



Embracing the Stalk (The Rhubarb Effect)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: An inexperienced alpha, a terrified omega mate, and a continued unknown threat. Will Gordon be able to protect his mate when he doesn't know when the next attack will happen?

Two attacks in his hometown of Valentine Growville and Red no longer feels safe, even in his own home. Hiding is his only answer until Gordon persuades him otherwise. His insecurities don't phase his mate, yet they eat at Red, will their mating be the shortest in history when Gordon realizes just how scared Red is?

Gordon has experience of hiding from folks with a libido bigger than him. Does that mean he has experience of getting down and dirty? Heck no, when he figures out that Red is his fated mate, he's a goat on a mission. Flowers in hand, he sets out to woo Red. That part turns out to be easy, protecting him requires something else—his pride.

Now they must all live together under one roof, a singing rhubarb, a pole climbing bull, a sweet eating, sexy dominant and a randy goat, what could possibly go wrong?

Embracing the Rhubarb – book four of seven of The Rhubarb Effect, is sweet enough to hurt your teeth and sexy enough to cook rhubarb.

Total Pages (Source): 17

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:58 am

Gordon

“How are you?”

No, Gordon. That’s lame.

I coughed and tried again.

“These are for you.” I thrust out the flowers from the pride garden, clumsily tied with a red ribbon I’d found in my bedroom. Or I would have done, if anyone had been standing there to take them. Okay, I held them out in my head in case anyone from the pride was watching on the cameras that now populated Valentine Growville, since the monsters arrived in town. They would never let me forget my lame behavior if they saw me.

Was acting all this out in my head any lamer than talking to myself in the street?

I sighed, conflicted. Did a rhubarb even like flowers? I liked them, well I liked eating the flowers, but Red wasn’t a goat and let’s face it, everyone knew goat shifters were all kinds of wacky. Or maybe that was just me? On a scale of one to wacky, I was at the top of the range.

I eyed the flowers thoughtfully. Maybe I should eat them for courage, it’s not like Red would ever know.

I snapped my mouth shut at just how ridiculous I’d look standing on the street eating a bunch of flowers. Not that I wasn’t standing on the street talking to myself right

now.

I gave a mournful sigh and scratched my butt.

I'm a goat so sue me. What was I even doing here? I should go back to the pride house and pretend Red wasn't in. Except everyone—Tim, Red's brother and his alpha's mate—would know I was lying. Then I'd never live it down. I was the one who'd insisted I'd visit Red to find out what was wrong with him.

The hot stalk had been hiding, and we all knew why. Nearly being abducted by monsters twice had done a number on him. He needed a friend, and that was me.

My steps slowed close to the little one-story house Red had at the other end of Valentine, and aside from supporting his brother Glass when the alpha stalk had screwed up with his mate, Red hadn't stepped leaf or root out of his house. No, I wasn't stalking him—just a concerned citizen watching his house on camera.

The town—Tim (again)—wanted to stage an intervention, but I had insisted this was something I'd handle. Why? Who knew—okay, I knew. Red was a tasty-looking stalk. And to my surprise, no one had argued with me. I'd prepared myself ready to argue my case, but they'd just given me knowing smiles.

I hated those smiles. They all knew something, but they weren't telling me. It was the same with Burke and Ricky, only I'd been the one giving those knowing smirks. Was this payback?

Stopping just around the corner from Red's—alright, I was hiding around the corner—I attempted to work up the courage to walk up to his blue front door and knock.

I heard a noise, like something mechanical was moving. I looked up to see three

cameras suddenly pointing at me, red lights flashing. Dammit, Tim was watching the cameras today, and it appeared he wasn't going to let me bail.

Get a move on! That was Maximus, the alpha of the pride, nagging me through our pride link.

You could at least pretend not to be spying on me, I groused.

Where's the fun in that? And that was Tim, Maximus's mate, disco diva, and curtain twitcher of the town.

Hey!

I noticed he didn't deny it, though.

Of course, I am a disco diva.

Oh goatymclovegoats no! Not the singing, please!

Oh, I love to love. But my lion just loves to stalk. He wants to stalk, he loves to stalk, he's got to stalk.

Clapping my free hand over an ear, I complained, I'm going! I swear it. Don't sing at me!

That didn't deter Tim, who didn't stop until I was outside Red's door.

I'm here.

You haven't knocked, Tim pointed out. I'm thinking Rick Astley...

I thumped on the door, hard. Now will you go? Please, please go.

Not yet, hold on...

The door opened.

And I'm out of here!

But I wasn't listening, because Red was standing in front of me, looking tired and confused, his brow wrinkled. I hated to see the dark smudges under his eyes. I wondered if he was sleeping at all.

"Gordon? What are you doing here? Is everything okay? Is Glass alright?"

Where did I start? I licked my lips. "Uh... everyone... we... uh... I... Glass. He's okay."

Although Red's brother, Glass, had been abducted by the monsters. Although he'd gotten rescued and his mate, Apollo, was all over him. He was a pampered stalk.

Red looked more confused the longer I stuttered. What was I doing here? This had to be the worst move I'd made!

"Here!" I lobbed the bunch of flowers at him. "These are for you."

Red caught the bouquet before it unraveled and stared down at the blooms. "You bought me flowers?" He traced one of the pink petals with his fingertip.

"From the pride garden," I added, like a complete dork.

He stared at them for so long, it made me fidget. "You picked them for me?"

“Silly. I know it was silly. Really, I should go.” Yeah, that was definitely for the best. I turned to leave before I made a bigger idiot of myself.

“No, wait,” Red murmured softly, placing a large hand on my bicep.

Red was a meaty sized stalk, at least five inches taller than me in his human form. He was an omega, but unlike Tim, who’s the bossiest omega who ever existed, Red was a gentle giant with huge brown eyes framed by long dark lashes and a soft full mouth I wanted to kiss. He made my heart pitter-patter faster, just being near him.

“Stay.” He blushed the color of his name and dropped his hand like he was holding a hot potato. “Come in.”

I hesitated, heart racing at thoughts of being alone, without any cameras. “Are you sure?”

“It would be nice to have some company.”

He stood back, smiling hesitantly at me, clutching the flowers to his chest in the cutest way. I walked into his house, telling my dick to quit with trying to drill out of my jeans. My libido needed to calm the heck down. This didn’t mean anything, right? I told myself I was just being a polite neighbor. It kinda worked until I sniffed.

I glanced down, gah!

His scent was driving me wild. It was sweeter than any of the flowers I’d given him. Was I trying to date him? Seriously though, why would this juicy stalk want me? I’m an alpha with too much testosterone, who most of the time behaves as if I’ve swallowed a truckload of Viagra. I’m the goat who never gets his goat on, if you get my drift.

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Red

The aches and pains from the beating I'd taken while fending off the monsters all sang together as I moved to shut the door and lock it behind Gordon. My body was like the fruit that had gotten squished between two watermelons.

I was not a happy stalk. Life was pretty sucky when I couldn't force myself out of the house to even check that my older brother was okay after his run in with the monsters.

I shuddered at the outcry about the large pan they'd found in the barn, which was ready to... I shivered violently, holding my flowers like a protective barrier.

"Hey, I can go if you don't want me to stay?" Gordon asked in the sweetest voice. It was quite something, listening to him talk. It did all kinds of things to my fuzzies. I'd not been able to think too hard about it, my fear of the monsters outside overwhelming me.

Was I a bad stalk?

I didn't think so.

"Red... are you okay?"

Concern was there in the furrowed brow as I switched gears faster than Bart could in his old truck. "I... yes." I clutched the flowers tighter to my chest. "Do you want a drink?"

Be a polite host. I could do that, couldn't I? I wasn't so sure when every time I came within two feet of the pretty goat shifter, I wanted to lean on him. Let him take care of me.

I nearly let out a sigh at such silly thoughts. I swallowed it back and waited as Gordon's head tilted to the side, the bridge of his nose getting an adorable wrinkle.

"Yeah, got any juice? I don't like fizzy stuff as it makes me feel all anxious."

"You get anxious?" I asked as I moved through the house to the kitchen, needing to get away from him before I gave in to the temptation to ask for a...

"I'm a goat with an entire bag of extra libido that can't leave the house because I can't control myself. Yep, I get anxious I'm gonna upset folks by..." His pretty green eyes widened as he stopped and slapped a hand over his mouth, as if he'd said too much.

I ran over what he'd said as I stared at him, still holding the flowers; they helped to stop the urge to go and sniff him. He reminded me of a garden in the summertime. Newly mowed grass and an array of flowers, the smell urged me to lie on him and bask in it.

What is wrong with me?

I was too big to be doing that, I'd crush him. My size had never bothered me so much before. Being an omega stalk, other stalks like me were tiny. I was more like a beefcake, the same as Glass. Shaking off my own weirdness, I placed the flowers down with trembling fingers on the counter, making sure not to bruise the petals.

I returned my attention to Gordon, watching his pretty face pink up. His hair was a shaggy, silky mess and made me want to run my fingers through it to see if it was as

soft as it looked.

“Why did you stop? I’m the last stalk to judge you. I couldn’t leave the house to go see Glass...” My brain caught onto something, and my eyes widened. “You left the house to come see me.” Then I couldn’t stop my rhubarb lips from running away with themselves. “Why am I different?”

More pretty red colored his cheeks as he glanced down, his feet shuffling on my lino. My gaze caught on something noticeable on the way back up.

I gulped at the protruding bulge. Even when he fidgeted and one hand dropped in front of his zipper, I didn’t appear to be able to look away. I gulped in some air, feeling way too hot, and inhaled a dose of Gordon’s fragrant smell.

I groaned, flushing, and gave my eyes a stern talking to.

Behave yourselves. This is not the time to act out.

Who are you talking to? Tim asked, bringing me back to reality with a thump, when I figured I’d projected to the whole of Valentine with my forcefulness. Oh rhubarbs!

Mind your own business.

I was, then you got all shouty, Red. Is Gordon’s goat giving you ideas?

Please, go away!

There was a noticeable huff, but Tim went quiet a second later, although that didn’t help with how Gordon was now eyeing me. “Sorry,” I mumbled, hoping that would cover every situation.

“I can’t help it—”

“Help what?” I questioned, frowning.

His hand shifted and made sure my eyes were back to misbehaving. All chances of wallowing were impossible with Gordon around. It was like that the first day we’d met, and he’d brought me home and looked after me. He had this ability to make everything feel better—especially when he touched me.

I gulped when he stepped closer. “My libido.”

“Oh... so that’s not... b-because of me?” Brazen much! What was I even thinking?

Reaching out, he gently took hold of my hand, the rough skin on his palm caused tiny shivers to run up my arm as he held my stare. Something in his eyes suggested he was figuring out what to say, when he didn’t immediately answer.

Was this bad?

