south⁵," the second wolf mentioned. "And the herds are restless."

The other wolf, the rabbit and the badger nodded thoughtfully.

"The shamaness has predicted a hard and long winter," Hglo added "So more than enough time for newly-weds to spend between the sheets..." He grinned.

Ilies hmped. "I wished I could get over and done with this sooner. It would be better for both of us."

"Hey, if you're really so worried about it you just got to get yourself laid," the badger interjected. Instantly the second wolf rammed his elbow into his side. "Hey, what was that for?" the badger complained.

"Don't mess with his head," the wolf said.

Ilies who was already partly confused by this looked at the two. "What are you talking about?"

Mosha sighed. "Look, Ilies, it's rubbish. Forget about it!"

"What?" Ilies asked insistently.

Mosha sighed. "You explain, Ezzo," he said to the badger.

Ezzo inhaled. "Well, there is this old rumour that a boy can become a man by... getting it on with a woman."

Ilies looked at him. "That true?"

Hglo shrugged his shoulders. "Who knows?! It's just some rumour and even if it was true, tell me what woman would deal her honor for someone like you?" He had leaned forward and the flames of the fire danced on his predatory face.

"Well, maybe that lynx tramp would," the second wolf suggested.

Instantly Mosha, Hglo and Ezzo started to whistle and to yell at him, the rabbit throwing remains of his food at the wolf who was laughing.

Ilies watched the show without enthusiasm and while it went on he stood up without saying a word and started to walk away.

"Hey, Ilies, where are you going?" Hglo shouted after him. "You don't want to flee, do you?"

The words ringed in his ears and all of a sudden he started to run, just trying to get away from the feast and everything else.

The four young men looked after him in surprise.

"Maybe he isn't really much more than a child yet," Hglo stated.

Mosha shortly looked at him. "I don't hope so, for my sister's sake..."

Something inside him had suddenly turned to stone, hurt so much inside his chest that he wanted to cry. But he could not do it, he had gritted his teeth instead and ran past the tents as if something was hunting him. His mind was spinning and he could feel the hammering of his heart almost like a physical pain inside his skull. His feet slowed down bit by bit until he was walking with normal speed again. For an instant loud laughter from the feast sounded over to him and for the same time he was convinced that it was him who they were laughing about. Of course he knew this could not be true but the mere thought cut him to the quick nevertheless. He felt so stupid because he did not really understand what had scared him so much. What the hell was wrong? Why did he feel so bad right now? He knew no answer.

Ilies stopped and inhaled deeply when he reached the outer skirts of the camp. He was a coward. There was no way to deny it.

Here the noises of the feast were nothing but an echo that lost itself in the vastness of the highlands. The air was cooler here, far less scents were in the air, instead there was the smell of herbs and flowers, moist grass and the specific scent of the mammoth manure. The darkness did good to his eyes and for a moment he was just watching the sky: Heya had risen high and its large crescent was beautiful, Tezu was close by and nothing but a fine crescent, hardly visible in Heya's bright reddish light; Koda seemed to hide between some of the thin, high floating clouds and from horizon to horizon stretched the Celestial River.

Ilies heard a rustle and turned around and blinked several times before he was certain that he did see what he saw: It was the lynx. Only at a few tents distance she was walking through the grass. Ilies stared at her, wondering what she was about to do. How could she leave the feast? She was the guest of honor after all!

The lynx waded on through the high grass until she was certain that she stood outside the circle of light that surrounded the camp. She seemed to be looking around and as she was a lynx she could hardly had overseen him, but despite his presence she did not hesitate any longer and started to pull down her shorts and lowered herself down in the grass.

For a moment Ilies was just staring at the feline figure in grass. But then he got aware of what he did and he turned away as quickly as possible. Automatically his legs started to move into the opposite direction. For a moment he was wondering what he cared anyway but on the other hand he was pretty relieved about it.

With a sigh he rose his head and looked at the sky again. He recognized a few of the constellations, especially the Crane high above his head. Since several months the tribe was following it in the search of the rich pastures of the herds that roamed the highlands of Ghere. They had left behind most of the settlements by now and ahead of them was nothing but uninhabited wilderness now. It would not be long before they would turn around again, traveling south before winter would come. And on winter solstice he would pass his rite and become a man and marry Kasha. Once again a sigh escaped him. He did not feel ready for it. Of course most of his friends his age were married by now but still...

He jumped when he felt the tap on his shoulder and when he turned around he looked into a pair of slanting eyes. Totally flabbergasted he stared at the lynx girl.

"Do y've got a smoke?" a hoarse voice asked him.

"What?" he asked.

"Cigs. Y'know tobacco, anythin'..."

"Oh...!" He shook his head.

"Shit!" she hissed and looked away for a moment.

Little by little he was starting to grasp that he was really talking with the lynx girl the guys had been joking about just a few moments ago. She had to have approached him with true feline stealth while he had been distracted. He was still hardly able to believe that it was indeed the tribe's guest of honor who stood in front of him..

She hmphed. "Can y'tell me 'bout this thing? This *One!*?" Her dark brown eyes scrutinized him slowly.

"*The One?*" he asked stupidly.

The lynx girl nodded.

Ilies tried to summon his spirits. "It's... it's a chant. A chant from the *Legend of the White Princess*," he replied. "A magical chant."

"Magic?"

Ilies nodded.

"Fuck!" she exclaimed and stared to the ground for an instant. "What kind of magic?"

"Well, eh..." He was slightly confused because he had never thought about this before. This moment of hesitation made him focus on her scent that was much stronger than he would have expected: She smelled like moist earth with a hint of cinnamon. It was odd and he laughed nervously. "I don't know," he said quickly. "I do not know if it's truly magic. But the shamaness says so and well... it's meant to..., you know, purify one's spirit. At least that's what the shamaness says." He scratched his head. "It's just music. But I like it. It's really a beautiful song."

She nodded. "Thanks," she said with this naturally husky voice of hers. "See ya!" And she turned around and walked back into the direction of the feast.

While he was still seeing her between the tents he stared at her tail and her buttocks that were fairly visible beneath the tight cloth of her shorts: They were perfectly shaped, firm and tight, although very muscled too. Her short, fluffy tail wagged seductively over it. He could almost feel his fingers at it. Blood shot into his head and for a moment he felt like he had a fireball on his neck. Quickly he turned away and looked elsewhere, inhaling the cool air deeply. His sex had grown hard and almost painfully stiff while he tried to distract his mind. But even though he thought of how they had gutted the chokotha today, the picture of the small lynx walking away, her tail wagging vividly over her backside popped up again and again.

Ilies gulped, closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. They had said that the only thing he had to do was to spend the night with her. He had seen her now, she had a certain effect on him, so what did he hesitate? Of course she was somehow strange, but after all who knew where she was coming from? Anyway there was something about her. Although he did not understand it. She looked like a boy, but on the other hand her backside...

With a cry of frustration he kicked a stone that had lain between the grass. It flew high into the darkness and disappeared fully somewhere beyond the sphere of dim light that surrounded the camp. He could hear how it touched down again. It was futile. Maybe Mosha had been right: This whole story of a woman turning a boy into a man was nothing but confusing him. For a moment he had truly believed that it was an option. It was just yet another treacherous hope. What was he thinking about?

The otter sighed. He had looked at the ground, at the blades of grass his feet crushed against the ground.

There was a sudden yell from many voices coming over to him. It made him turn around and gloomily he walked over to the feast again. He came back just in time. He could see that the preparations for the performance had already started. Most of the dishes and such had been moved aside and almost everyone was impatiently staring at the place where the shamaness, the chief and the lynx sat. Some younger children had sneaked out of their families' tents in order to peep on the performance although they were supposed to be sleeping by now.

The shamaness nodded towards the four maidens and those picked up the instruments that they had taken along. The first girl was putting a large, thin flute to her lips, the second was holding a tiny ocarina in her paws, the third had a

bodagh and the fourth had two different tangles of bells. In the same moment five men on the other side of the lynx rose to full size.

The lynx at the shamaness' side eyed them in surprise.

The anticipation of the song made the audience restless as they were all eager to get into a comfortable position before the song started. Ilies observed the commotion from between the tents. At least he wanted to enjoy the performance.

With nothing but a nod towards her maidens and the men on the other side the shamaness alarmed them. Instantly the last remaining noises subsided.

The lynx eyed the musician and singers around her.

Once again the shamaness nodded towards the men on the other side and these inhaled deeply and in this moment the entire tribe held its breath, prepared itself for the performance, opening itself up to it and the lynx could feel the anxious desire in the air.

The first man started to sing a single low tone, the second man joined him with a higher tone and another moment later the third man joined in with an ever higher tone.

Every set of eyes rested on them.

In the very same moment the three men stopped, inhaled and started anew and in this instant the two remaining men joined in, humming deeply, adding a nervous tremble to the whole of it. The bodagh joined in with a steady rhythm, the bells were shaken, their high-pitched sounds were like the shiny reflections of stars in a dark sea of male voices. The flute joined in with a constant never-ending trill and this sound send a shiver down the lynx' spine who was unable to take her eyes off the musicians now who had closed their eyes and moved slightly in accordance to the rhythm.

And then the shamaness started to sing, her high voice illuminated the night like a shooting star and the ocarina's dark tone accompanied her. She had a beautiful voice that sounded like the rushing of a small waterfall in the morning and the tones that came out of her mouth transformed the words into pictures that danced vividly in the air, enchanting the audience.

*In the Darkness they stood and blessed her,
blessed her with ancient curses and sent her away,
and thru' the air she rode to the valley
where her beloved were waiting.*

Between every verse everyone fell silent just the bodagh and the bells went on with their rhythm before the men joined in again, the flute and then the shamaness and the ocarina, conjuring up another verse.