I released a shuddery breath as his thumb ran over the back of my hand. His scent strengthened and tantalized my nose.

“It is you, too. Mostly you, to be honest. Since I caught your scent, I...” he glanced down at his jeans. “I’ve been suffering—”

My brows merged together. “Suffering?” What did he mean by ‘suffering’?

This was not so good!

“No... yes... shit, not like suffering, suffering. More like, I’m a more randy goat than normal around you. Like I want to rip off your clothes and rut. Only I respect that’s

probably not what you wanna do. You know, with me being a goat and what's been happening to you? And I only came 'cause I wanted to check up on you and give you the flowers. They looked pretty and reminded me of you, and I thought you might like some pretty in your life right now."

He let go of my hand and buried his head into both hands, groaning. "I'll shut up rambling now."

He thinks I'm pretty!

Beaming at him, my face ached at how long it felt since I'd smiled so widely. "You think I'm pretty?" I asked like a dork stalk, ruining any credibility I might have had.

Way to go!

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Gordon

I raised my head and caught his glorious smile. Pretty? I thought he was the most alluring rhubarb ever to walk the earth and had done since I first met him. All I wanted to do was enfold him in my arms and keep him safe from the rest of the world.

“I’d like that,” Red said shyly.

I furrowed my brow. “You’d like what?”

“For you to hold me and protect me from the rest of the world.”

“Wait, you heard that?”

We all heard that.

Fuck off, Tim, Red said. This is my wooing, not yours, and I received flowers.

I heard my stalk loud and clear and if I’d been in my goat form, my little hooves would have kicked up in joy, jumping about the fact he knew I was wooing him.

And who told him to take the flowers?

I groaned at Tim outing me.

Hey, I got the kinky candy from my mate. That was Glass, adding to my torment.

I guess we all had our weird love language, but I needed them all to get lost because the noise was too much! I tapped the side of my head, as if I could kick them out.

“What’s wrong?” Red asked, looking concerned, clearly not getting that I could hear the entire conversation between him and his brothers.

“I think the entire town just took residence in my head. Is this what it’s like all the time?”

Red’s smile lit up the room. “Welcome to the wacky world of Valentine. Your business is their business. Particularly if Tim is listening in.”

Nothing is secret in Valentine, Maximus agreed.

The town and the pride!

We are one.

I wasn’t sure who said that, but there were more than a few snuffles.

This is all heartwarming and stuff, but I have a... mate who needs my arms right now, I said firmly. Take a hike out of our heads, okay?

Silence.

Blissful silence.

Red and I locked gazes.

He loves jasmine, Tim butted in.

Maxi, go do unspeakable things to your mate before my mate feeds him to the pan, Red ordered.

I heard an outraged gasp and a growl, but the silence returned.

I sighed and held out my hand. "Let's make the most of it while we can."

Red took my hand, and I tugged him closer, pulling him against me. We both sighed at the touch. It was real, we were mates.

Then Red took a step back, and my heart thumped hard against my ribs.

"What's wrong?" I asked, panicked that I'd maybe scared him. Had I been too forceful? Too overly goaty?

Red picked up the wilted flowers. "I think I should put these in water. They need it. If you add some Mountain Dew to the water, they'll last longer."

I couldn't have cared less about the flowers at this point, but I let Red go, watching him bustle over to a kitchen cabinet and draw out a vase just the right size. He caught my look of surprise.

"What?"

"I don't know many guys who'd have a vase, let alone know where it was."

Red chuckled and opened the cabinet to show me just how many vases he owned. "I've always loved flowers."

My heart skipped and pitter-pattered like kids let out to play. Destined to be mine, that's all I could think. It was fate. How had the Goated Gods found the one stalk in

the world who didn't laugh at my love of flowers? As I held his stare, I knew he'd been worth waiting for.

From the hitch of his breath and pink cheeks as Red filled the vase with water and arranged the slightly crushed flowers, Red had clearly heard my teen O.M.G. (oh my goat) moment.

I swallowed hard and tried to recover my dignity. "You don't sleep in the soil?"

"When I need to eat and recover, I sleep among the flowers in my backyard. I have my own house because I like my privacy, and you can't always get that in Valentine."

If he wanted to stay at the pride house, I'd dig out a space for Red away from the others, just under the jasmine. I knew just the place.

Red placed the vase in the middle of the kitchen table, then stepped into my space. "Can we resume the hugging? I could really do with one."

It was easy to tug him closer and wrap my arms around him, burying my nose in the crook of his neck and inhaling his floral scent. I loved the power of his solid body flush against mine.

"You don't mind that I'm not a teeny-tiny stalk?" he murmured in a hesitant tone.

I guess he meant an omega stalk built like Tim.

I raised my head to nibble on his ear. "You're perfect, just the way you are."

He giggled and writhed under my touch. "You're not going to eat me, are you?"

"I want to eat you," I admitted. "Your mouth, your cock, your ass. I want to nibble

your fuzzies until you're screaming my name. There isn't a part of you I don't want to lick and touch and make mine." I nibbled the other ear for emphasis.

He shivered delectably in my arms. "I like the sound of that."

I buried my face against the smooth skin of his neck and ran my hands up and down his back, feeling his occasional shiver. Red could do anything, and I'd follow. He was perfect. But was this my libido talking?

I really didn't know what to do. I was the Inexperienced Alpha. And I didn't even know how much experience Red had. Would it be the virgin duo or had Red cantered around Valentine, tasting every alpha in town?

"Gordon?" Red sounded very amused.

"Yes?"

"You know I can hear all this, don't you?"

"Oh my giddy goat," I groaned. I was never going to be able to look my omega in the eye again.

"You could just ask me instead of panicking."

I took a deep breath and locked eyes with him.

"Red, omega of my heart, have you gone stalk to stalk before, been deflowered, popped your cherry—"

He pressed a finger across my mouth. "I get it, and the answer is yes. I have. And I'll happily be the honeybee to your pollen. Or the other way around. But we'll work this

out together. Just keep me safe from the monsters, Gordon, because I'm stalker's scared."

The unexpected shift in conversation sent icicles through my furry curls. I held him close to my heart.

I will protect you until the end of my days.

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Red

His words cemented his place in my heart. Even if we weren't mates—which was epic—I'd have no issue finding him attractive. Taking the next step, I wanted to get all cuddly—just with a lot less clothing. Which meant letting go, but with his forceful declaration, I wasn't ready to move.

Issue... to say I had some experience might have overcooked the rhubarb. I had a boyfriend when I was younger, and we'd experimented. Would it be enough to satisfy my randy goat?

Anything we do will satisfy me.

This reading thoughts came in handy when it meant I didn't have to say shit aloud and make the situation more awkward than it already was.

Gordon cuddled me a little closer, those sexy lips of his moving down my neck to nibble me like I was the grass he loved to eat. Me being bigger and taller, my overexcited dick was attempting to poke my mate in the stomach. I wiggled as a hand slid over my butt and squeezed, bringing me closer to the bulge that I'd eyed earlier. However, feeling it pressing against my thigh made my ass slick, and the need to get naked grew faster than a cheetah on a rocket.

“Want to show me the rest of your home?” He kissed his way up to my ear, causing shivers to run through my body. “By that, I mean your bedroom. I want you lying down. I'm told we are all the same size lying down.” A chuckle ghosted over my super sensitive skin and I groaned anew. His free hand slipped between us and curled

around my cock, making me gasp and moan like a ten-dollar hooker. His lips were back by my ear as he murmured, “Although this might argue with that statement.”

Great Rhu!

Bed, we needed my bed. I wanted to see if he was right, only with us both naked. Somehow, I managed to steer us to my bedroom with his hand still holding my dick and his mouth doing delicious things to my neck.

Once there, getting naked became a priority. Yeah, I wasn’t sure how that was going to happen because all I could think about—feel—was the fingers stroking my hard length, making my eyes cross.

“I want you naked so I can taste...” He kissed his way to the edge of my T-shirt, both hands squeezing parts of me that made me rock forward and backward, undecided which I wanted more.

“Come on sweetheart, lose the clothes.”

“You have to let me go for that to happen,” I gasped, remaining conflicted. Then I got an idea, I shifted before I could think.

Gordon’s laughter was gleeful as he lifted me out of my clothes in record time. “That works.” His tongue licked me from root to leaves and he made a guttural sound that vibrated my tiny fuzzies until I was a sticky mess.

Agh... yeah, lick my leaves... suck my length, I begged unashamedly. Any residual pain I’d had from the beating disappeared at the attention. His teeth grazed my stalk and he bit me, sending me into a spiral of pleasure I’d never known before.

His groans grew louder, and they made my fuzzies buzz so hard I was dancing in his

mouth. Rhubarb couldn't make music in this form, but it sure as hell felt like I was. Everything that had happened, all the fear, bled away into the deep well of delight.

"Anything you want, sweetheart. Show me what you like," he said around my stalk, appearing reluctant to take it out of his mouth. I could live with staying right as we were.

What you're doing. That, I moaned at the next frisky tonguing. His teeth went from biting to nibbling along my length.

"You taste delicious. Better than anything I've ever tasted." His tongue danced over me. "Do you taste the same in both forms?"

His question made me moan, and I shifted before I could think about it. My eyes widened in surprise at how easily he held me, making my cock throb at the show of strength.

"Wanna find out?" I asked shyly, looking at him from under my eyelashes as he slowly lowered me to the bed.

The coolness of the cover didn't quell the heat pouring from my body at the look Gordon wore as his gaze swept over me. My cock bucked as if begging for attention.

He smacked his lips together and grinned. "It'll be my pleasure." Clothes flew around the room as he stripped, and before I could figure his intentions, he was between my legs, cock in hand. "Now, let's see just how sweet you taste here."

His tongue swiped the custard leaking from the head of my dick. I shuddered and bit my lower lip to keep the begging words from slipping free. I wanted everything all at once.

He pushed my thighs apart and came closer to suck the head of my shaft between his lips, distracting me as a finger slipped between my ass cheeks. His now sticky finger circled my hole, making it twitch with need.

“Argh...” I cried out in a strangled moan as he eased a fingertip into my ass, making it burn just a little. I clenched down right as he opened his talented mouth, and my cock got bathed in wet warmth. He sucked me down like a popsicle until I hit his tonsils, and then things got real interesting when he swallowed. His throat clasped my cock in the best kiss of my life, and everything went white as my whole body spasmed.

To the Great Rhuuuuuuu give it to me, my horny goat!

Please don't stopppppp.

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Gordon

Proud of the way I'd made Red come, I swallowed his sweet custard and looked up, my smug smile swiftly fading as I regarded my mate, sprawled out and not moving.

"Red?"

The stalk didn't move, his eyes closed and his expression blissed out.

I shook his arm. "Red? Wake up, honeybee."