*But from afar she could see the smoke,
smoke from the brightest of fires,
and the stench in the air.
The perfumes she knew were gone forever.*

*And in admist the destruction she met
her fate, a beast with a without a tongue,
telling thousands of lies,
and always telling the truth.*

*She knew it from long ago,
it had come to her at night,
had taught her to love, to hate,
to forge a weapon black with fury.*

*As she thought her rage to be righteous,
she did not weary, but the beast spoke
wisdom and ancient orders,
denying her birthright.*

*“By us you live, by us you die, my love!”
And her fury knew no bounds,
an ancient love betrayed
for the sake of life, for the sake of love.*

*“Yours was never the right to chose.”
“Yours was the decision, mine is just the execution.”
“So all is lost and your blood
will join my loved ones’ you spilled.”*

*“Nothing is lost, two Moons spinning,
one resting in the sky.”
And diamond teeth and mighty sword
started to dance upon the bones.*

*One holding the other in deadly embrace,
wound kissing wound and blood in between,
and ether on her lips and flesh on his,
and yells and cries of ecstasy.*

*But with her shadow taller than her soul,
she smite him and with his shape vanishing,
he spoke: “Love, my mortal love,
life is yours and so is darkness.”*

*“Take me, take me whole,
no way to leave yourself, the Goddess herself,
has sealed your gates a long time ago,
nothing but your heart, my love.”*

*And with a last gasp he died and vanished
in her arms, left nothing,
nothing but the grief in her heart
and an eternal flame burning in her chest.*

*And all was well, two moons spinning,
one resting in the sky,
and darkness in her heart,
a princess who had seen her face.*

The shamaness hold on the last tone and the men joined her, the rhythm of the bodagh and the bells got faster and faster and the trill of the flute got higher and higher and it all added up to a single chord that exploded and ended like it had never reverberated in the air. The song was over.

Everyone was dead silent for a moment, overcome by the power of the music.

Someone started to clap and in a matter of an instant it transformed into a single deafening cheer when the whole tribe cried out its joy. They were yelling, clapping, stomping and shouting and there was nobody who did not smile happily due to this wonderful performance.

Except the guest of honor. The lynx needed a little longer to overcome the enchantment and when she did she eyed the agitated tribe with something like confusion and anxiety. She inhaled deeply, tried to keep herself and her hammering heart under control. She was feeling like she had fallen down a riff, having grabbed a single branch to rescue herself in the very last instant. Her hands were trembling. Fear had elicited a rush of adrenaline in her veins, that had thrilled her, completely intoxicated her and she had not noticed the gravity of the situation until the last chord had subsided: She had been much too close to loose control. Fever of excitement sparkled across her skin. She stared at her paws, saw her claws retreating again and did not notice how the chief by her side pat her on her shoulder in order to share his happiness.

Now Ilies was feeling much better, like most of his fellow tribesmen the chant had relieved his tension. A feeling of inner peace had suddenly taken over. He loved the music and he was happy any time he had a chance to listen to a performance. But especially tonight it had been just what he had needed. But when he looked at the lynx he noticed that something was not alright with her despite the distance between them: Her movements were somehow erratic and she was avoiding eye contact with all the people around while she was breathing heavily. Somehow the chant seemed to have troubled her. He knitted his frowns.

Just in this moment she was looking up and for a short instant their eyes met. The rhombic pupils of her strange slanting eyes had become small.

The chant had changed the whole atmosphere of the event: The members of the tribe had moved closer together, somehow unconsciously searching for their mates' company. It had freed them from most of their inhibitions and the heat of the big fire and the excitement the song had aroused in everyone had dispelled

any false inhibition. Kisses and even more intimate caresses were freely exchanged and more than one tribesman had removed parts of his or her clothing in the passion of the moment. It was obvious how this night would end.

The lynx was still distracted when the chief pat on her shoulder one more time. She looked into his broadly smiling face and the man nodded towards her as if he was asking her something. She was slightly confused but then looked around and instantly noticed the change of the behaviour around her. The chief smiled at her another time, stood up and cleared his throat as noisily as possible. Bit by bit most of the distracted people turned towards him.

The lynx eyed him suspiciously.

The lion looked around with a smile. "Fellow tribesmen," he said with his strong voice.

Ilies had carefully observed the changes around him and the more he had seen of it the more he had started to dislike it. He knew what was coming now and he did not particularly like this part, most especially because he was not ment to be a part of it. A momentary impulse told him to leave, but his curiosity was stronger: He wanted to know who the lynx would choose.

The lion went on: "The law of hospitality lays down that our guest may choose a companion for the night..."

The lynx girl was looking at the lion despite not showing surprise. She was rather eyeing him suspiciously as if she was doubting that he was actually speaking the truth, suspecting him to be joking. But her tail started wagging more strongly, revealing her increasing nervousity.

"Any man has to follow her call if she chooses him," the lion added and with a generous smile he turned around to the lynx who was still eyeing him.

The otter boy pressed his lips together. This whole show was unfair, young men like him who were still unmarried were excluded and in this moment he felt his envy for the other men more than ever. If it was true what Ezzo had told him before this lynx could have been his salvation, but she did not even know... Lost in his thoughts he watched what was going on.

"Do you want to spend the night with someone?" the lion asked the lynx.

Slowly the lynx turned towards the gathered men and women again and with narrowed eyes she looked around, shortly eyeing every single male present. She could sense their lust, such as the flickering spark in their pupils when they observed her. The women were eager to know her decision, they seemed to be ready to break out in laughter the moment she would reach her decision, because it might turn a proud man into her obedient slave for the night.

The lion and his fellow leaders observed the girl just like the shamaness and her women on her other side.

Ilies saw like her vision got closer to him and although he told himself to stay calm, he became nervous for a moment. What if she chose him anyway? But her look passed by him without even the shortest moment of hesitation and he let go an inaudible sigh. It would had been too much of a miracle. What had he been imaging anyway?

Her eyes wandered on and she stopped when she saw a group of young men sitting at the edge of the gathering, two jackals and a slender antelope man, the brothers Mioka and their friend Colomania, a mighty successful team of hunters, still young and bold but their faces were already showing their experience. They seemed to burn with the need of an adventure.

Her eyes wandered on and she saw a hyena in the first row, just next to the tribes' leaders. He was smirking from underneath his boldly cut, long hair. He was extremely muscled, every pore of his body seemed to exude his masculinity and his eyes were more than obviously inviting her.

The lion looked at her, getting a little bit impatient.

Going on further she noticed a big stag, his harsh features were not expressing his emotions and he seemed to be observing the whole show without any interest. His motionlessness was expressing his ability to control himself and it seemed to include every fiber of his hunter's body. He was eyeing her with just the same coolness she was eyeing him too.

"Now...?" the lion asked, his tail wagging strongly.

"Yeah, him...," she said and pointed at the stag.

A collective gasp was uttered by the gathered men and women.

Niccera. Ilies pulled a face. He could have guessed it in advance. Niccera was already a widower, his wife had died after being hurt by a mammoth almost a year ago. The young, unmarried girls were all about him. He was muscled, good-looking, a successful hunter, always ready for an adventure and secretive enough.

As the men and women cheered to Niccera who was about to stand up, a sudden feeling of disgust overcame Ilies and he spun around on the spot and walked away, suddenly full of anger. The lynx' choice enraged him, although he did not know why. What did he care anyway? If she chose a bloke like Niccera, it was her problem. What did he care? What did he goddamn care? His mind spun around this riddle while he walked beyond the outer skirts of the camp again, leaving the tents and the light behind until he stood in the moist grass nothing but darkness in front of him, the camp nothing more than a tiny ring of flickering light under the moons' watch.

He sat down and stared into the darkness. There was nothing else he could do.

He did not know how long he sat there, it did not matter anyway.

"Ya still haven't got a smoke, eh?"

Ilies looked around and stared at the lynx: He could hardly see her in the darkness, she was nothing but a darker shadow in the night, standing a few feet from him, her short hair fluttering in the weak wind. "No!" he answered without sympathy. "What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to enjoy yourself?" His words lacked any trace of friendliness.

She looked over to him, her feline eyes shimmered.

"What's your goddamn problem?" he went on, now no longer looking at her, but looking ahead into the darkness, rather speaking to himself. "Go and get what you deserve!"

There was silence. It lasted so long that he was convinced that she had left him alone. A little bit of remorse gnawed at him, because he had dealt with her the

way he had done, but on the other hand he did not really regret it as she was a goddamn female. Who knew what these damn creatures wanted anyway? And thus he reminded himself of his problems with Kasha who was still waiting for him...

Grass rustled close by.

"Listen," he said suddenly and turned around, almost surprised that the rustle had really been her who was about to leave him for good. "I got to ask you a favor."

"What?" Her eyes narrowed.

Ilies stood up and inhaled deeply. "Couldn't you spent the night with me?"

The lynx eyed him for a moment, then she exhaled audibly as if she wanted to laugh, turned around and walked away.

"Hey, at least you could give me an answer!" he yelled after her.

She turned around. "Gimme one good reason!"

"This is not about me! It's about my... my..." Desperately he tried to find the correct term. "...fiancé," he said finally.

"You want me to fuck her or what?" the lynx replied sarcastically.

"Hell, no!" Ilies replied angrily. "Look: I got to pass a night with a woman to become a man and marry my... fiancé."

She waited for a moment. "So?"

"Could you do that for me?" he asked.

The lynx sighed. "And what 'bout me?"

"Please!" Ilies added.

The lynx slowly shook her head, but did not say a word.

"Why did you come here anyway?" the otter asked.

"It ain't 'cos of you," she hissed. She turned around and looked towards the camp. For a moment she was standing totally motionlessly with arms akimbo. "OK," she said finally. "But y'do what I tell ya, got it? Don't wanna fightin' some blockhead tonight."

Inaudibly Ilies sighed and suddenly a great weight left him, a weight he had not even felt before. Neither had he felt his own anxiety that vanished as well. "Thank you!" he said and then quickly followed her who was already walking back towards the camp. He followed her at a few steps distance while she walked straight towards the big fire.

Music welcomed them when they reached the center of the camp again. Most of the tribesmen had already left and the noises from the tents suggested what they were about to do right now. But there was still a group of man and women. The women were undressed except for a modest loincloth while they danced in a circle the men had formed around them. The men played music with small flutes, drums and bells or at least clapped according to the rhythm if they had no instrument. The women swirled around, jumping nimbly from one foot to another while they shook their heads and their breasts, teasing the men and each other alike while the music got faster bit by bit. Sweat glistened upon the women's furs and their scent mixed with the scents of arousal of the males who watched them.

Once she had noticed them the lynx looked at the dancers for a moment. Her tail was suddenly wagging more strongly again as if something was troubling her but Ilies did not dare to ask her. Instead he looked around and he noticed that Niccera was nowhere to be seen. But the chief and the shamaness were still sitting where they had been sitting before, talking lowly to each other.

As soon as she was able to take her eyes of the zestful dance she walked towards the lion and the antelope. "Sorry," the lynx interrupted their conversation. "I changed my mind. I wanna go with him." She pointed over her shoulder to Ilies.

The lion looked at her with eyes wide open. "Who?" he asked in disbelief. "Ilies?"

"Yeah," Jiddy replied.

"That's impossible. He is no man yet," the chief said harshly. "He is still a child! You cannot..."

"She can!"

The chief stopped dead and glared at the shamaness.

"She is allowed to pass the night with him if she initiates him," the woman explained with a faint smile.

"What are you talking about?" the lion growled, angry about the unexpected opposition. "No woman can spend a night with a child."

"Every woman might choose a young man of age to initiate him in the secrets of love. He is a child the night before, he emerges from her bed as a man the morning after," the antelope said formally. "Do you doubt my words, chief?" She looked at him with a mischievous smile.

"I have never heard of anything like this before," the lion growled.

"Because it has not happened since a very long time," the shamaness explained.

Angrily the lion inhaled. He stretched and rubbed his hands against his trousers. "If you say so," he said unwillingly.

The shamaness looked at Jiddy. "Are you willing to initiate him?" she asked her.

Jiddy shrugged her shoulders and nodded at the same time.

"Well, we will have to prepare you for this," she said and stood up the same moment. "Come with me, please!" She held out her hand to Jiddy.

Shortly Jiddy looked at Ilies, before she took the antelope's hand and allowed her to guide her away into the darkness of the night where the shamaness' tent was supposed to be.

It felt as if everybody was watching him all of a sudden, even though nobody paid any attention to him except the chief.

"Now...", the lion grumbled. "You seem to have found yourself an easy way to get your right to hunt. If I were you I'd never allow somebody like her to defraud me of my initiation." He scrutinized Ilies for teeth to toe. "On the other hand I am not surprised that you choose this way..."

Ilies tried not to return his glare.

Behind him the men cheered when one of the exhausted women allowed herself to drop down into the arms of her happy chosen one.

Her breath got faster, every moment the hands went on applying the oil to her fur.

In her tent the shamaness had told Jiddy to undress and she had done so while the shamaness had woken three of her maids who were supposed to help Jiddy preparing for her task. Jiddy observed it carefully, this religious stuff made her uneasy but she did not object because the shamaness was friendly and told her not to worry. After Jiddy had undressed the shamaness poured a circle of red sand around her, sat down opposite her and told the maids to apply some kind of oil to Jiddy's fur.

Underneath her clothes the silver arc had showed up and the shamaness noticed it for the first time. For a moment she looked at it, until Jiddy noticed her look. Then the shamaness just smiled knowingly and concentrated on her own duty again.

The hands of the three young women on her fur were exciting her. She tried to ignore these notions, but even though the maids were carefully avoiding every obvious caress the light touch of their warm, oiled fingers were enough to make Jiddy's nipple hard. She shivered and exhaled, tried to think about something different, closing her eyes for a moment. But in this darkness behind her eyelids the careful touches were getting even more promising. For incredible short moments the fingers ran down the rippling muscles of her stomach, shortly touched her pubic fur, then went on anointing her thighs while another pair of hands was busy running down her back and a third pair took care of her feet. The scent of the oil was weak enough to let the faint scents of the three women through. She tried to hold on to the words of the shamaness who had started a calm, beautiful chant whose words escaped Jiddy completely.

It ended when the three women stopped applying oil to Jiddy's fur that was now as smooth as a second skin, even shimmering in the dim light that ruled the shamaness' tent. Breathing heavily Jiddy opened her eyes again when the hands let go of her.

The shamaness looked at her. "Please sit down," she said with a smile.

Hesitatingly the lynx girl sat down.

Two of the three young women had sat down too, but outside the circle of red sand. The third woman had disappeared but a moment later she came in from the outside, carrying something inside a small bag. She handed the bag to the shamaness who took a reddish fruit out of it and hold it out to Jiddy.

"Please, eat this," she said.

Jiddy eyed the strange fruit for an instant: It looked almost like a pomegranate. Jiddy took it out of the shamaness' paw: Unlike a pomegranate it had no hard shell, it was rather soft and when she sniffed at it, she noticed that it diffused an equally sour and sweetish scent. "What's this?" she asked.

"It's a boakey⁶," she answered. "Please, eat it!"

Jiddy hesitated shortly but then she buried her teeth in the fruit and instantly her mouth was filled with a sweetish, sticky juice. Beyond the firm skin the fruit offered almost no resistance, the pulp was nothing but a gooey mess with a few harder gobs that seemed to surround the stones. The juices flowed down her lips, run over her paws and dropped on her thighs while she swallowed and slurped as much of the slightly sour, but mostly sweetish juice and pulp. She stopped for a moment, cracking some stones with her sharp teeth and as she eyed the fruit for a moment, she understood why she had been asked to eat it: Unlike the reddish skin the pulp and the sticky juice had a very light yellowish color... While the juice ran down from her mouth, down her chin and her neck she gave the shamaness a look.

“You know what lies ahead of you,” the antelope woman asked.

While slurping down more of the juice Jiddy nodded.

A smile flitted over her face. “Very good,” the shamaness said. “As you have agreed to initiate Ilies, you must introduce him to carnal knowledge and Ilies is no man as long he has not spent himself into you.”

Jiddy who was about to eat the last remains of the fruit nodded.

“But that does not mean that you do not have the right to enjoy yourself with him,” the shamaness added. “After all he is yours for the night and he is supposed to do whatever you want him to.” She winked.

The lynx did not really listen, she was busy licking the remaining juice from her paws.

It seemed like time stretching into infinity, seconds lasting longer than a lifetime while he sat on the carpet and waited for her.

He had not looked long at his surroundings as he already knew them. Instead he stared at his paws that moved nervously. From time to time he had to swallow the saliva that had gathered in his mouth.

There were only very few sounds coming in from outside: The strange cry of some distant bird, the cracking of the dying fires and from time to time he could also hear more than just obvious noises that revealed what was going on in the other tents. This night was clearly ment for matters of love.

The tent was illuminated by three, dim oillamps that hang down from the rods that supported the tent’s roof. They cast an blurred, flickering shadow of his naked body.

He had undressed, because he thought that this was the right thing to do and because he was slightly sweating. It was his nervousness. His mind was still busy: He was becoming a man even without the damn rite and he did not have to wait any longer. It was happening right here and right now and it was happening in the most pleasant manner he could imagine. Or something like that... He was worried and he did not know why and maybe that was the reason for his anxiety. Or was it something different? Was he afraid of what Kasha might think of him? Of course she could not be too happy about this. He was not offering her his first

time but on the other hand he would be a man after this and they could finally engage formally. If she still wanted to...

He sighed and looked to his paws, slowly turning them. He was feeling somehow helpless. He was not sure about what was supposed to happen. But on the other hand he was no child anymore! Maybe he had not passed his rite yet but he was grown up! That he was certain about. He turned his hands and closely looked at his dark brown, thick fur. He was old enough. These were not the paws of a boy anymore. Maybe he had never officially participated in a hunt yet but he had done his share of work and he had already skillfully hunted the smaller animals that he was allowed to. He was especially good at hunting fish with a harpoon. It was a heritage of his species but it was also something the others respected him for and that was why he enjoyed it even more. After all he loved fish. And he knew what was expected of him tonight. He knew.

Something just outside the entry to the tent rustled. There was low talking. The cloth was pushed aside.

In the backlighting she stood and looked down on him as if she had been born from fire.

His eyes were wide open.

She had worn some cloth around her shoulders that dropped to the ground. Underneath she was naked and her fur was glistening as it had been anointed. It stuck to her very skin, so that every curve of her body had become plainly visible, from her boulding shoulders over the round shape of her small breasts and the tight muscles of her belly to her firm buttocks. The oily fur reflected the dim light and it seemed to dance on her, even though she did not move at all, just her lynx eyes' fire disappeared for a short moment whenever she blinked.

His heart had started to race while he stared at her with his mouth wide open. He could not see much in the darkness but what he saw was already enough and he could imagine the rest. His sex was rising between his thighs and accordingly he could feel like his blood carried his arousal from his loins into every corner of his restless body.

Jiddy eyed him from the entry and then she made a step forward and the entryway closed behind her. In the dim light she was nothing but a black shade anymore that was stepping forward, her tail wagging slowly, her breasts standing out prominently or at least it seemed to him this way. He had never seen such strong muscles on a woman before. In the middle of her chest hang a strange silver pendant that flashed up whenever she breathed.

He sniffed: She was surrounded by a the scent of the oil, it was no ordinary oil they had applied on her, it was smelling strongly but in a pleasant way. It reminded him of oranges and grapefruit, but also of the scent of algae or a rivulet, although he was not quite sure why. But there was also something else, something more profound that he did not recognise, but this was having the strongest effect on him. He shuddered when he noticed it for the first time.

And she was still coming closer.

Ilies could feel her eyes resting upon him, she was eyeing him carefully as the darkness was no handicap for her. He had a full erection now and it stood out prominently.

Her merciless slanting eyes looked down on him.

Ilies stood up and took her by her shoulders. For the first time he noticed that she was almost the same size despite her species. Her short hair framed her dark face with the shimmering eyes which followed him constantly. The oiled fur beneath his fingers had gotten a unique smooth texture, something he had never felt before and his curious hands stroke the bulges of her muscles while he leaned forward.

His sight and his scent had instantly trapped her, had released the demanding poisons of desire into her bloodstream. It was strong but her reservations were still stronger, she could feel the urge to attack him, her heartbeat quickened. But she wanted to control her instincts as long as she was uncertain about his intentions. He had not waken her interest, she had not reacted towards his presence as she would have preferred to. But when he leaned forward to kiss her, she returned the caress, enjoyed the short impression of his lips on hers and the closeness of his male scent and when they parted she tried to get a grasp on the taste he left behind, with partly closed eyes she tried to focus on this ephemeral feeling when she was suddenly thrown around and down on the furs behind him. Instantly he was above her, supporting himself with one hand while he tried to guide his sex to hers with the other.

“Stop that, dickhead or I gonna smash your face in!” the girl snarled right into his face. Her voice was full of ice-cold rage.

With eyes wide open he stared at her in surprise and that was all she needed to push him off brutally. He was thrown off the furs and hit the ground with a yelp.

“Fuck! I should’ve know!” Besides her mumbling and her hoarse voice her urban accent was very strong so that he had difficulties to understand her properly.

Lying on the ground he looked up at her, rubbing his elbow that hurt from his fall. “Listen,” he said hard. “I do not like to be insulted.”

“Yeah? You’re just deservin’ it!” she replied and stood up from the furs.

He glared at her and stood up from the ground.

She stood at the hatch of the tent and observed every movement of the otter boy.

He stepped right in front of her and looked straight into her eyes. “Who do you think you are? You’re just some deadbeat roamer. Nothing more! Some pussy with a little bit too...” Before he could even finish his sentence a punch hit him so hard that he fell to the ground. It had come out of nowhere, had surprised him so much that he had not even had the time to prepare himself for it and when he lay on the ground his mind was still trying to grasp what had happened. But even this thought was not ment to be finished as his head was yanked backwards by his hair and he had to face a line of sharp feline teeth.