Red stayed where he was, not responding, the link between us a hollow emptiness. Sweat prickled across my back.

Oh dear Goat! I clapped a hand over my mouth.

I'd killed my fated mate with the power of my tongue.

Death by blowjob.

The town would never forgive me. My pride would kick me out. I'd be a goat on the run. I'd be locked up.

Still a virgin.

I looked down at my softening dick. Was this the Gods punishing me? Seriously, I didn't know this could happen.

What could I do? Goated Gods, tell me what to do?

Then my brain shifted to the upstairs one, and I knew how to save him. Thank the goat I remembered a program on the TV that showed me how to do life-saving measures. CPR, yeah idiot, we got this. Was it ‘Nelly the elephant came to town’?

Fuck no, that wasn’t how it went. Where was Tim when a stalk needed to know how a song went?

You need to get him breathing and stop damn panicking about the beat of a song, I chastised myself.

I shuffled around, ready to start compressions. Had CPR changed in the years since I’d seen that show? I just hoped I remembered enough to save my beautiful mate.

“You can do this!” Positive affirmations for the win!

As I laid my hands on his chest, Red sighed and his eyelids fluttered.

Thank fuck, he’s alive!

Alive!

What are you shouting about? Tim asked.

I ignored him, as he’d not come to my rescue earlier. I shook Red again. “Red, baby, open your eyes. Show me those gorgeous baby browns.”

Red did as he was told, taking a second to focus on me. His lush mouth curved into a smile. “Wow! What just happened?”

I sat back on my haunches and breathed for the first time, my panic receding. He was okay. I hadn't killed him, thank the goatly gods.

"That was..." He shook his head and licked his lips. "Amazing."

"Are you sure?" All my uncertainty bubbled to the surface. I was supposed to be the alpha. Surely my mate wasn't supposed to pass out like that.

Red raised a hand to tug me closer. I leaned over him, and he cupped the back of my neck and pressed his forehead to mine. "An orgasm like that would make anyone's brain fritz for a few seconds. I think you've emptied me of custard."

"You scared me," I admitted, my cheeks flushing with embarrassment. "I thought I'd killed you. I didn't know what to do."

He chuckled softly, but it wasn't a nasty sound. He wasn't laughing at me like the mean goats used to do in my previous herd.

"I'd never be mean to you," he promised.

I snuggled closer, needing reassurance, and he kissed me gently. Then he licked my lips and kissed me again. His tongue sought entrance to my mouth, making my dick swell once more. My mate wanted to taste himself, it appeared, so I gave him what he needed, sharing his custard.

He groaned lewdly into my mouth. "Now it's your turn." The murmur against my lips in a sexy drawl melted my goatly heart.

I could get on board with that. Red arched up against me, fuzzies sending sparks of pleasure through me. He ran his hands down my back and cupped my ass. Then he did a stalky ninja maneuver and landed me on my back.

“Sneaky,” I accused, laughing at his antics while my heart thudded hard at being handled so easily.

Red grinned at me and winked. “Just wait ‘til you see my other moves.”

“I can’t wait.”

My shaft stood to full attention, begging for Red to love on it.

Red could clearly understand Gordon-dick-speak because he wrapped his large hand around my shaft and tugged it until I moaned.

“This is so good,” I crooned in delight. My insides felt as good as his fuzzies had against my tongue.

“You’ll see, it’s only going to get better,” he promised as he bent and licked the head of my leaking dick, making my toes curl with anticipation as he sucked me in. He feasted on my dick, nibbling, licking, and sucking, never stopping until I was ready to lose my mind. Nothing in my imagination had ever been as good as my stalk’s mouth and hands on me.

I grabbed his head, staying his passage to my balls. “I need more,” I confessed with a blush, hoping he would understand.

Red raised his head, his lips glistening. “Are you ready to pop your cherry?”

I bleated my excitement. Was I ever ready? I’d been born ready for this moment. He climbed up my body, kissed me again, and rolled us over.

I sighed into the crook of his neck. “You feel so good.”

“Make love to me,” Red whispered, almost shyly. “I need your dick in me, make me whole. Make me the happiest stalk in the world.”

“Whatever you want,” I promised, guiding my cock to his entrance. I was more than ready to give my stalk what he desired, and to lose my virginity at freakin’ last. I could think about nothing but burying myself in his body.

My head lifted, my ears perking up as my heart skipped a beat at the sound coming from outside the door. The thump thump of footsteps brought a panicked look to Red’s beautiful features.

He clutched at me, nails digging in painfully. “Monsters! They’ve come to get me!” he squealed, right as I turned, snarling, ready to protect my mate from the monsters, covering his body as much as I could with mine.

Maximus burst into the room with Tim on his heels, their eyes wide and panicked. The door flew back hard enough for the handle to leave a dent in the wall.

I stared at the pair. They stared at us.

Red groaned.

I bleated in confusion.

What. The. Goat?

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Red

If there was ever a time I wanted to clout my baby brother, it was right this second. “What do you mean, you heard something?” I snapped, scowling at him across the kitchen table, where we’d come after I had shooed both men out of my bedroom so I could put on some clothes.

The moment between me and my goat had been totally ruined by the two men, who at least had the good grace to look a little embarrassed, sitting at the table. They’d frightened me seven shades of red bursting in on us like that, especially when...

Please, if you keep sending me pictures of what we were about to do, I might just mount you on this nice table in front of these two idiots!

“It’s all your fault, Gordon,” Tim accused, not giving me a chance to answer him myself. Once more, I was getting cock blocked—only this time it was a more imaginary cock block, if there was such a thing. “If you’d just answered me, then I wouldn’t have gone to tell Maxi something was up. You were so panicked, it was like you were sending out singing signals. That you can’t sing for rhubarb is enough to worry anyone something was up.”

He’d been singing the same tune for the last ten minutes and I was fed up when my goat had left me hanging and I could feel his embarrassment, along with the wish to not explain why he’d been singing. Not that I could figure that one out myself. I’d need to ask later, when we were alone—maybe after we’d gotten back to what we were doing before the interruption.

“Are you purposefully doing that?” accused Tim, looking directly at me.

“Huh? Doing what?” I asked, confused by the shift in conversation. What had I missed this time? Could I help zoning out? Probably, but I had other, more important things to be thinking about that had nothing to do with monsters coming to kidnap me.

Maximus chuckled at me. “Are you even listening? You did give us a fright. Tim was so worried we hightailed it over here. Maybe you could remember he’s pregnant. My omega doesn’t need this stress.”

I blushed scarlet and looked down at the mug I held, not wanting to look at Gordon.

He reached over, placing his hand over the one I was nervously rubbing up and down the mug. “Ignore Maxi. I had to put up with their horny antics for weeks. You have no idea how the singing drove us all nuts.”

“You were singing, I heard you!” Tim spluttered out, his gaze narrowing on Gordon. “Something about an elephant.”

“Yes, well, that was different. Now can we move on, change the rhubarb record?”

The tips of Gordon’s ears were a delightful pink when he shook his head, his waves shifting around his face, highlighting just how pretty he was.

“See, this is what you get when you do a rhubarb a favor.”

I side-eyed my brother. “How is it a favor when you cock blocked me?” I accused, before I could think to keep my thoughts to myself. In for a rhubarb, in for a parcel. “I was about to pop my mate’s cherry, and there was Maxi, trying to break my walls and slamming doors.”

I was off the seat; the fear returning at how they'd invaded my home so easily.

"It's okay, my little rhubarb, I'm here, nothing bad is going to happen," Gordon murmured softly, coaxing me back into the chair. "Shushhh. We'll make sure to fit better locks and check in with the sheriff on what's happening. Be assured, I won't leave your side, I promise."

Our gazes locked together, I could see he meant it. Feel it in my fuzzies from where he'd had his teeth in me. I shuddered as Tim and Maximus rose, mugs on the table. They hightailed it out the back door without saying a word. Did I care? Not one little fuzzy. My mate was being all sweet goat.

"I can be, but how about I be all sexy goat?" He stepped away and I kept my attention on him as he swayed his sexy backside to the door, bolting it.

He spun around and came back to me, his hands taking hold of the hem of his t-shirt, tugging it over his head. His hair fell in a sexy mess as he dropped the t-shirt to the floor. His eyes were all lust that matched the bulge attempting to tent his tight-fitting jeans. "Now, where were we?"

I gulped, my hand shaking as I placed my own mug down, licking my lips and projecting an image of him lying on top of me, his dick, slick and hard...

"Fuck," he growled-bleated, dragging me off my seat.

Up in his arms, making my heart beat faster than a stalk in a relay race at his show of strength, I clung on to him. My fingers tangled in his silky tresses, dragging his lips to mine, desperate to taste. To lose myself in him and forget my worries about the mon—

No. There'll be no thoughts of them. Think about this. One hand snaked under my ass

and squeezed, lifting me a little higher so I had to release his lips. Panting, my body sticky with need, I stared down at my mate. "I'll try."

He shook his head. "I think we can do better than try."

Then we were moving back toward my bedroom, my arousal pushing against rock solid muscles that flexed and made my worries disappear in a flood of hot, potent desire. His scent was stronger, warmer by the time I was naked on the bed. He'd sat with his back against the headboard, his legs splayed out in front of him and he had me straddle him facing the other end of the bed.

Oh Great Rhu, were we finally gonna play ride the pony?

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Gordon

I licked my lips as I caught Red's thought.

Oh Goat yes!

"I want you to lasso your goat, turn on your light, and ride the pony until my cherry is so popped it's making cherry bomb sundaes." I wasn't sure any of that made sense to him or me, but I didn't care and neither did my stalk. He made these cute whimpering noises and wiggled his butt at each order.

"I wanna slide down your pole," he begged, looking over his shoulder at me.

My breath caught in the back of my throat. My big, solid stalk begging to ride me? If he were a doe, he'd be wagging his tail at me. He was, kind of. That lovely dick was wagging at me. It was the biggest turn on ever.

"I need to prepare you," I growled, unable to control the hunger that had me wanting to rut madly.

There were some parts of a goat's mating I'd have to pass on. Another goat would have understood about the pee thing, which involved me peeing on myself so he could get a good whiff of me. Rhubarb to goat, maybe not so much.

We'd adapt. We didn't need to attract each other in that way when he had me firmly in his fuzzy hold.

“I’m sure I’m ready.” His voice was all breathy.

“Don’t argue with me, omega. No one gets to hurt you, not even me.” I let a growl infuse my voice and watched him shiver. He wanted me to tell him what to do, I could feel it through our bond. I grinned at my sweet omega. “I want to bury my face in your ass and show you exactly what this goat can do with his tongue.”