"Y'asshole won't insult me! Got it? Just 'cos y'know how to hump don't mean you gotta right to push me 'round! Understood?" she hissed straight into his face.

The closeness of the predator was enough to make him nod without much hesitation.

She could feel the powerful throbbing of her blood, she had to cool down. In response she let go his head and pushed him violently to the ground. "I was thinkin' y'owed me somethin'!"

Ilies was feeling fuzzy, she had acted too fast for him, the unexpected attack of hers and the pain had overwhelmed him and when he tried to get up again, he did it rather by instinct. Thus he did not even notice the blood that dripped out of his nostrils and ran down his muzzle until he saw the growing number of dark spots on the ground beneath him. In disbelief he rubbed his hand over his nose and afterwards stared at the blood in his paw. He moaned. His nose did not hurt, it was feeling numb and he sniffed strongly to make the blood flow down his pharynx. For a moment he just sat there, breathed strongly and tried to focus as he was feeling a little bit dizzy.

"Get out!" a hoarse voice snarled. "It's my tent!"

The otter started to stand up carefully, pressing one of his paws against his muzzle. Besides the ache in his muzzle and his dizziness he was feeling angry too, but it was a futile feeling as he had understood pretty well by now that he had no chance against her. It was her tent, her night, he was her... Ilies stood at the opening of the tent and hesitated. He was breathing strongly and with a sigh he turned towards her again. "Listen: I am sorry. I..."

"Out!"

He inhaled. "Listen, please! I am sorry, okay? This..."

"Out!" she snarled.

"...is not about me, alright? Please, I've been stupid. I didn't know what to do instead. I thought, I thought... I was just..."

Before he could go on she had taken him by surprise, had thrown him to the ground once more. But this time she was above him and he saw straight the line of her teeth. At the end of her fingers long claws shimmered. "Y'deaf or what?" she hissed through her teeth. "I'm sick of guys like ya. One's just fuck'd up the best job I ever got. I just wanna've my share. That too fuckin' much?" she growled from the very bottom of her chest and just the sound of her voice was enough to make him shiver. It was ice-cold anger that spoke out of her.

Ilies breathed quickly, he gulped. "I've understood, okay? I am sorry. I really am. I've been thinking... I understood, trust me. You tell me what to do, I won't do anything you don't want me to, alright? You'll get whatever you want! I'll shut up! I'll do whatever you want! Alright?" He hardly knew what he said in this moment but he had to have found the right words because at first she was hesitating and then her expression started to change.

The slanting eyes scrutinized him.

"Alright?" he asked again.

For a short moment rage had controlled her and she had hardly been able to resist the call of adrenaline that was still lingering in her veins. But his words and

his refuse to defend himself had cast shadows of doubt across her mind and these short moments of hesitation had been all she had needed to get aware of his sex again. His body was just beneath her, this close his scent seemed to be all around and it mixed with the smell of the blood that had flown down his face. Her body responded to it, a cold shiver ran down her spine and into the very tip of her tail that twitched in excitement. The excitement she felt seemed to change towards something different almost instantly. She lowered herself.

At first he wanted to retire but he could not move beneath her and so he tried to hold still. To his surprise he felt her raspy tongue instead of her teeth and his eyes opened wide when he realized that she was about to lick the blood off his face. In a sudden outbreak of disgust he tried to push her off, but she resisted him and a short, awkward fight took place until Jiddy violently grabbed his arms with an iron grip, pushed them down to the ground and held them there while she glared right into his face, her teeth gritted and her eyes screwed up.

Ilies gulped, closed his eyes and tried to relax, still breathing hard. He tried not to think about what she had been doing.

His surrender instinctively appeased her once again and she returned to lick his face, she enjoyed the feeling of its shape against her raspy tongue and slowly it went on, licking over his mouth, his chin and his neck. Meanwhile her hands let him go and one started to explore his belly, brushed through his pubic fur and went on further until it had found his sex.

He inhaled and hoped that she did not notice it while her hand was fondling his sex.

For a moment she stopped licking him, instead she caressed his sex more fervently but no matter what she did it remained nothing but a limp piece of skin in her paw.

He did not dare to open his eyes.

With a hiss of frustration she let go of him and sat up, rage instantly welling up again.

Ilies exhaled. "I am sorry," he mumbled. "I didn't want to... I was just..."

"What?"

Ilies looked at her.

"What y'were doin'?" Jiddy growled, her angular face was contorted and her eyes sparkled.

"I... I... I am... I think I am not... ready." Ilies gulped. "Please..., I am sorry..."

Jiddy's tail was quivering and wagging strongly. Her rage had fuelled her desire even more but she had understood by now that she was getting nowhere with him. "You stupid fuck!" she exclaimed and her fist fell down on his belly.

Ilies moaned in pain when she hit him hard.

She stood up and stared into the dim twilight of the tent, the little light did not mean anything to her, she could see anyway, but in this moment the light was a nuisance to her, just like everything else. A growl of frustration escaped her, her hands closed to fists and she gritted her teeth so strongly that her jaw started to ache but it did not help much, her entire body was crying for a little bit of sex, she was already wet between her thighs and her instincts demanded to attack him

right away. She could still smell the remains of his arousal that was still lingering in the air, it was as if it was just within reach and her instincts demanded of her to take it right away, but the conscious part of her mind knew that this was nothing but an illusion. She let go another hoarse cry of frustration.

The pain had left by now but Ilies did not dare to move yet, he lay on the ground and watched her fearfully. He had never seen a furr behaving like her, she was a complete mystery to him and he had no idea what she would do to him now. She had already attacked him two times and he was definitely not eager to be attacked a third time. For a short moment the story about her attacking Beelau, the biggest and strongest bear of the tribe, came back to his mind and now it started to make sense to him: How could one fight someone like her who was about to explode at any time?

Her fist hit her head hard and the short pain cleared her mind for a moment, she was much too agitated to think straight but she had to. She had to find a solution to this situation, she had to think, her hands tore at her hair. How did she get into this situation anyway? It was all his fault! It was all because she listened to his goddamn whining about his girlfriend or something... For a moment her train of thoughts stopped as if it had hit a tree. His girlfriend! There was something about his girlfriend! "Your girlfriend...?"

When he heard her voice, Ilies froze. "What?" he dared to ask an instant later when he had realized that she had not insulted him.

"Your girlfriend! What's her name?"

"Kasha," Ilies answered, instantly asking himself why she wanted to know this name.

"kay," she said instantly and headed for the opening. "Stay here!" she ordered while she cast the hatch of the tent aside and stepped into the cold outside. She was much too agitated to realize that it was so cold, although she was still nude. But it really didn't matter to her in this moment.

She looked around for a moment and her lynx eyes perceived the dark shadow that lay next to mostly burned down fire in the middle of the camp. She walked over to him and kicked him none to gently.

The man was instantly awake and stared at the nude lynx above him.

"Kasha! Where's she livin'?" the lynx growled.

First the old buffalo just blinked as he tried to make any sense of the situation: He was not used to answer questions from a nude lynx in the middle of the nightly guard. "Who?" he asked, trying to gain a little time.

"Kasha," the lynx growled impatiently.

"The tent with the feathers over there," the man answered and pointed into one direction.

"Thanks," the nude lynx growled and was already gone again.

The old buffalo turned on the other side. Had this lynx really been today's guest of honor? What was she doing? And why had she been nude? A smile flitted over his lips. If this was some kind of dream it was a nice one for sure. He snuggled up in his fur coat to bag some more Zs, then he would make his patrol for sure.

Meanwhile Jiddy had found the tent the guard had indicated her. She had slipped inside without making even the slightest of sounds, she was instinctively so stealthy that nobody could hear her. Inside she needed a moment to adapt to the darkness, but even this was no problem for her lynx eyes. Her predatory, feline senses were guiding her. Her nose had instantly told her that she was inside a rabbits' tent and when she looked around she noticed six sleeping furs. There were three lying together, judging from the size beneath the furs these were obviously two adults and a very young child that lay between them, instantly she could hear its very silent breathing through all the other noise. For a moment she was almost paralyzed. But then she broke away from the sight and eyed the three other sleeping furs. She went to her knees and sneaked through the tent, approaching the bed closest to her: An old woman was sleeping there, snoring weakly. Jiddy looked around, approached the next bed and instantly she knew that she had found what she had been looking for: The long, curly hair that hid the head except for the long ears was proof enough. For a moment Jiddy hesitated. But then she approached the sleeping girl, went to her knees and sniffed: The scent confirmed her assumption, it was as rich and many-sided as only a mature girl's scent could be and most definitely it did not lack its effect. Carefully Jiddy kneeled fully down by her side.

Kasha wanted to yell the moment she was thrown around in her furs but in the very same moment a hand on her mouth silenced her. She was instantly wide awake, but rather running by instinct than thinking properly and this one told her to bite the strange hand but the grip was too strong.

"No crying! Got it?" a hoarse voice snarled.

The bunny tried to see something in the darkness but the furr above her was hardly more than a shadow to her. Strangely enough she was rather surprised than fearful. Not knowing what else to do she tried to nod and a moment later the hand was gone.

"Come! It's 'bout your boyfriend," the unseen furr said.

"My... boyfriend?" Kasha asked, much more surprised about this term than about the fact that she was waken by a stranger in the middle of the night.

"The otter! Get up!"

Still not really thinking properly Kasha did as her instincts told her and thus she stood up. A moment later she realized that this action could be regarded as a confirmation of the term *boyfriend* and when this thought struck her mind she instantly stood still, wondering about the meaning of her behaviour and its consequences, no longer wasting a thought about the stranger in her family's tent who was about to loose the little patience that was left to her.

Jiddy had not really thought about this situation, but unconsciously she had been prepared for every kind of panic or counter-attack. But she had not been prepared for a totally absent-minded bunny whose mind was still fast asleep and who was now standing around like petrified. Without much fuss, Jiddy grabbed her arm and pulled her towards the exit.

A short "Hey!" escaped Kasha when she finally noticed the presence of the strange furr again. But it happened so quickly that she was already standing

outside the tent when she was finally trying to resist. "What..." she stammered and eyed her abductor that was still pulling at her and if she had not already been surprised about the fact that her abductor was female, she would have been surprised about her nudity or the fact that her abductor was supposed to be the tribe's guest of honor. "What are you doing?" she exclaimed.

Jiddy did not care about answering and pulled the bunny girl towards her tent.

"What is going on?" Kasha asked and tried to stand still for a moment but Jiddy almost tore her off her feet and thus she stumbled on, dressed in nothing but a thin nightgown. "What does all this mean? Hey! I am talking to you!" And she tried to pull herself off, but Jiddy was stronger.

The lynx swirled around instantly, took hold of the confused girl, took her in her strong arms and lifted her up, carrying her on her arms, instantly noticing that the girl was heavier than she would have expected.

"Hey!" Kasha exclaimed in surprise but before she could stop Jiddy she was already lying in her arms and was carried through the nightly camp. "Hey! Hey! Wait a minute! What does this mean! Let me down! Let me down!"

Jiddy gritted her teeth as she did not want to let the bunny fall.

"Stop! I say: Stop! Let me down! Let me down!" Kasha struggled, tried to push Jiddy away, slapped her weakly, tried to loosen the hold of her arms and floundered like a small child. She did not even notice how Jiddy kicked the opening of a tent aside and stepped inside. Kasha first noticed that something was different when she landed on a heap of pillows and looked straight into Ilies' face who gaped at her in surprise. Instantly Kasha was motionless and the two furs could not take an eye off the other. Ilies' nakedness just added to Kasha's amazement.

"That's what you want?" Jiddy asked Ilies.

Ilies looked at the lynx, looked at Kasha again and looked at Jiddy again. "What?" he asked in total confusion.

"She's the one you want, right? Fuck her and marry her and sunshine and happiness," Jiddy said violently.

"What?" Kasha exclaimed. "What does all this mean?"

"You!" Jiddy looked straight at the bunny girl. "You're female!"

"Yes... I mean... I... Yes..., but why...?" Kasha stammered.

"He's gotta fuck to be a man and you want to marry him, so you fuck and you can marry. What's the problem?" Jiddy summarized.

Now both of them were staring at her.

"What's the fuckin' problem? Why've you pulled me into this?" Jiddy exclaimed with unexpected sharpness. "I'm sick of this shit! I just want a good night, then you come along and fuck it up. I'm sick of it!" She was almost yelling, her whole frustration breaking free while she walked around in the tent. Her tail wagged animatedly. "Heya's already high in the sky and I still had nothin'. Gotta care 'bout some stupid fucks who..."

"Hold it, hold it!" Kasha interrupted her suddenly. "I still don't get it but I will go back to my tent now..."

An ice-cold glare from Jiddy made her stop.

“Y’ don’t wanna marry ’im?”

“No... I mean... Well, I... Why are you asking me that?”

Instantly Jiddy was right in front of her and looked deep into her eyes. “‘Cos it’s up to y’!” she stated. “It’s not my fish!”

“You mean... I...” Kasha looked at Ilies and noticed that Ilies was looking at her as well. “We...” Very slowly she turned her head towards Jiddy again.

“I won’t let y’ go ’til y’ know what y’ wanna do!” Jiddy growled threateningly.

“You mean... you want me to...” Kasha said and pointed at Ilies.

Jiddy’s slanting eyes glistened in the dim twilight of the tent. She nodded.

Kasha looked at Ilies again who returned her confused glare.

Jiddy eyed Ilies shortly. “He’s ’bout ready,” she stated and looked down on Ilies.

Kasha looked at the otter to and when she lowered her gaze her eyes opened wide.

Ilies needed a moment to understand what the two girls could have ment but then he instantly knew and his hands tried to hide his excitement.

Slowly Kasha turned towards Jiddy again. Her features had softened, clearly displayed uncertitude and a little bit of shyness.

Jiddy eyed her for a moment: The bunny was a beautiful girl with long, curly hair, honey-colored eyes and a stern face whose body was seductively hidden beneath the thin cloth of her light nightgown. Kasha’s scent waved around Jiddy’s muzzle for a short instant and despite the pleasant scent of a dry meadow in summer Jiddy was certain to distiguish a hint of musk. Jiddy’s left ear flicked strongly for a moment. As slowly as possible Jiddy rose her paw to Kasha’s shoulder, always looking into her eyes, searching for a hint of disapproval. Unopposedly her paw lay down on Kasha’s shoulder and very carefully she pulled off the nightgown. She looked deeply into these dark brown eyes and her hand quivered lightly when she rose her hand to the bunny’s face. Lightly her hand jerked away when she tried to touch the furry cheeks and when her fingers touched the soft fabric they touched it so lightly that Kasha never knew when Jiddy’s fingers were gone again, her cheeks were sparkling strangely. But a moment later Jiddy violently turned away and pressed her hands against her chest. She shivered.

Kasha and Ilies watched her, waiting for whatever would come next.

A strange sound, something like a suppressed wail escaped the lynx. Her entire body seemed to cramp, she writhed, tensed until the last shivers had finally disappeared and nothing but one of her ears flicked. For a moment she was motionless, nothing but a ball of dotted fur and muscles.

The other two young furs tried to hold still, their breathing droned unnaturally strongly inside their ears.

Jiddy’s head rose very slowly and she looked around, one of her feline eyes glistened. “What y’re waitin’ for?” she asked surprisingly softly and stood up, went to the opposite end of the tent where her stuff lay around. She grabbed the whole lot of it, quickly shouldered her backpack without caring about dressing.

“What are you doing?” Ilies asked suddenly.

Jiddy looked around. "Get it on!" she said while she walked over to them again. For a moment she looked at the two confused furs. "Good luck!" she said finally and went to the opening.

Right in the moment when she was about to cast the hide of the opening aside Ilies said once again: "What are you doing?"

Jiddy hesitated shortly. "Fate's in your paws. Never hadda ask me..." The words died away and before one of the two other furs could say one more thing she left the tent.

"Hey! Waitaminute!" Kasha shouted after her. But there was no response, the otter and the bunny were alone in the tent. "Wait!" she shouted another time, but it did not sound as if it had been a serious attempt to stop the lynx. There was anxiety in her voice.

For a moment they were both silent.

"How did you get in here?" Kasha asked Ilies sharply, more sharply than she had intended.

"I asked her," he admitted.

"But... but... Why? You are no man, why did they allow this anyway?"

"I am no man yet, but... If she had... initiated me, I could have skipped the rite."

Kasha knitted her brows. "You wanted to skip the rite... What for?"

"What are *you* asking me?" he said with sudden anger. "You have been nagging me about marriage all the time. I just wanted to... speed up things. I did not want to wait for damn winter solstice anymore. I... I..." Anger had taken the better of him and as speech failed him he looked away. "I know I was stupid... But... Aw, forget it!" He stared to the ground.

"Yeah...", she said slowly. "You were kind of stupid..." Her voice was low.

He did not want to look at her, he was feeling embarrassed and angry and confused. All his strength had left him, dealing with the lynx had exhausted him, it seemed as if she had taken all his strength with her the moment she had left.

"...But what you did was... kind of... sweet too."

He felt her hand on his shoulder and he started and instantly spun his head around and there she was, just a few inches from his face with her eyes almost closed and for the first time during this long night he was sure about what he had to do.

They engaged in a first cautious kiss.

The grass around her rustled in the light wind and it waved slowly just like her fur. It had gotten cold but it did not matter to her despite her nakedness, it was part of the night.

The moons had hidden behind clouds and thus the plane was pitch-black, just the distant horizon showed a little bit of sky where a few stars shone and these cast an eerie, planar light across the plane.

Jiddy had lay down between the grass and disappeared entirely in it, her stuff lay all around her as if she had fallen. Her body twitched and trembled, she rolled

around while her hands caressed her breasts, pressed them hard, squeezed them, her fingertips rubbed her nipples before they went on, tried to imitate the hands of a lover that passed over her body and beyond her unsatiable desire there was enough hope of satisfaction to keep her going. She was nothing but the feeling of her hands on her excited body, spending herself as much pleasure as possible, while blurred pictures raced through her mind, reminded her of long lost lovers whose hands had given her what she craved for now. A shiver shook her body when one of her hands disappeared between her thighs and she rolled over while her fingers met the wet mons that had burned, anticipating this moment.

When she felt the fingers resting on her labia she closed her eyes. Her lips had swollen, the thin opening surrounding the fingertips, the first drops of lubricant wet her hand. She could feel the blood running into her abdomen, flooding her opening, swelling her labia and the clit, increasing their size, heating and leaving behind a strange impression of a void, pulling her down, so that her fingers moved by themselves and entered her body. She threw her head back, gasping, when she spread her labia. The upper part of her palm pressed down on her clit that hid between her pubic fur, a small hard knob that sent faint shocks throughout her body. She pressed her thighs together and thus pressed her swollen netherlips aside onto the muscles of her legs, rubbed their inner side. While two fingers slipped inside and explored the soft fabric, that was overflowing with her juices now and the delicate touch of her fingers spread through her entire body, set fiery sparks free that swirled through her, danced through her chest and she pressed herself hard against the ground beneath her, rubbed herself against it in order to obtain a little bit of stimulation for her hard nipples. The other fingers of her hand pressed into the equally soft and resisting labia, caressed them and spread her juices over them while her palm went on pressing down on her clit which seemed to get bigger with every heartbeat and she gasped and writhed when the pleasure gathered inside her abdomen. She was nothing but a ball of muscles and fur that doubled up in little shocks of pleasure, she had to shrink so that her entire body could gain what it needed. Suddenly she threw her head back and she moaned towards the sky when her fingers totally sank into the depth of her sex. Her eyes were opened wide but she did not see the dark sky above her as her mind was totally occupied by pleasure.

The dark plane around had long since disappeared completely, she was nothing but her mons and her opening anymore, nothing but sex that blinded out the darkness. Two of her fingers were surrounded by the firm, slick fabric of her opening, its muscles held onto them as if they wanted to never let them go again. She trembled and her face fell into the grass, her backside rose high, her hand started to move rhythmically. Her palm relentlessly rubbed her clit and sparks danced in front of her eyes, her breath was quick and every time she inhaled her breasts touched the ground underneath and her nipples pressed hard against the blades of grass. When her fingers retired slowly from inside her innermost, her body was shaken by weak convulsions, she could no longer resist the pleasure that rendered her powerless, entirely took over her body and she welcomed it unconditionally as it washed every thought, every memory and every impression

away except the intense feelings of fulfillment and excitement that strengthened every time her fingers plunged deeply into her sex again and spend her the caresses she yearned for.

Her juices flowed down her thighs. Her tail was stiff above her backside that was bluntly exposed to a blind sky. Gasps escaped her while her hand moved in a complicated movement that let her fingers slip inside of her, that let the other fingers squeezed her labia and pushed her palm against the little clit that stood erected above her sex. The glowing sphere inside her abdomen was growing and when her body started to spasm with desire, she suddenly writhed again, curled up completely until she could no longer move anything except the fingers on her sex and without warning her climax overcame her like an unexpected cold shower. Her face cramped, a number of soundless gasps escaped her while her entire body shivered and the feeling of pleasure imploded and fizzled out too quickly, left her alone with her loneliness in the night.