I put my hands on his hips to raise him so I could bury my face in his ass crack and lick around his hole. He was already helping, groaning and wriggling as my tongue circled his twitching hole. He mashed his ass against my face, pushing my tongue into his clenching hole. Fuck, this wouldn’t last long with how I was imagining him riding and squeezing me. My cock was leaking so hard from how I needed to bury my dick into my rhubarb and fill him up.

Red yelled and bucked as I darted my tongue deep, then brought it out to lap around his hole again. I had to grab onto his hips to keep him still with how eagerly he rode my frisky tongue. I teased and loved at him until he was loose and ready. His sweet submission was as intoxicating as his taste and scent.

I wanted to hold him tight and never let him go.

By the time I had my dick lubed up and ready to make sweet, scented loving, Red was begging me to breed him. Every word that poured from his lips made it impossible not to worry and I had a moment of nerves. It was my first time, and I was desperate to get this right for Red.

It’s our first time together. You won’t get this wrong.

I hoped he was right because I was done dancing around the subject. It was time I showed my stalk exactly what all the fuss was about before anything else could interrupt us. I guided him onto my dick and he pushed down with agonizing

slowness, his hands on my thighs and his ass on display just for me.

Goatymcgoatness.

When he was seated on my thighs, my dick swallowed whole, I wanted to swoon like a doe flapping her tail.

“Fuck.” Red breathed out the word in a sexy rasp. I struggled not to unleash my randy side.

I echoed his sentiment. “Ride the pony, sweetheart.”

Then I discovered what firm thighs my baby had. Someone had been practicing his squats because he rode me like a Derby winner. Gasping and groaning, body tensing, I held on as long as I could, but my climax was boiling in my balls, and I wanted to fire my cream through my cannon and fill up my baby.

“Come for me,” I managed to gasp out.

The scent of custard with notes of jasmine filled the air as he came on my order, shuddering violently and pelting my legs with cum. I yelled and clutched his hips as his ass squeezed me so good, it triggered my own climax. I thrust into his ass, breeding him like he demanded over and over as I shuddered through my release, Red’s clenching channel prolonging the sensation.

Finally, panting like a goat who’d fucked forty times, I sprawled out like a starfish, Red’s beautiful back curving as he slumped over my thighs, my sticky cock nestled between his ass cheeks.

Not a virgin anymore! Whoop! I’d given my v-card to my fated mate! What a lucky buck I am.

If Red heard my ecstatic thoughts, he was kind enough not to laugh.

I came forward and carefully eased him into a position where I could see his flushed face.

“You’re mine,” I whispered in his ear, feeling Red shiver and moan. Then I slid down his back, nipping and kissing until I reached his plump ass. I gently lifted his hips and inhaled our combined scent, my gaze on the trail of cream trickling down his fuzzy balls. I followed it with my tongue, lapping at my juices.

“Do you think you’ll want to experiment?”

I blinked and pulled back from the tasty treat at his sudden question, trying to get my head to shift gears. “Experiment? Like with kink? That’s more Apollo’s thing than mine. Although, I guess I could try if you want?”

I waited, holding my breath, doing everything to keep my thoughts to myself. I’d do anything for my stalk.

Red snorted as he looked at me over his shoulder. “That’s fine with me. I’m not a kinky kind of stalk. But don’t you want to eat your way through the flowers?”

“I do that anyway. The pride house yard has an array of plants.”

From the groan I received, and Red’s face buried in his hand, I was missing something important. I just wasn’t sure what it was. So I wiggled up his back and rolled him over to cup his jaw and lock our gazes. “I don’t understand, babe.”

He leaned into my touch. “I’m sorry, I should have been clearer. What I mean is, do you want to fuck other men?”

I squinted at him, doing my best to avoid sharing the pain caused by the thought of anyone touching him, now I'd claimed him as mine. "Why would I want to do that?"

"To taste the other flowers in the garden? Rather than just me."

It took me a moment. I was cum-drunk. That was my excuse, and I was sticking to it. I dropped a kiss on his lips, uncaring I'd just had my tongue lapping at my own cum. "No, Red. I don't want any other shifters or humans. All I want is you."

He sighed and melted into my touch. "That was the right answer, my goaty alpha."

I could have stayed like that, but first I needed to take care of my stalk. Reading my thoughts, Red leaned over the side of the bed and handed me a gray T-shirt.

"Use that. I need to do laundry anyway."

Chuckling at how I'd considered doing it, I gently cleaned Red's backside, lifting him over the bed so I could kiss each cheek, then easing him back onto the mattress and admiring how flustered he looked at my moves. A look I hoped I'd keep there forever.

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Red

Water cascaded down my back and I hissed as it hit my ass, relishing the sting. I twisted to look down my back at the bite marks on my cheeks and chuckled to myself. Gordon loved to nibble on my ass for sure. I had yet to take a bite of him, which was harder than it should be considering how long we had spent in the bedroom, naked, sticky, and sweaty.

My cock plumped at thoughts of my rutting ram. He was something else. It was as if someone had leashed him, and I had been the one to cut the tie. My soapy fingers ran over my hole and I shivered at how loose and well used it was. I worked my fingers inside, cleaning myself, not that it probably needed much because something else I'd discovered was how Gordon loved to get his long tongue in the most interesting places.

One glance told me my stalk was firming at my thoughts and finger action. I groaned. Alone in the house, and doing naughty things to myself, wasn't my plan.

Are you being wicked?

Maybe... will it bring you back to me?

I promised to go and see the sheriff for you, and then pay a visit to the dude Glass recommended to sort the locks in the house. You feeling safe is important to me.

I sighed loudly, competing with the water hitting the tiles. I know, just hurry, I miss you.

I did, and it wasn't because of being scared, either. The last few days, where we'd stayed locked in my house, had been perfect. He could make me forget all my worries. One nibble and I got lost in him.

The problem was, reality had intruded, and as Gordon was a goat of honor, he'd insisted he would get the locksmith to come and make sure the house was secure, so I felt safe. I couldn't tell him I only felt safe in his arms. He'd gotten dressed in the clothes I'd finally laundered and headed out. His plan to see the sheriff and follow up on the monsters they'd captured was what had driven me into the shower. I looked for something, anything, to take my mind off the fact Gordon was going to be close to those fuckers.

What if they got out and hurt him?

Stop that, I'm being careful, and I've got Maxi with me, so you don't need to worry about me. I've also made sure you aren't alone.

What?

He'd barely mentioned it before there was knocking on my front door.

Come on, Red, let me in, I need to pee. The babies are kicking my bladder.

Seriously? I turned off the shower and stepped out, dripping water all over the floor to grab a towel and wrap it around my hips as I trailed downstairs, moaning and complaining as Tim chanted at me.

Pee. Pee. Pee. This stalk-a-doodle needs to pee.

I yanked open the door and didn't have time to utter a word as Tim ran past me, leaving Burke staring at me sheepishly. "I wish my babies just kicked my bladder."

Stepping back, I ushered Burke inside and closed the door, quickly bolting it. “Still got you climbing up stuff?”

“Yeah, and practicing getting down isn’t going so well with my belly getting in the way.” As if to make the point, he ran a hand over the round mound of his T-shirt covered belly.

I glanced down at my own flat stomach and wondered if, after everything we’d done, I could be in the rhubarb patch like Tim and Burke. It seemed we were all a fertile bunch. What about Glass and Apollo? They hadn’t mentioned having babies yet, or not that I’d heard.

Would that mean the potato doctor would have to stay? I’d not met him, but I’d heard the parcel gossip about the guy who it seemed was a friendly potato. If not a little reserved as he’d yet to partake in any of the rhubarb activities in town, much to the dismay of the gossips, who were stalking to get to know more about him.

“Are you gonna dry yourself and get dressed?” Burke asked, his gaze sweeping down my body.

Blushing all shades of rhubarb, I darted for the stairs. “Make yourself at home, I won’t be long.”

Towel flapping, I ran head first into Tim as he came out of the bathroom. “Hold your stalk,” he muttered, using his hands to ward me off as I tried to backpedal to stop him toppling over.

My foot caught on the top stair, and I wobbled backward, heart racing, nearly heading back down the stairs. I swayed forward to gain my footing, scowling at Tim. “Sorry,” I muttered crossly. “But you’re the one who invaded my home, needing the bathroom, and nearly pushing me down the stairs!”

He grinned, not looking at all offended. “Hey, you tell that to my babies because they aren’t getting that they shouldn’t kick their daddy’s bladder. Right now it’s any toilet in a storm. And is it my fault you came up the stairs like a rhubarb out of hell?”

“I—”

He did the same as Burke, eyeing me before interrupting me. “Aren’t you gonna get dressed? I mean, I’m your brother and I believe this look might be more suited to your goat.” He came closer, lowering his voice. “Is he as randy as the others made him out to be?”

Back to the blushing season, I glared at Tim. “That is none of your business!” I swung in the bedroom’s direction and my towel unraveled from my waist, dropping to the floor.

“It seems he is!” Tim exclaimed, giggling.

I stomped into my bedroom, knowing exactly where Tim’s gaze was. “At least I have an ass worth nibbling on!”

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Gordon

Sheriff Butch raised an eyebrow at me. “I’m surprised you left your bed and your luscious mate.”

I bristled at the leer as he said ‘luscious.’

You don’t think I’m luscious?

Damn, of course my mate had to hear that. Now the hurt rolled off him.

You know I think you’re the most luscious creature ever to walk the earth.

You do?

Red sounded breathy, even at my snappish tone, and I realized it was the words that mattered to him. My mate needed my words.

I do, honey. You and me, we’re fated to be together forever.

If Red could deal with an over-libidoed goat with a love of flowers, then he was mine.

I can!

That breathy note was destined to drive me wild, and I couldn’t wait to show him how excited I was when I finished doing what I had promised him. Perhaps we could

try out his backyard, doing it amongst the flower scents could be fun. Then a cough distracted me from my thoughts and I looked up to see the sheriff rolling his eyes like he'd known exactly what I had going on in my head, which of course he couldn't... could he?

“Much as I’m pleased for you, Gordon...”

By pleased, I suspected by the way he said it, he meant exasperated.

Always an over-explainer, I tapped at my temple. “I’m sorry, but it’s all new and hard to focus. There’s so much going on in my head.”

“I get it,” Sheriff Butch assured me. “Every newly mated couple is the same.”

I’d beg to differ as I’d had no action and now all my goaty-goatness was there for my stalk of rhubarb wanting to unleash everything—all at once. But I asked, “Does every couple broadcast their love to the whole town?”

I was part of a weird and wacky pride, these things weren’t something we had cause to talk about in the past when it wasn’t sexy times we were broadcasting. When we’d formed, it had taken us time to quit broadcasting every thought to each other, but we’d gotten used to it. Being part of Valentine Growville was a whole new freaky experience. It was as if our thoughts were on blast to the whole town, especially the newly mated couples—that was how it appeared with the side looks the stalks gave us. Get a rhubarb mate, sign into the rhubarb superhighway.