For a while she lay totally motionlessly as if she had gone to sleep. Weakness had overcome her and had flooded her with a feeling of powerlessness. Her breath got slower again. Unconsciously she massaged one of her breasts.

It started totally soundless, first it was just her body that trembled slightly and but then she started to laugh hoarsely and while she laughed she rolled on her back and when it subsided again she opened her eyes again and her lynx eyes perceived the unbroken layer of clouds above her. Absent-mindedly her hand searched for her Silver Arc and when it had found it she held onto it.

The only sound was the rustling grass that surrounded her infinitely.

He hesitated, but not any longer than he could dare to. Slowly he stood up from the cushions, the movement of her glowing eyes told him that she could see his body, that she was eyeing him from teeth to toe, that she saw his member that was fully swollen. Her look was enough to make him feel horny as if it had magical powers. He could feel a strange yarn in his loins, an emptiness inside his abdomen, a pulling inside his member as if something was wandering through its fabric. Ilies stood still the best he could. From time to time his eyes wandered towards the triangle of her chestfur whose longest strands covered her ample, much less furry breasts. Her nipples were small, but clear bulges in between the fur. Beneath her breasts was her round belly with the cute hole of her bellybutton that was just above the line of her pubic fur that stretched down to her thighs and disappeared in between, completely hiding what lay underneath. As quickly as he could, quickly- but not as quickly as he had wanted to- he looked at her face again.

But Kasha's eyes had been busy too, but unlike him she finished eyeing him quickly and smiled slightly. His scent was weak but striking as soon as she had been able to track it down, it surrounded him like a fragile haze that had just been waiting to invade her nostrils, to affect her: It smelled of fern, running water, wind and pungent sweat, repulsive and attractive at the same time, there was a scent

she had not known up to now, it had to be the scent of his unsheathed sex that lingered about his body. An unexpected shiver passed through her body.

Unconsciously he wet his lips and moved a little closer, so that they were almost touching each other. Their breaths had gotten faster. He tried to return her smile but before he had been able to she had closed her eyes and her muzzle came closer. He gulped quickly, closed his eyes too and their mouths touched very bashfully and when they did, they instantly retired again as if an electric spark had jumped across and had made them jerk. For an instant they opened their eyes and a smile of amusement flitted over their lips and as if by an unspoken agreement they closed their eyes again and their mouths joined another time, more courageously than before. Their lips quivered when they touched, first they tickled upon each other, then there was a little moisture and then the soft and equally firm fabrics met. Ilies shivered, Kasha got weak in her knees and when they broke their kiss Kasha embraced the otter and pressed herself against him.

Ilies inhaled deeply while he stared at the opposite end of the tent. Her hand weighed lightly when it run through the thick, lush fur of his back and her other hand joined in. They wandered over his back, from his shoulder blades to the base of his tail and back and he started to breath faster while she explored the outlines of his body. Lightning struck him when he could feel like she pressed her body against his own. He could feel the hardness of her nipples, the softness of her breasts, the firmness of her muscles and the softness of her fur. He exhaled happily.

"You don't know how often I have fantasized about this moment," Kasha mumbled.

For a moment Ilies did not know what to answer. "I never thought this possible," he replied.

"You are stupid," she said softly.

They were both silent for a while. The feeling of his firm chest on her soft breasts, their scents and the whole atmosphere of the dark, warm tent was enough to keep their minds occupied.

Suddenly she sniffed and with a violent movement she pressed her forehead against his, so that she could look deep into his eyes.

Ilies noticed that her eyes were shimmering with tears.

"What do you think has kept me running?" she asked lowly.

He shook his head.

"You are such a hardhead," she teased him and sniffed strongly.

"You didn't make it easy for me," he replied.

He yelped shortly when she tore some hairs out of his chestfur, but thus he was getting closer to her again and they used the chance of the moment to kiss again. This time their mouths opened partly and for an instant their breaths mixed, their tongues met and instantly retreated like shy animals. They renewed the kiss and once again the smoothness of their lips melted away and gave way to their tongues that touched curiously and the strange, new sensation was thrilling both of them, it was like a forbidden fruit they had not known about and now- after its

discovery- they realized that this had been what they had yearned for unconsciously. They shivered simultaneously, exploring the strange shape of the other one's tongues, its texture and its taste. His tongue was smooth and slick, hers was raspy and strong.

"Ouch!" She broke the kiss and held her lip.

"Sorry!" Ilies exclaimed instantly, realizing that he had shut his mouth a little bit too much, his carnivorous teeth had met her lip.

For a moment she was just holding her lip, but then she started laughing lowly. "You are really new to this, aren't you?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well..." He was suddenly feeling embarrassed for some reason. "I guess I need more practise."

She smiled. "Sounds like a good idea to me," she whispered and leaned closer again, the pain in her lip was forgotten and they kissed anew. Once again their lips met, once again the soft skin started sparkling when they gave way, once again their tongues reached out and started their slick rendezvous. And within a few moments of mutual caress the emotions that had been interrupted last time came back: Their knees got weak, their heartbeats got faster, their heads became light and a strange vacuum spread inside their bowels, made them shiver while their lips closed again and their tongues retired.

"Wow!" he gasped.

His comment made her giggle.

"What are you laughing about?"

The girl just shook her head lightly and put her index upon his mouth.

She approached him again and kissed his lips lightly, then she licked it sensually and little bit little it started to explore the shape of his face beneath his fur and a sudden urge requested him to take her in his arms while she licked his face, tasted the sweaty, salty fur. Now that she had finally gotten so close to him she wanted to know everything about him, his scent, his taste, the shape of his body, everything her body could explore and she could hardly hold back the feverish impatience that urged her to do it faster. But she wanted to know, to absorb it, to remember every moment, every touch no matter how insignificant. Unexpectedly he was hers for tonight and while her mind was still unable to fully accept this, her feverish, hot, wet, yearning, desiring body had already decided to make the best of it, to take as much as it could.

"You...", she whispered. "I... hate you, Ilies Otter..."

His hands had found her hips and he stroked their soft fur. He could smell the unknown, female scent that rose from down there and he pressed his muzzle against her neck as if he wanted to kiss her, but instead he inhaled deeply, inhaled the sweet, overloaded fragrance of femininity that was like an invisible piece of silk that lay down on his body and started to wrap itself around him, got tighter and tighter, most especially around his waist and his sex that pulsed strongly inside this immaterial hold.

Her muzzle sunk deeply into his chestfur and she inhaled strongly and the intensity of his male scent was overwhelming, a shiver ran down her spine in slow-motion and every limb it touched became powerless. Her hands tried to get

a hold on his chestfur but in this moment the shiver reached her abdomen and released a spray of desire. She could feel the blood rushing into her abdomen and her hands slipped off his chestfur while the shiver moved through her tail. She kissed him again lightly, their lips met shortly and she repeated it again and again as if it could not match her desire again and with every kiss she pushed him back a little until his feet met the edge of the cushions.

One hand let her go and he tried to find a hold with it without stopping to kiss her. But she was still forcing him backwards and he lost his equilibrium. She tried to hold him but instead he pulled her with him and suddenly they were both lying on the cushion.

Kasha giggled and Ilies smiled too, showing his glistening teeth in the twilight.

"You are a stumblebum, Ilies Otter," she said while lying upon him.

He could feel her light weight upon him, her breasts lightly touching his chest, his hard member trapped underneath her belly. His heart was racing but not only because of the fall. "First I'm no stumblebum..." he said and grabbed her arms.

She yelped when he pushed her over and forced her on her back, inverting their positions. He was now lying upon her.

"...and second don't call me by my species, Kasha Rabbit!"

At first she smiled but slowly it faded away. Something had changed she did not know what it was, but suddenly a wholly different atmosphere had taken over. He was so close now...

Ilies felt it too. His head was just above her chest and her breast was mere inches from his face. Hesitatingly he rose one hand, he looked up to her, trying to find a proof of approval in her eyes. But her face was empty, her breathing was fast and anxious. He looked at her breast again and his fingers shook when they approached them and touched the soft, thin fur. It was as if his hand was made to cover them.

"Yes," she whispered.

Ilies looked up shortly. He went his lips and gulped down the saliva that had gathered in his mouth. He had never felt something like this before. The way she lay there, his breasts had almost disappeared between the fur. But when his fingers met the soft fabric, he would never had imagined it to be so tight. He could shape it with his hands and still he could feel the small hard knot that was her nipple that pinched against the furless underside of his hand. All of his muscles were suddenly quivering, his entire body had become so light that he was feeling completely surreal as if what he did could not be happening at all. But it was real, she lay beneath him and just touching her breasts was overwhelming, she was overwhelming and he was willing to be overwhelmed just as much as she wanted to be overwhelmed too.

His light touch of her breast was like a revelation, it was so different, so unique and so simple at the same time. She would never had expected that it could mean so much to her, that it could trigger such strong emotions inside her. She took a deep breath. She would never had imagined that it would make such a difference if Ilies touched her. Nobody had ever touched her like this, although it was just his hand simply resting upon her breast. It was so simple and so

wonderful at the same time, something she had unconsciously yearned for all time, she instinctively understood that now and her entire body responded to it, she could feel herself tense in a good way as if she wanted to get closer to him.

His hand wandered up and down her breast, wandered over to the other side, stroked her fluffy chestfur and unknowingly caressed the sensible area underneath it. No matter what he did, this close to her, every movement was exciting him more and more, his heart hammered loudly inside his chest, his tail was wagging strongly (at least as strong as an otter's tail could wag) and his sex was so hard that it almost hurt. He had never felt something like this before. This strange painful pressure between his legs was unknown to him, despite the occasional erections he had already experienced. But this feeling was not strong enough to temper his curiosity for her body that he wanted to know, to feel inside out. The hot breath from his short muzzle brushed over his hand and her breasts and his heightened sensibility for even the slightest sensation made him notice this tickling feeling as well. He could hardly imagine what it made her feel. But the dreamy eyes under her half-opened lids that returned his look when he rose his head for a moment, told him to go on, to go a step further and thus he lowered her head.

"Ilies...", she gasped when his lips touched the curve of her breast and although it was nothing but a light touch, it left behind a burning mark of pleasure. Before she knew what she did, she wrapped her arms around his head and with gentle pressure she encouraged him to go on. If such a light kiss could make her feel so hot, she wanted to be set afire by him.