Thoughts changing tack of their own accord, I smiled, thinking of my Red as I’d left him in bed.

You should have seen me in the shower, Red said coyly. Tim saw the bite marks on my ass cheeks.

I shivered as I remembered putting them there.

“Oh Great Rhu, either focus or go back to your mate,” the stalk in front of me said, frowning hard enough to give him a monobrow, which wasn’t a good look on him.

I shook my head, trying to clear my horny thoughts. Damn, that rhubarb had me tied up in knots.

“Gordon!”

I jumped at Butch’s yell. “I’m listening,” I protested, hoping to convince him I was.

“I haven’t said anything yet,” he snapped. “But now I have your attention, why are you being chased by monsters?”

I pressed my lips together.

He sighed, rested his elbows on his desk, and steepled his fingers together. “Why is no one from the pride talking to me?”

I didn’t look sideways at Maximus, who’d joined me. No, if I didn’t look, then there was clearly nothing to see. Right?

“We just want the lions out of here,” I muttered, still not looking at the silent lion next to me.

Sheriff Butch gave us both a hard stare. “I get that. We do, too. But this is more than just a pride dispute. The monsters are going after members of my town, and I can’t have that. Crimson has asked me to handle it. If the pride doesn’t start talking,” his gaze moved to Maximus, “then I’ll have to take action.”

What kind of action? Red said, sounding concerned, evidently hearing the whole conversation.

It's okay, I soothed, even though I was out of my depth. I didn't need a map to understand what Butch was saying. I wasn't the alpha of the pride and I gave Maximus the side-eye, seeing that he looked undecided. My only concern today was my beautiful mate. I needed to know he was safe.

"Are either of you going to answer me?"

I forced a smile and glanced at Maximus fully. "The sheriff wants answers, alpha." Please give him some, I need to get back to my mate.

We never used his title, but this was important, and Maximus hesitated before he gave a curt nod.

"I know he does. He should be talking directly to the alpha of the pride. That's me," Maximus said pointedly to the sheriff.

"The alpha of the pride isn't talking, is he?" Sheriff Butch huffed in exasperation. "So I'm speaking to the new alpha of a member of my parcel whose mate was nearly kidnapped, twice. And you both came to me, remember?"

"I did," I confessed, sensing the macho face-off they had going wasn't really going to get us anywhere.

"Sorry, Maxi," I tagged on. "I need to know Amell and the others will be locked up far away from my omega. Red is scared." I hoped he'd forgive me for divulging that information. "And I'm worried there are other monsters out there. I'm scared for my mate and my town." I made sure they understood I meant both prides.

Both men gave me an identical nod, and I breathed out a sigh of relief.

“I’ll handle it from here,” Maximus rumbled. “You take care of Red.”

I wasn’t sure I’d resolved anything, but I’d confessed my fears, told them my mate and my pride needed to be safe. I had one final stop to make before I returned to Red, because I had already organized for the locksmith to go to Red’s home.

Back in the pride house, Leonidis, Drew, and Randy sat at the kitchen table, nursing large cups of coffee. As the three unmated members of the pride, I guessed they were spending more time together.

Randy waved at the coffee pot and I nodded. I was part of this pride too, and I wasn’t going to forget that.

“What are you doing here?” Leonidis asked once I had a cup and took a seat.

“I asked Drew to get something for me.”

“It’s in the yard by the back door,” Drew replied.

I grinned at him. “Thanks.”

“No problem. How’s Red doing?” Before I could even speak, he scowled at me. “I don’t want to know how you’re doing Red. I’ll leave that to Glass and Tim, whose sex singing gymnastics have reached an all-time high.”

“At least Ricky is more discreet,” Randy said, and we all mumbled our agreement.

I took a long swallow of coffee. I didn’t drink much coffee as everyone said I was hyper enough, but after pleasuring my mate, organizing locks and facing the sheriff, I

needed the caffeine hit.

“The only thing weird about Ricky and Burke is the mini bull’s penchant for climbing, thanks to his unborn kidlets,” I said, idly wondering what Red would do when he was pregnant.

I’m not climbing anything, he insisted. I have a fear of heights.

That was a shame. I loved climbing anything and everything.

You’re a goat, I’m rhubarb. We stay closer to the ground.

My mate had a good point.

I felt a sudden wave of fear over our link.

Red? What’s wrong? I banged the cup down on the table, coffee slopping over the side.

Drew scowled at me. “Hey careful, that’s my favorite cup.”

I ignored him, focusing on my mate.

There’s someone at the door. I don’t know who it is. I don’t recognize the scent.

Where are Burke and Tim, aren’t they there with you?

They left just a few minutes ago.

Shit, I’m on my way. Don’t you open the door. Even as I said it, I sprang to my feet, and so did the other three men, looking at me with obvious concern.

“Is Red under attack?” Drew demanded, in a way that suggested he’d already picked up my fear.

“I don’t know,” I confessed, “but there’s a stranger at the door.”

“I’ll drive,” Leonidis said, grabbing the key fob from the hook as he headed towards the door, not waiting for me to answer.

“You don’t have to—”

Drew squeezed my shoulder. “We’re family and now, so is Red. We’re coming. Let’s make sure your mate is safe.”

I took a deep breath, blinking back the tears as we exited the house and piled into the van. I was a lucky goat.

We’re coming, baby.

All I heard was Red’s scared whimper.

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Red

Fear stole my breath and I couldn't get my shaky limbs to move, to get up off the floor where I'd fallen at the loud banging on my front door. The scent of the stranger had done the rest.

I wanted to be brave. I had been brave. But the memories of fighting off the attackers and how they'd taken my brother to a boiling pot were too much to fight past now I was on my own. I needed my mate.

We're coming, baby.

I whimpered and clung to those words, barely able to take my next breath despite how my lungs hurt with the need to fill them with oxygen.

I could hear my clock ticking in the kitchen, and I counted the seconds, hating each and every one when I felt so helpless. Every second felt like an eternity.

Twenty-two.

Twenty-three.

Twenty-four.

Where are you? I cried out, skin crawling like it did when ants sometimes invaded the patch.

Two minutes, baby. I'll be there in two minutes. I'll wrap you in my arms and kiss all your hurts away. No one is going to touch you but me, I swear.

It was hard to cling to the conviction that came through, but I tried and whimpered while listening out for any noise.

Bang. Bang. Bang.

A fist hitting wood made me jump. "I know you're hiding in there! Fucking coward. We should have put your brother in the pan, so you knew what to look forward to!"

Go away. Go away. I don't want you here. The words were all in my head as I screamed them, my throat squeezed so tight I couldn't breathe. Couldn't swallow. Spots of white danced in front of my eyes as I lurched forward, placing my head between my knees.

I can't breathe.

I can't breathe.

Panic clawed at my insides as the words sank in. Who was threatening me? Why me? What had I done to them? The world faded at the edges and my chest burned with the need to allow air into my lungs. My body wasn't listening. It wanted the darkness, but I fought it because what if the monsters came in and took me from my goat?

Gordon. I was sure I wailed it, but nothing was making sense.

Seconds, baby, I'm seconds away. Count with me. Come on, I need you to focus on my voice. I know you can.

He coaxed, cajoled and shouted at me as I fought to do as he wanted. The first breath

did nothing to release the tight band holding my chest hostage. The second one wasn't much better. I was shaking hard enough that my head banged on my knees.

Count, Red. Come on, do it for me.

Three.

Was that loud?

Did he hear me?

I can hear you. I'm at the back of the house. Just count another breath and I'll be there in the shake of a goat's tail.

The sound of the back door unlocking unleashed another breath and then the scent of Gordon surrounded me, and the shaking became epic as the relief at him keeping his word, being here to protect me, rushed through me.

"I got you. I got you," he soothed, kissing my hair as he wrapped his arms around me, his kneecaps pressing into my back. "It's alright. Take another breath. You can do it."

I could, now he was here. I could do anything if he just stayed right next to me.

Drew's voice came from a distance. "Whoever it was at the door, they've gone. I can't see a car. But I can smell they aren't rhubarb. They're also not lion shifters from our old pack. Do you think Amell has gone to another pride for help to capture a rhubarb?"

I didn't care who they were as long as they left me alone. I repeated their threats to Gordon through our link, unable to speak aloud.

“Shush, it’s alright.” Gordon rocked me as much as he could while kneeling behind me, with me glued to the floor. “We’re gonna figure it all out.”

“I’ve called the sheriff, he’s on his way.” This was Leonidis.

“T-thank y-you,” I managed to stutter, feeling dreadful to be caught like this, but unable to do anything about it, so I kept my head where it was.

Leonidis patted my knee, I could smell it was him. “We’ve got your back. All the pride has. We all have our fears. There is no weakness in knowing what they are and seeking support from your friends.”

He sounded so knowledgeable, I managed to raise my head and look at him. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. It might take time, but you’ll control it and learn to live with it. Just be kind to yourself.”

I wasn’t sure I could do that. I didn’t feel I could do anything at the moment.

Gordon pressed a kiss to my temple. “Then I’ll be kind to you until you’re ready to be kind to yourself.”

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Gordon

“You need to pack some clothes,” I said, as firmly as I could. I’d been thinking about this for a couple of hours.

Red had been dozing on my chest as we sat on the couch. Now he raised his head, blinking sleepily at me. “Huh?”

“You need to come with me to the pride house.”

He sat up, running his hands through his hair. “I don’t think I can do that.”

I sucked in a deep breath, expecting him to protest. Now I just had to think how to phrase it to get what I wanted, and what he needed. “You’re my mate, my omega.”

Despite his worry, heat bloomed into his eyes. Red liked the idea of belonging to me. “I know that.”

“Then you’re part of my pride.”

“I know that, too.”

“Being part of my pride means you’re protected by my pride. By Maxi and Apollo and my guys, and Ricky and all your annoying brothers.” I ignored the outraged exclamation from Tim. I’d gotten used to the fact he was always listening in. “You heard what Leonidis said. They’ve got your back, just like mine.”

“What if I put them in danger? I don’t think—”

“Please, I don’t want you to think, my stalk. I just want you to listen to me. We’re gonna pack you some clothes. Drew is going to come with the van and drive us to the pride house and you can hide in my room for the night. The house is always busy. You’ll never be alone . If you need a night buried in the soil, we can guard you.”

I watched a myriad of emotions cross his face. Fear, worry, refusal, hope. He wanted to say yes. He wanted to say no. Red didn’t know what he wanted. But I did. It was time I goated up and acted like an alpha.

“Drew is just waiting for my call. Dinner’s almost ready, Burke’s getting impatient. He’s a bit of a Gordon Ramsey in the kitchen, but he loves feeding people.” I was so proud of my pride. They’d come through for us. “Apollo is even willing to share Glass’s kinky candy.”

I snorted at the growls in my head. From Red’s wide eyes, he heard that too.

“I guess that’s a no, then,” he murmured.

“I can buy you strawberry and cream penis candy if you want,” I said, laughing as he wrinkled up his nose. “No?”

“I’d rather eat strawberries and cream.”

I sucked in a breath as I had a sudden vision of licking a long stripe of cream up Red’s gorgeous body to nibble on the strawberry perched on his nipple. Then I followed a trail of cream to his cock.

“Fuck,” he breathed out. From the sudden floral smell, Red was happy to share my vision.

“Let’s go,” I suggested. “This is one fantasy I want to play out.”

He suddenly looked uncertain. “You don’t think they’ll mind me being there?”

“If they put up with Tim’s caterwauling, they can put up with anyone,” I said, laughing, hoping to break the tension coming from his uncertainty.

Hey!

I shared a smirk with Red at his youngest brother’s protest, then I stood and tugged Red to his feet, being assertive when he needed it. “Come on, we’ll get you packed, and I’ll message Drew.”

Received! Be there in five. That was from Drew.

Hurry up! Dinner is getting cold. Burke had to stick his oar in.

Red sighed heavily. “If I say no, are you going to listen to me?”

I shook my head. “Nope. This is my decision. I’m taking care of my mate in the safest place I know. That, my sweet rhubarb, is with my pride.”

There was a happy emotion rolling from my pride. It wasn’t often I’d talked about anything except sex. I guess it was time.

Our Gordon has grown up, Randy said cheekily.

I was about to threaten them all with the dreaded pan, but I didn’t want to scare my mate.

We were packed and waiting by the door when I heard a beep beep ! I cautiously

peered through the window to see the minivan with Apollo, Maximus, and Leonidis jumping out.

“What the hell are they doing here,” I muttered, flinging open the door.

Maximus looked around and beckoned us out. “Give me the keys. You two get in the van. We came in case there was trouble,” he explained, making sense of why they were all there.

My pride fucking rocked. I was so lucky to belong to them, even if they drove me nuts.

I picked up Red’s pack and wrapped an arm around his shoulders to guide him to the van. Maximus took the keys and shooed us away. I could feel Red shaking against my body, but he didn’t protest.

“Remember, we all have your back,” Maximus said to my mate, who nodded and swallowed hard enough I heard the gulp.

The lions formed a protective barrier to any form of attack as we walked to the van and climbed in. Then Maximus was there, the door slid shut, and we were away. I hung on tight to Red because Drew wasn’t the best driver in the world. Red buried his face in my neck.

I caught Leonidis’s worried glance Red’s way, then he looked at me. “We need to talk,” he mouthed.

I gave a slight nod. We could do that later.

When we entered the pride house, it was chaotic and loud, as usual. I ushered Red to the chair next to the one where I usually sat in the kitchen. Tim sat on the other side

of Red, and Glass sat on the other side of me.

Tim grabbed Red's hand and squeezed it. "Good to have you here," Tim sang, but at less than his usual full volume.

We all shuffled our seats closer so we could sit around the table together while Burke and Ricky served up bowls of pasta, sauce, salad, and hunks of meat for the lions.

I could see Red gazing around the table, then he took a deep breath.

"You're fine," I whispered. "You're safe."

"I am now," he agreed, and for the first time, I believed he meant it.

Dinner was just the same as usual, everyone talking over each other and discussions about the upcoming baby additions to the pride.

"We're going to have to remodel the house to accommodate all the new arrivals," Maximus grumbled.

"We could build a separate house for everyone," Apollo suggested.

Maximus shook his head. "You can live elsewhere, but the pride house is for all of us whenever we need it." He winked at Red, who flushed and nodded.

"It'll be Apollo and Glass's turn next," Drew said cheekily.

However, from how quiet Apollo and Glass were, I had a feeling that if they were expecting a lion cub or rhubarb, they weren't about to let on.

"You're the last people we're going to tell," Glass finally declared, as if sensing the

curiosity coming from the pride.

“You won’t be able to hide it,” Burke pointed out gleefully.

“Not all of us are having cows,” Tim said, leaning against Maximus. He sounded tired.

“You might have a lion cub.” Maximus grinned, projecting that he’d be happy with whatever Tim had.

Glass gave his omega the sweetest smile. “Any baby we have will be a blessing.”

I swallowed hard. I hoped my mate would feel the same way when we had kids. Only Red seemed to be avoiding anyone’s gaze, especially mine.

“What’s for dessert?” I asked, changing the subject.

Burke wagged his eyebrows at me. “Strawberries and cream.”

I looked at my stalk, loving that idea despite the cheeky bull. “Wanna have dessert in my room?”

Red didn’t hesitate and took my hand, looking at me now. “I can’t wait,” he said breathlessly.

Red

Naked and sprawled over Gordon's comfy bed, I rubbed my back against the thick, fleecy cover under me. It was easier to think about sexy time, regardless of the audience we had just beyond Gordon's bedroom door. My head needed a break, and my mate had the best of ideas. The one he was projecting to me as he finished stripping made me pant with anticipation.

"I-I want that," I gasped as he sent an image of him creaming up the length of my dick and then resting a strawberry at the head so he could lick and swallow all the deliciousness from me.

His smile was seven shades of wicked. "I know, sweet thing, and I'm gonna give it to you." He kicked his clothes away, his gaze never leaving me. My skin heated and my dick throbbed at the intensity.

He picked up the bowl of fresh strawberries and a can of whipped cream before kneeling on the bed between my spread thighs. He placed the bowl down next to my hip. The juicy strawberries looked so tempting my mouth watered.

"No, these are my treat," he chastised, clearly picking up everything that was going on inside my head. My dick bucked but before I could protest, the sound of the nozzle squirting cream right up my hard length filled the room.

"Ohhh fuck," I moaned, the cold against my heated flesh both shocking and exhilarating, making my heart knock hard against my ribs. A buzz of desire shot straight to my balls and the base of my spine. My body thrummed with passion.

I groaned at the picture Gordon made as his hot, long tongue ran up the length of my stalk. Warm and cold combined, making my hips jerk with need. Pre-cum thickened the air with each kitten lick Gordon gave to my cock. Cream smeared over Gordon's chin and lips as he teased me, his eyes never leaving mine. His tongue circled the head of my cock, and I became so focused that I never noticed he'd picked up a large strawberry until he squished it between his fingers. The warm sticky juice trickled over my sensitive skin and made me rock up towards the mouth.

"Please," I begged. "P-put me in y-your mouth."

I gasped, groaning when the hand squishing the strawberry smeared the pulp up my length and Gordon opened wide and swallowed me whole until it hit the back of his throat. A sticky finger slid under my balls and traced the juice from my taint to my twitching hole. The touch was light, and the sticky feeling drove me wild as Gordon sucked deep, his throat clasp the head of my stalk.

"Argghhhh," I cried, bucking up.

A choked laugh came from Gordon as he took that wonderful tongue away, leaving his fingers right where they were.

The sight of his hot as fuck body looking a total mess of cream and strawberry pulp left me panting and struggling not to come. He used the back of his hand to swipe at the spit, cream, and strawberry juice around his mouth. I moaned, desperate to lick from his mouth down his body. Sticky and lickable, I wanted him so bad.

"You will have me, but only when I have driven you wild and you can't remember your own name." He moved until our lips were in touching distance and I could smell the sweetness of the cream and strawberries, along with my custard on his breath. His sticky lips brushed mine as his fingertip swirled over my hole, adding pressure but not breaching me. It was maddening and so good with how it awakened all the nerve

endings. They sang a merry tune that Tim could never match, all leading straight to my dick.

“I need you to keep those hips still, my sweet rhubarb,” he reprimanded in a sultry voice as he slowly breached my ass with the sticky finger.

I gasped at the slow drive in and then he held still.

“Can you keep still?”

I nodded, or I thought I did because Gordon's finger moved, and he hit my sweet spot, and I wanted his mouth back on me while he finger fucked me.

His grin made my cock throb. “Let’s see if you can.”

The words had hardly left his lips before they were back around the head of my cock doing wicked things. He sucked, pushing the tip of his tongue into my slit and groaning. The vibration hit all the sweet spots, including the one in my ass he was continually stroking.

I panted, groaned, whimpered and begged, trying real hard not to impale my cock in Gordon’s tonsils.

Please. Please. Please.

Please what, my sweet rhubarb?

Argh.

This? Gordon jabbed into my slit and worked another finger into my slick ass.

Ohhhh.

How about this? He added yet another finger, stretching them wide so I could feel the burn as his probing tongue mined my cum in the best possible way.

My whole body undulated on the bed as sensation after sensation bombarded me, and I didn't know which way was up with how desperate I was to come. One more finger, I wanted the burn. The fullness.

I cried out as Gordon removed his fingers and mouth. Before I could protest, he flipped me onto my belly, dragged me up onto my knees, and drove his tongue right into my willing hole.

“Yes. Yes. Yes,” I moaned deliriously.

He slurped, his tongue going deep, fucking me, but still, I wanted more. I wanted my alpha.

You have me. His hand moved between my legs and he took hold of my stalk, stroking from root to tip, the stickiness on his palm adding delicious friction.

Come on baby, give me that custard! His tongue widened and jabbed me so fucking deep I wanted to scream.

Face planting the mattress, my whole body spasmed and then there was nothing.

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Gordon

Making Red come with my tongue in his ass made me feel I could climb a mountain, stick a rhubarb flag on the top, and sing one of Tim's interminable disco songs. If I had a tail in this form, it would be wagging so hard I'd take off.

What am I talking about? Of course I have a tail.

And it's wagging for you, my mate. I wanna bury it deep inside your glorious ass.

No answer.

"Uh...Red?"

Red was facedown, ass tilted up. I peered around his butt to look at his face. His eyes were closed, and he wore a sated smile that I'd put there. I loved that smile.

Red, honey?

Still nothing.

I chuckled at what I'd achieved. Little old me had got his goat on and my mate had passed out again in the custard patch.

There was no panic this time... or not so much when I reached out to press a finger to his neck to check for a pulse. I really didn't want the pride bursting into our room. Had I locked the door? Not that it would stop an alpha lion or a worried bull... or

Red's brothers.

Most definitely, I needed to keep my thoughts on the down low. I made sure Red was comfortable—and breathing—then lay down beside him and stroked the length of his spine, caressing his soft skin gently until a long time later, his eyelids fluttered open and he blinked dazedly at me.

“I...” Red coughed, back to looking like the color of his stalk. “I guess I passed out again?”

“You did,” I agreed, holding back my smug satisfaction. I was such a goaty god in the sack.

“I think you switched my brain off with your monster tongue,” he mumbled sheepishly.