His first real kiss lost itself among her chestfur, but the scents he inhaled in that moment were so intense that he became much more daring. Within a few moments he was covering her breasts with clumsy kisses, enjoying the feeling of the soft fur and the curved skin left behind on his lips. Every kiss satisfied his desires a little bit, but the promises of additional pleasure were much too powerful. He wanted to know every inch of her chest, wanted to explore it and to feel it with his mouth. Hot breath waved across her chest while his muzzle brushed through the fur. She had started to sweat, rendering her scent even more charming than it already was and the yearn inside his chest was driving him on like an explosive that was pumped through his veins by quick heartbeats and when it reached his lips, little explosions took place whenever he touched the curves of her lips.

"Yes," she gasped when his lips closed around her nipple. It was an intensification of what he had been doing and she moaned softly when his lips left the touchy spot again, leaving behind the faint moisture of his saliva. And it seemed to her as if this moisture was instantly evaporating. Although her nipple was already stiff, his kiss seemed to cause the skin of her breast to tense even more, the fur bristled lightly and for a moment her whole body was so sensible that she was convinced that she could feel every hair of her fur, every goose bump, every drop of sweat and every little uneven spot of reddish skin her nipple was made of and his muzzle was only a finger's width from. His sourly male breath was breaking on her nipple with every breath he took. As good as she was

able to in the twilight of the tent she tried to look at him, but his face was lowered, still much too close to her chest and as she could not bear him hesitating, she gently enforced the pressure of her arms around his head and thus encouraged him to kiss her again and he obliged more than willingly. "Oh, yes!" she moaned when the touchy fabric of her nipples was stimulated once again.

The faint sweet taste that was left behind in his mouth was exciting and more daringly he reached out his tongue and gave the hard little breastwart a hearty lick that gave him a whole new impression of the furless circle of skin on the top of her breast. It resisted against the soft pressure of his tongue, but he got rewarded by more of that ethereal taste while his tongue ran over the swollen fabric with its tiny bumps that stretched towards him. And of course, it did not lack its effect on him: He shivered strongly, the feeling passed through all his limbs and readied them for yet another cumulation he did not know about yet. In this moment it was some sort of a reward for his endeavours to please her, to caress her and- yes- to love her. For this moment it was the best he could think of, all that he needed, the constant burning desire inside him that grew with every time he licked her breasts, felt the shape of her hard nipple, the soft curves, the bumpy swollen skin and her taste on his tongue. Every caress fuelled the fire of his desire, made him shiver, dragged the power from his body into his loins until every heartbeat was followed by an echo of his sex that demanded his attention more and more urgently and filled his mind with promises of even greater lust and passion. He could feel her sweating, breathing, soft, warm body beneath him and he started to tremble while his tongue changed from breast to breast.

She wanted to moan, but no sound escaped her mouth except her hard, short breath. She was looking at the boy but what she saw was completely unlinked to what she felt because what she felt was far beyond anything she had ever experienced before. Her whole body was a source of pleasure that would had burst if it had not been for the weight of lies that lay upon her.

Suddenly he stopped and they looked into each other's face.

"Kasha,..." His voice was low and hoarse. "May I...?"

"Yes," she replied instantly and her heart started to beat faster. "Come inside me." Fear was lingering at the edge of her passion driven mind.

But there was little time for her to care about this fear because he was starting to move upon her and every little motion meant something, changed something between them, enforced her excitement and made her heartbeat quicken. Anxious sweat was hanging between them, suddenly the seriousness of the situation was overwhelming, but what took place was like an avalanche of feelings: Mutual desire, pleasure and joy at their most intense, driving them beyond an emotional point of no return. They did not know when they had crossed it yet, maybe a moment ago, maybe when he had touched her breast, maybe when she had pulled him towards their first kiss, maybe when they had met in the darkness of this tent, maybe when they had met for the first time. But in this moment it did not matter, nothing mattered anymore except the intimacy between them.

He rose slightly, lifting his weight of her and she used that moment to inhaled deeply, while he shifted his body and she spread her legs, revealing the wet spot between her thighs that was suddenly touched by cool air, a surprising sensation as it seemed to be so hot as if it was the only source of heat inside her body. He reached out his hand and gulped, his hand met his member and he took it carefully while he stretched his body and moved forward a little bit.

They were both knowing what they had to do, but neither of them had an idea what would happen.

She shook from teeth to toe when she felt that something touched her labia. Breathing strongly she looked up into his face and her own anxiety was reflected in his face as if it was a mirror. He felt that too.

She rose her hand and with a casual, gentle gesture totally out of place, she brushed his hair from his face. Kasha feeling strangely relaxed all of a sudden. Slightly shifting, she moved her hips towards him and he lowered himself.

There was an stitch and then all her emotions, feelings, sensations burst out as a loud moan from the deepest bottom of her chest. Her entire body contracted around the male sex inside her, her legs and arms took hold of Ilies, pulled him as close as possible while her sex adapted to the unknown size of a male sex inside her, engulfed it totally, her mons pulsed around it, she could feel juices flowing around it. "Ilies...", she gasped and another moan broke out of her when pleasure enveloped her again, spun the two of them into a warm cocoon of lust and joy that was turning around itself, speeding up as long as she could feel the member that had invaded her glowing abdomen, her ready opening.

The otter gasped for breath, as if the unexpected tightness around his sex constricted his chest. He was shaking, inhaled deeply through his gritted teeth as he had never expected it to be like this. Sweat poured from every pore of his, blood had shot into his head and throbbed inside his ears, his entire face was so hot as if it was afire, his heart seemed to flutter inside his chest and beyond all these physical sensations there was a rush of pleasure to his mind, carried along by his blood, from his loins straight into his head and its source was his member that was surrounded by the tight, moist warmth of her sex and his balls that pressed against the delicate curve of her mons.

The feverish passion of their union robbed him of all his powers and when he lay fully down on her, she welcomed him with an hasty, impatient kiss. It did not even matter that he did not instantly find her lips, every touch was just as well and a moment later their mouths found each other and they kissed as good as they could despite their breathlessness. Their tongues met to complete their union and while they were still kissing he started to move with verve as his instincts told him to. She had to break their kiss as the new sensation of the movement elicited a moan of hers, but within an instant his mouth had found hers again and he silenced her with yet another, breathless kiss. His body was now dripping wet with sweat, every muscle shook and everything he could feel was her body beneath him, her mouth, her tongue, her sex and the traction at the top of his sex. The movement backwards consumed all of his strength and when he pushed it back in he felt such an intense satisfaction that he had to repeated it

as quickly as possible. The girl broke the kiss again, gasping for breath and moaning again. He was totally oblivious to it, but fully aware of her presence, her hold of him that protected him while his urges kicked in. Kasha did not let him go and his entire mind was spinning around her as if she ran through her body, as if she pulsed inside his veins, strengthened him so that he could continue.

Every movement of his elicited a gasp of hers and in between she moaned when the pleasure became to intense for her young mind. Her moans were as loud as cries but none of them noticed. She was overflowing and still it was not enough. She could not hear his pants above her, but she could feel how his member glided in and out of her, how it was perfectly embedded inside her abdomen, her mons, his loins between her thighs and how her opening craved for its touch when he retired or released a shower of pleasure when he came back inside, spreading her innermost apart and revealing new pleasures every time. She was her sex, she was made to welcome him, to take his sex and his love and to give her own in return that was plentifully pumping through every vein of her body. She held him as tightly as she could, wanted him as close as possible to share her joy and her lust, she wanted him to feel her, she wanted to make him happy because she could not hold her own pleasure anymore and deep inside her abdomen she could feel like she reacted to everyone of his quick motions, how the caresses of flesh on flesh were returned by her moist, tightened opening that held his ecstatically moving member with all its strength. She exhaled whenever he retired and she gasped for breath whenever she was filled again.

Tiny explosions rocked him, the shockwaves reached into his mind thus he did not know what he did, running on instinct alone and that was all he needed. He breathed hard and somewhere inside him he understood that he was so close to her that he inhaled Kasha's scent with every breath he took, that it was her fragrance, her scents, her arousal that fuelled his lungs, kept him going while his loins where bathing in pure pleasure, a pleasure that was her, a tight, hot, moist pleasure that moved around his member, that throbbed, rocked and shivered. She let go a little gasp whenever he pressed his hip against hers, whenever he felt the softness of her mons with her wet netherlips touching and holding him. It was an erratic rhythm he was obeying to, something that told him that she was enjoying this as much as he did and so he pressed himself against her, obeying to the pressure of her arms that held him until he felt as if he was joining the curves of her female body beneath him, sinking into her breast and her belly and her abdomen. But every time his instincts told him otherwise and he rose slightly, made his member glide out of her until cool air shortly waved around the moist shaft and he had to sink down again, seeking new pleasures his body was instantly rewarded with by hers.

She was gasping for breath, every time her chest got a little bit tighter, her heart was hammering incessantly and its pace quickened. She was tensing, her entire body was contracting around her sex, as if it wanted to share more pleasure, to get more joy out of it, as if desire had taken control entirely and her blissful mind was not able to control it anymore. She pressed herself against him, her hip moving on its own by now, not wanting to let his sex go that was moving

in and out of her, she wanted more, she wanted him, she wanted this to last forever and she was overpowered when it ended the very same instant.

With a heart-rending, deafening moan she threw herself onto the bed while her body was rewarded for their mating. Everyone of her senses went out of control, she was feeling hot and cold, tense and relaxed, heard hammering rhythms in total silence, saw colorful explosions in total darkness while she was about to blackout, overwhelmed by the intensity of her passion, the purest pleasure and the merriest of joy. Electric sparks of satisfaction shot through her abdomen and her breasts, pierced into her nipples and danced upon her lips. A powerful shiver run up from her tail into her head, turned her inside out and shook her completely until she bucked while a little explosion took place inside her head and she slumped again, feeling as light as a feather. She had never felt anything like this before and for a moment she feared she never would again, but above her was still his comforting weight and between the touchy fabric of her sex she was still feeling the moving shape of his member.

He felt her climax, it could not be ignored, he felt how her sex tightened around his member and he saw what happened to her while her moan deafened him for a moment. She was completely lost for a moment, he could not move in the least while her arms clenched around him and pressed him so hard against her that he could not breath, but a powerful shiver of lust jumped over when he felt how her sex moved around his and he trembled in lust, eager to continue his endeavours once she had calmed herself. She bucked, her hold tightened a last time and then she slumped down, her throbbing sex slowly weakening too so that he could assume his movements again, hotter and more lustful than before, driven on by the promises of a climax that had just gotten closer. He moved more powerfully, sweat welled up from every pore, tension was building and his field of vision was narrowing. He pressed himself against her and inhaled deeply, her fragrance was sweeter than ever, she was softer than ever and he could feel her inner juices flowing around his member whenever he moved in and out.