I didn't know whether to be offended or laugh, but he was totally sated, all his muscles relaxed, all the unhappiness of earlier that had etched his features drained away. I ran my hand down his back again and cupped his tight ass.

Yeah, I could live with a monster tongue when it could make him look this chill. “You leave it switched off, honey,” I crooned. I didn't want to see him come online just yet.

“What about you?”

I looked at my engorged cock, which looked like it was ready for a battle. Selfish? No, that wasn't me, and I snuggled into my stalk. “It can wait until you're ready.”

“You're so good to me.” Red flapped his hand at me. I caught it and held it tight before he smacked me in the face. “I love you, Gordy.”

My heart just melted into a gooey mess at his declaration, and the nickname. I leaned down to brush my lips over his lax mouth and we shared a sticky kiss. “I love you too, my sweet omega.”

My sigh was hard to contain when I saw the worry was back in his eyes.

“Are you sure—”

Placing a finger over his mouth, I considered my answer. “I’m sure about everything when it concerns you, darling.” It was not a lie. I’d spent so long waiting for this moment and now it was here, it all made sense. He was mine, and nothing else mattered.

With considerable effort, Red heaved himself over and wrapped himself around me. I swear my mate was part-rhubarb, part-octopus, neither of us caring that he rubbed his custard all over me.

“We smell like strawberries, cream and custard,” Red muttered into my neck. “We’re gonna stick together like rhubarb and custard candy.”

My thoughts drifted to a certain candy kink-fest we had arranged for Apollo and Glass.

“We could have one of those too,” Red murmured, reading my thoughts easily. “Not the kink, but the candy. I have a sweet tooth.”

With a wide, silly grin at how to please Red, I murmured, “I’ll put it on our sex-to-do list.”

“I like that idea. Gordon and Red, sexing to-do list.”

I chuckled into his neck. “We could sell the idea and make millions!”

I swear I heard an excited shriek in my head from a certain Alpha’s omega, but I ignored it. “OnlyGoats,” I muttered aloud.

“OnlyStalks,” he countered.

‘OnlyGoalks.’ Maybe not that one. It was hard to pronounce.

“OnlyRhoots.”

“OnlyGoots.”

Red burst out laughing, rocking himself against me. “Now you’re just saying goats with a Scottish accent.”

I chuckled along with him. “I sound like my Uncle Angus. He had a deep Scottish accent.”

He kissed me hard. “Could we just have sexy times for you and me? No cameras? And not your Uncle Angus.”

“No cameras, I need you safe.” The warmth that burst through our link made my body heat. “So let’s play pretend that we’re filming ourselves so we can watch it back later and see me bury my cock in your body? Don’t you think I’ve waited long enough,” I said plaintively, pointing at my cock which still waved hopefully at Red, a drop of pre-cum oozing from the slit.

With no hesitation, Red rolled over onto his back.

My grin was back at the sight he made sprawled on the bed. He was a mess, his fuzzy

hairs matted together in drying custard. Our cuddle had produced a custard sandwich and now it was time to add my cream to it.

“Come fuck me, mate,” he begged with hungry eyes.

“Do you need me to prepare you? We have extra cream.”

“Just stick your big, fat dick in me.”

Whoa, that growl from my stalk was all kinds of sexy. It made my dick sit up and take notice. I licked my lips in anticipation.

A glance at the bed and I grabbed a pillow, putting it under his hips. I settled between his thighs, feeling the fuzzy hairs rub against me. The scent of strawberries gave me yet more ideas.

“This time, just us,” he pleaded, catching my thought.

Fuck, he was a temptation. “Just us.” My mate was sweet enough for me.

Red pulled my head down to kiss me fiercely. “When it’s safe, I want you and me in the soil, rhubarb, and goat. Bite me, make me your mate every way a goat can.”

I would make it safe for my stalk to have me anyway he chose. We might still have to have a certain conversation about a buck getting it on. Sometimes a goat got excited, get what I’m saying?

I pressed a kiss to Red’s full mouth, moving to the tip of his jaw, and nibbled up to his earlobe as I pressed inside him until I was flush against his sticky body. His body gave way, his ass clasp tight as we both whimpered, and I held still, letting him adjust.

“Fuck,” he groaned. “Please Gordy, move before my custard spills again and I take another nap.”

My boy needed me to make him mine, and that’s what I was gonna do. “Hold on, my sweetheart. Hold on.”

I pulled back until the head of my cock stretched his hole, feeling it pulse and try to suck me back in. I stayed there until his eyes opened and the fiery need was all I could see.

“Bastard,” he muttered without heat as he shuddered with need.

“You’re welcome,” I growled and thrust in hard enough to make us both cry out. All the need drove me to pound hard into his willing body. I groaned in approval as he took every punishing thrust I gave him, and more besides.

Red was made for me.

Perfect in every way.

I am?

You are.

To make my point, I changed position, and he yelled as I nailed his sweet spot. Sweat trickled down my back. The room filled with the sounds of slapping flesh and the heady scent of rising custard and cream. I wanted to come so badly, my balls aching to empty themselves into my mate, but I wasn’t going to come until he took his pleasure again. He was so close... almost... just there .

Red stiffened under my hands, and he came untouched, his cock spraying me with

custard as I let go, burying deep inside him and filling him with my thick goat cream.

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Red

I swear I'm wearing a permanent blush or else it was stubble burn after several repeat performances demonstrating how much stamina my goat had. If anyone ever had insomnia, I could market my mate as a cure.

Gordon's Sex Tonic: a cure for discerning Gentlemen with Insomnia.

Only I wasn't sharing him, not with anyone... ever.

That's right, my little rhubarb stalk. My goatiness is all yours.

He did sound amused by the sex tonic idea.

No one wants to share his goatiness, Tim pointed out. Although the tunes you sing when he's—

Give over, Tim. Leave Red alone. Glass sounded amused and pissed at the same time.

It was becoming clear I really needed to work on keeping my thoughts to myself.

"Ignore them," Leonidis muttered, rubbing his eyes and cracking his jaw as he walked to the counter where the coffee pot was. "They're just jealous. I didn't think anyone could compete with how loud Tim got." He gave me a cheeky wink as he grabbed a mug. "It seems I was wrong."

"We need to find a store that sells extra, extra, extra powerful sound canceling

headphones. Mine aren't working anymore." Drew didn't so much as pause on his way to the table where I was sitting. When he stopped next to me, he made a coughing noise and then something landed in my lap.

I nearly brushed it off in disgust. What the heck? Has he just spat on me?

Nah. Pick it up and see what it says , Gordon said with excitement.

My mate was in the garden digging us a nice bed, so how did he know what was on my leg?

Pick it up. You'll see.

With more than a little ick factor going on inside me, I reached for what appeared to be a pale pink love heart... sweet! There, in the center of the heart, were the words embracing the stalk.

Now, isn't that just fitting? I'd most definitely like to embrace my stalk. Thanks Drew.

Drew's smile was part-sweet, part-leer. "You're both welcome, even though your acrobatics could turn me into a drama llama. Just saying."

I chuckled, hiding my new blush in the coffee cup that I'd grabbed after Gordon had gone outside with Maximus to figure out which part of their enormous yard out back would be best for my patch to get...

Why stop there?

Stop it. Everyone is looking at me! I exclaimed, because it was true. Those who had come down for breakfast were paying more interest in me.

“Breakfast. I took a deep breath and tried to recover my dignity. “Does anyone want me to make them some eggs? I make a mean vegetable omelet.”

“I won’t say no,” Tim muttered as he came into the kitchen, rubbing his protruding belly. “I need to feed these little tykes, as they are stealing all my energy to sing!”

“Let it continue,” muttered Burke, who was right behind him, his belly much the same as Tim’s, only he wore a top that strained across his bump.

“Is Doc Picker coming by today?” Drew asked as I got up, tucked the love heart into my sweats pocket and went to investigate what vegetables they had to add to the omelet as I listened to the conversation.

For the first time in weeks, I felt like I could breathe, and it didn’t hurt. The constant fear gnawing at me... wasn’t there now. I felt safe. My goat was right, being here surrounded by the noisy pride, it made a difference.

See, I told you. And can you save me some eggs? I’ll need some energy for when you join me in the soil.

Please...

“You two are definitely worse than Tim, Apollo and Burke, rolled into one!” Randy’s giggle sounded strained, and while I whisked the eggs, I watched him shuffle about the kitchen, a furrow digging deep between his brows.

His pink hair was longer than it had been when we’d first met. He brushed it back, the light from the kitchen window behind him making his hair appear like spun cotton candy.

“Who cuts your hair?” I asked, thinking about his animal form, too. Tartie was the

best shearer in these parts, although he wasn't around that much as he had to travel to find work.

"Oh crap, did I mention Tartie offered to give you a shearing?" Ricky, who'd been out the back, asked as he came through the door, covered in soil and little else.

"Mate of mine, I love you all stalky dirty, but could you maybe find something more to cover you than dirt when this lot is around?" Burke grumbled, whipping off his T-shirt and going to Ricky to wrap it around his hips.

"Someone stole my clothes," Ricky murmured, nuzzling into Burke's neck and transferring some of the dirt to Burke's naked chest.

"What about Tartie? Maybe you did, I just can't recall if you mentioned it?" Randy shrugged, appearing intrigued, or that's what I picked up. "I mean, if he's good with the shears, then I'd let him get his hands on me." He wagged his brows. "I could do with a little action even if it's only getting a shearer to fondle my—"

Ricky held up his hand. "Noooo, he's my friend. I don't wanna think about that!"

"We have to think about nothing else but that, when you guys get all... down and dirty!" Randy fired back, giggling. "I think it's only fair to have turn around, if only for a minute."

Ricky muttered under his breath as Burke led him to the door, trailing dirt with them.

"Where are you going?" Randy asked, back to frowning. "I thought you were gonna ask Tartie to shear me?"

"What..." Ricky's gaze narrowed on Randy. "Right now? Can't it wait till I showered off the dirt?"

“Let’s be clear. We can all read how Burke wants to clean you, and it isn’t with water,” Randy pointed out, laughing along with most everyone else.

“Whatever,” Burke muttered, not looking at all bothered.

The whisk flew out of the bowl at the peel of the doorbell.

Everyone in the room looked at me as the whisk bounced on the counter, splattering egg everywhere, and landed on the floor next to my sneakers. Ears buzzing from sudden fear, it took a second to hear Tim. “It’s Doc. You’re fine, Red. You’re safe. Breathe,”

The back door burst open and Gordon rushed in, wielding a pitchfork. Dirty and sweaty from digging, his eyes were fierce and his alpha power filled the room.

Even through the fear, a shiver of delight ran through me.

Oh my, look at my goat!