Her weightless body was shaken whenever he moved. The intense pressure of her desire was gone, his member inside her felt comfortable and its movement relaxed her while she enjoyed the pleasure that lingered through the limbs of her body. She let go little moans whenever he was fully inside her and he pressed his hip against her mons and thus pleased her once more. She was still holding his head, though rather lightly now and he used the opportunity of his proximity to kiss his headfur.

Flashes shot through him, he was trembling, feeling weak. He could not move anything but his loins anymore as those gathered all of his strength as his movements quickened. His mind was blank, his urges had taken over, he needed to be inside her, he had to feel her sex around his member, her breasts, her belly, her abdomen, her mons, her labia, her opening and all that was inside, holding him and giving him the pleasure he craved for. He started to wheeze when his movements became even more powerful, there was nothing gentle about this anymore, there was nothing but his desire, his lust, his need and Kasha, the only one who could fulfill all these at once. She was beneath him, she was there for

him, she was holding him. His paws grabbed her strongly and held onto her as if he was afraid that the tension that build up inside him would consume him whole. He retired, pulled his sex out of her until only his glans were still inside her. There was a moment of intense excitement and then he pushed his sex into her up to the hilt and he roared, shook from teeth to toe. Something inside his balls exploded, rushed through his entire body and left him in short painful spasms of his member that was surrounded by her comforting softness. He was twitching powerfully, moving erratically, his body was overcome by so much pleasure that it could not deal with it, neither could him. There was nothing but a red haze in front of his eyes, his face was white hot and his ears afire. He could feel her fur almost painfully rough against his nipples, he could feel her labia, the wetness between her thighs, every fiber inside her and every droplet of their mixed juices. His member was still twitching deep inside her while he was finally overcome by an unknown feeling of peace and pleasant weakness.

She felt his climax just like he had felt hers. She closed her eyes when he retired and she was rocked when he came back inside her and she let go a sigh when she could feel that he had gotten to his peak too. The first powerful twitch of his sex was a surprise to her and she inhaled sharply when she felt like his seed was suddenly starting to fill her. She trembled slightly while further twitches released more of his semen into her. It was a strange feeling, her senses were even so accurate that she could feel how it started to run down her thighs. It was a comforting feeling though, she knew that she had taken his seed now, that she had made him a man now, that he had claimed her now as well. She felt somehow proud.

“...I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you...” His tongue was heavy, his throat was dry and he felt as tired as he had never felt ever before, but these words came out of his mouth all by themselves and he was glad they did.

His words took the last remains of excitement from her. She realized that she was feeling tired as well, her limbs were sore for no reason and beneath him everything was warm and pleasant. “I love you too. I do. I do...” she breathed.

They could feel each other’s heartbeat.

She was so soft beneath him, he did not even care to move his hip, his retracting member slipped out of her sex by itself and the moisture that had gathered there emanated a strange scent that was starting to envelop them. There was no need to change anything in that moment and they never did that night because before they could had done anything, they were fast asleep, lying on each other just like they had when they had loved each other.

She was as silent as she was able to. During those last few years she was hardly as stealthy as she had been once. Actually she had never been so stealthy at all. But usually she did not have to be stealthy, so it did not really matter.

Of course the noises of the tribe which was about to strike the tents could usually have woken a mammoth, but she knew pretty well that whatever had

happened in the tent during the night must have been out of the ordinary. Almost the very moment she had woken one of her maidens had told her everything she knew. The maid had heard the story from her sister and this woman had heard everything from her husband who had been one of the nightly guards. As far as she had understood the story, the guards had been kept from sleeping off on duty. There were hardly any secrets in the tribe, every story went the rounds in almost no time. And this was most certainly a story worth telling if only half of what she had been told had truly happened.

She pushed the last skin at the entrance aside and stepped inside the dim light of the tent. Hardly surprising the interior was in a state of disarray, but between all the mess was still a large heap of furs and pillows and two shapes were visible underneath them.

The shamaness wet her lips and stepped closer to the larger one of the two shapes.

She cleared her throat, stretched herself to an upright position so that her antlers were almost touching the skins of the tent's ceiling. Eager to make a pleasant look, she looked down on herself and quickly smoothed the resistant cloth of her ceremonial gown once again.

She cleared her throat once more (she was hoping that Ilies could be wakened by it). She inhaled and finally said loudly and formally: "May the Goddess and all her Spirits bless you, Hunter Ilies. May the wind carry the scent of deer towards you, may the earth grow all its herbs for you, may the sun warm your tent, may the moons guard you sleep and may your family be blessed with all the virtues you hold dear yourself."

"Uh...?" Two long ears and a head showed up between the furs and half opened, sleepy eyes looked at her.

The antelope's jaw dropped down. Instead of looking into the face of the otter, she was looking into the face of a naked bunny with bloodshot eyes and messy hair. Her frowns knitted. "Kasha?" She said the name the moment it shot to her mind.

The bunny blinked several times and finally she recognized the antelope in front of her, but for a moment her confusion was still clouding her mind. She was frozen except for her eyes that shot about while she tried to find a clue what she was doing in this strange tent and why the shamaness was standing in front of her and... Without thinking any longer she hit the shape next to her with her paw.

The shape moved a little and moaned.

The bunny hit him more anxiously and finally the otter rolled around and looked up. His eyes opened wide when he noticed that the rough awakening was not caused by his brother (as he had instinctively expected) but by Kasha... and she was nude... He looked at her in amazement: He had never seen her like this before, so close, so clearly and so...

Kasha panicked a little bit and when she noticed that Ilies was just staring at her bare chest she whispered inaudible words and violently pointed at the shamaness.

Ilies knitted his frowns, but did as she told him to and looked around. His eyes met those of the surprised shamaness.

"Ilies!"

"Ye... yes," the otter stammered.

"You won't tell me that you two..." The antelope woman pointed at the two young furs.

"What?" Ilies uttered instantly.

He did not need to answer: Kasha turned her head away and blood shot to her face so that it got visibly red despite her fur.

Ilies looked to the ground as if he was searching something.

A smile started to spread on the antelope's lips and a moment later she started to laugh heartily. "Sorry..." she gasped while catching her breath. "Sorry!" And she laughed on while the two young furs looked at her from the corner of their eyes.

The shamaness was still chugging, her pendants rattled, but she forced herself to calm down a bit. "My, you don't have to be ashamed of what you did, do you? After all it was ment to be this way. That's what Ilies was here for, wasn't it?"

The otter nodded hesitatingly.

The shamaness looked at the bunny girl who was still looking away and biting her lip. The antelope went over to her and kneeled down by her side. "What's wrong, Kasha?"

"I..." The bunny fell silent again. "I... lost... my honor," she was finally able to exclaim.

Gently the antelope laid her hand on the smaller girl's shoulder. "No, you didn't," she said firmly. "There is nothing wrong in what you did, no matter what somebody might say later. You chose to do this, so what is wrong with it? You gave your love to the one you love. Who might blame you for something so selfless?"

Kasha looked at her from the corner of an eye that hid underneath her messy hair.

"I'd rather say you have got something to be proud of," the shamaness added. She stood up again and looked at Ilies who had not dared to move. With a few gestures she showed the bashful otter that he should not just sit there.

The otter rose his eyebrows.

She formed the words "Come on!" with her mouth.

Shyly the otter approached Kasha a little bit and embraced her from behind.

The girl started when she felt his touch.

"After all you got yourself a husband last night," the shamaness said.

Now it was up to Ilies to blush and a smile started to spread on Kasha's lips.

"Yeah, a stupid one, but I got one," the bunny said, smiling.

"Who are you calling stupid, wimp?" the otter growled, still hugging her from behind.

"Look who's talking," she replied.

"At least I don't make a fuss about *my* honor all the time."

“Yeah, you lost it when you messed up your rite. Where would you be today without me, eh?”

“I hate you!” the boy said.

“I hate you too, stupid!” she replied.

“Stupid yourself!” he growled and gently bit her shoulder.

“Hey!” She turned around quickly but his hold was stronger. “Let go!” she exclaimed, half laughing. She struggled to get free, turned halfway in his hold while he was still trying to enforce his hold. But suddenly she let herself drop to her side and pulled him with her. Now fully laughing, she fell into the furs and quickly he settled above her, playfully growling through his gritted teeth.

The loud clearing of a throat made them both hesitate for a moment.

The shamaness was still standing at their bedside. “Well, actually, I was supposed to tell you that the men wanted to strike this tent but... I guess that has got to wait a little longer.” Absent-mindedly she scratched her shoulder. “Well, I think I can keep them occupied with the preparations for an initiation and a subsequent wedding.”

And the moment she turned towards the exit Kasha and Ilies turned towards each other again.

“One more question though,” the shamaness interrupted them. “Where is the lynx?”

“Who?” Ilies asked instantly. “Oh... you mean... Errh... Isn’t she with you?”

The shamaness shook her head. “She must have left us then...” Thoughtfully she shook her head. “Well, I better go and prepare myself for tonight’s wedding, right?” And an instant later she had left the tent.

The noises of the tribe who was about to prepare its leave were all around the tent. Shadows passed by it while Ilies and Kasha lost no more time and engaged in a passionate kiss.

Futile to mention: The men who wanted to strike the tent had to wait for a while.

End of Chapter 14

Annotation 1: Chokothas are large flightless birds, not unlike an ostrich. But they are larger than those, have a dark heavy reddish plumage and no less than four eyes. Thus they are a very difficult prey.

Annotation 2: The child of parents belonging to different species is a full member of either species.

Annotation 3: This is a derogative term for children of parents belonging to different species (see above). The term may be considered an insult but the whole issue is very complicated as there are many social, ethnical and ethical issues attached to it.

Annotation 4: Likatta is closely related to the Gentianaceae. Its root contains lots of sugar as well as slightly toxic substances which work as a mild relaxant. It ferments quickly and the mush mixed with water is referred to as Likatta root beer.

Annotation 5: The migrations of birds is an important indicator of a coming winter.

Annotation 6: The boakey is a rare fruit, that grows on low bushes. As it grows within the reach of many small animals it is mere luck to find one before it has already been eaten. Its outer skin is very hard and almost entirely inedible until the fruit is ripe. Then it becomes very soft within a few hours and the fruit starts rotting within a few days. Their rarity and the symbolic consistence of their pulp are both equally important for its ceremonial relevance.