Gordon

“What happened? Who’s at the door?” I demanded, dropping the pitchfork by the door, then striding over to Red to haul him into my arms. He shook, even as I felt a mixture of fear and lust shoot through him. My mate was meant to be safe here, not scared by random visitors.

Maximus, who’d rushed in after me, patted my arm. “Stand down, Gordon. Your mate is safe here. We’ll protect him.”

I gave him a tight smile. I knew that, but it was hard not to react to Red’s constant fight-or-flight mode. He wanted to run, and I needed to fight. But then our pride hustled around us, like a barrier against the outside world, and I breathed easier.

Red forced a smile and held onto my arms. “I’m sorry. It was instinctual. It’s hard not to react to something I don’t expect, but I do feel safe with your pride and my brothers.”

I held him tight to my heart, running my hand down his spine. We took a moment to breathe in unison and calm our racing hearts.

“Is everything all right?” Doc Picker, dressed in scruffy jeans and a plaid button-down, asked from the doorway, Burke right behind him.

“I just panicked at the doorbell,” Red admitted awkwardly. “I panic at everything.”

Doc Picker hummed as if he were processing that, his gaze moving around the

occupants of the room. “Understandable. Why don’t we talk after I’ve visited with the papas and the babies?”

I felt Red’s reluctance, but I whispered, “He’s almost pride now. The babies call him Uncle Doc. He could help.”

Red snorted out a laugh. “You’re saying if unborn rhubarb and a calf can trust him, so should I?”

“Yes,” I agreed, not seeing what the issue was. The little tykes might not have arrived yet, but they had revealed their cheeky personalities for sure.

“The same babies that leave their daddy stranded up trees and poles without any clue how he got there. You want me to trust their judgment?”

“He has a point,” Burke said, disguising his chuckle behind a hand.

Ricky wrinkled his nose. “Yeah, maybe using the babies wasn’t the best frame of reference for the doc.”

Doc Picker chuckled, wearing an amused look as he watched our interaction with interest. “I’ve had worse. Red, was it you making breakfast?”

Red nodded. “Omelets.”

“Why don’t you finish the omelets first? I’d love one too if there are enough eggs? Do you have any bell peppers?”

I was about to protest that one of the others could take over when I caught Doc giving me a pointed stare and I got it. He wanted Red to be focused on something else. I had the perfect distraction, but we couldn’t get down and dirty in the kitchen. I guess fun

times would have to wait until later.

Is the bed finished? Red asked, sounding like he was looking for an escape route.

Five minutes and it's done.

Of course Tim was listening in. Finish it off and we'll help Red.

I scowled at his order and held Red even closer. Shouldn't I be the one with my mate, especially when he melted against me like this? I never wanted to let him go, and it worsened when he got distressed.

Someone slapped me on the back. "Come on, Gordon. Let's get this finished."

Great, now my alpha was joining in.

Red reached to kiss me. "My brothers want some stalk time with me. I'll make you breakfast. We can share an omelet before I talk to Doc."

The forced gaiety in his voice meant I might argue with my pride, but not my mate.

If you need me, just call. I'll be here in two shakes of a goat's tail.

Yes, I know that's not what the saying was, but I'm a goat in love with a rhubarb, so cut me some slack.

"How did I get so lucky?" he whispered against my lips.

"I'm the lucky one," I assured him.

Ignoring everyone, I cupped the back of his head and pulled him in for a kiss,

tangling our tongues together for a brief but thorough exploration of his tonsils. When I pulled back and licked my lips, I relished his taste, making sure he knew just how much I loved it.

It's time my goat explores your rhubarb.

"Later," he promised, giving my ass a pat.

I headed for the kitchen door, retrieving my pitchfork, aware of Red's eyes on my butt. I may have added a sway of my hips just for his benefit. Did I care that someone snickered? Hell no. This was just for my mate. He loved my ass.

Tease. But he gave a sweet chuckle.

Ya know it.

I couldn't wipe the grin off my face as I headed into the yard.

Maximus turned to me as we reached the newly turned soil. "It's not easy, loving a stalk. But it's worth it."

As Maximus had spent the first half of their wooing running away from Tim, thereby subjecting the whole town to a frantic disco soundtrack until he gave in, I considered it a mature thing not to laugh in my alpha's face.

Okay, I'm not mature.

The laughter came in big belly rumbles until he scowled at me, then I laughed harder still, head down, hands on my thighs, tears rolling down my cheeks.

"What's so funny?" he grouched with a touch of amusement he couldn't hide.

“You hafta be joking. You ran away from Tim.”

“I didn’t know what to expect,” he snapped, all lion teeth. “I gave you and the others the chance to know what to expect!”

I sobered a little because he was right. Once Tim came into our lives, we started to find our mates. I had no doubt Randy, Drew, and Leonidis would, too. “What would have happened to us if we hadn’t found each other and moved into Valentine Growville?”

Maximus seemed to give that some serious consideration as his brow furrowed and he leaned on his pitchfork. “I think we’d have ended up here whatever happened. The Fates arranged this. We are fated to be together, as a pride and with our mates.”

I slammed my fork into the soil as I thought about it. There were so many variables that could have stopped us from getting together, and yet here we were. Town and pride, and potato. I couldn’t forget Doc, as he seemed to be planning on sticking around. Maybe he had a rhubarb mate, too?

It was meant to be, Red murmured, cutting off my train of thought.

A huge grin widened as I worked my fork into the soil. You bet your rhubarby ass, it was.

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Red

“So, Red, do you want me to teach you some techniques?”

I resisted frowning at Doc. I knew he meant well. We’d been in the living area, with the door shut, talking for the last hour. He was right. It helped to just talk about everything. How weak it made me feel to be paralyzed by fear. Yes, being here helped me, but as was proven this morning, it didn’t take much to get me freaking out.

Doc had insisted I talk without an audience and that included my mate. Gordon had given in to Doc’s gentle nudging to get him out the door so I could speak freely. Not that anyone ever had alone time with Tim, who was for sure trying to listen in. He was the most persistent rhubarb in town for earwigging on our thoughts. Yet, I’d done my best to voice my concerns rather than project them to Tim and Gordon, or anyone else who thought they’d like to know what went on in my head.

“I do the breathing techniques. I also try tensing and releasing my muscles, thinking about them in groups. Gordon helps to calm me.” I kept it to myself how Gordon’s tongue in my ass could get my brain to switch right off. Doc definitely didn’t need to know that. It could be my go to?

I stifled a chuckle when I let that slip to Gordon, who moaned and tsked but kept his thoughts to himself.

“What about standing and dancing, shaking your arms for a minute or two?”

“Dancing?” Was he for real? I was anxious enough without getting caught looking crazy, dancing about like a bee was attacking me. “I’m not sure dancing is going to help. I’m not like Ricky, I don’t have a fluid move in me. You see, I’m more of a chair dancer. You know. Head bobbing and toe tapping.”

Doc’s lips quivered in amusement as he got up. “I don’t mean disco dancing. We’ll leave that to Tim or Ricky.” He held out his hand. “Come here and I’ll show you.”

I got up reluctantly, my sneakers dragging over the rug as I shuffled over to stand next to him.

“Your system, when in fight-or-flight mode, produces extra cortisol and heightens everything inside your body, causing the anxiety you feel.” He lifted his arms and moved them in loose motions, then started to dance about. “By giving your body the opportunity to release the pent-up emotions through movement, it enables your system to regulate itself. The body is an amazing thing.” He smiled, uncaring just how ridiculous he looked right then. “Give it a go. What harm can it do?”

None, I suppose. I already looked silly with my overreactions. I took a breath and swung out my arms, shut my eyes and hummed a song of Tim’s I liked, though I would never openly confess that to him. He’d never let me forget it.

“That’s it, shake it off.”

Getting into it, I shook my ass and bobbed my head, continuing to flap my arms around. Minutes later, a little sweaty and grinning, I stared wide eyed at Doc.

“Wow.” I felt... good.

“We might look like a daft potato and rhubarb, but who cares when it makes you feel good?”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Feeling calmer versus looking ridiculous, there was no competition!

When the sound of the doorbell came a moment later, did I freak out? I kid you not, I glanced at the door and took a deep, cleansing breath. I was a dancing rhubarb miracle.

I didn’t even flinch when the door burst open and Gordon charged in, demanding, “What happened? Your brain glitched!”

Gordon glared at Doc as he came and tugged me into his side. A space made just for me.

“I am a disco dancing diva after all,” I declared, giggling. “And it makes my brain behave.” I nodded at Doc. “Thank you.”

“It just needs to be something you do daily to start your day and maybe when you feel the anxiety creeping up on you. Pay attention to your body and it will tell you when you need to dance it off.”

“Dance it off?” Gordon glanced between us. “Dance what off?”

Has he done some weird potato mojo on you?

“It’s not a weird potato mojo. I’ll explain later.” I glanced at the open door, hearing an excited squeal and an alarmed bleat. “Who was at the door?”

Gordon didn’t lose the adorable wrinkle at the top of his nose. “Are you changing the topic?” We’ll get back to this! “It’s Tartie. Ricky rang him and he was home so he said he’d come by.”

“Why is Randy bleating?”

“Who knows, maybe he’s excited to get sheared. I think we shouldn’t worry about that right now. I’ve finished our patch, and I think it’s time I got my goat on with your rhubarb, don’t you?”

My thoughts fled at the giddiness I felt coming from him.

“And I think my work is done here,” Doc muttered, exiting the door fast enough to be a blur.

I squeezed Gordon’s side, giving him what I hoped was a sexy grin. “I’ve limbered up.” I wiggled my ass. “So I’m ready for whatever you got!”

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Gordon

I shivered at the delectable sight of my mate's ass wiggling just for me. Oh yeah, it was time for this goat and rhubarb to get it on. My human tail wiggled and bobbed in the front of my sweats in anticipation.

"Come on," I urged him, desperate to take him to the fresh bed of soil I'd made just for him.

Just for us, baby, Red corrected. We'll share it together.

Together.

I ran my tongue along my bottom lip in anticipation of what was coming. Although first we had to... swallowing hard—nervous about what I was about to say—I took one of his hands. I didn't want to squash his stalk-on, but I had to have this conversation with him before we went outside.

"Red, it's you and me, okay, but the pride will make sure we're safe outside. Maxi has promised the three lions will patrol the perimeter of the house. Away from us," I added hastily, in case he thought they'd be watching. "And Drew too. He's scarier than the lions," I confessed, knowing Drew's llama would viciously attack and bite anyone that threatened to harm those he loved. Their slightly more aggressive nature meant llama shifters could be easily trained as guards, in either form.

Panic crept around the edges of his lust, and I grabbed his hands tight. "You know I've got horns, right?"

A slow smile spread across Red's sweet face, and I felt the fear recede. "You're telling me you've got horns, and you know how to use them?"

"Oh yeah, sweetheart. I know exactly what to do with them." I almost purred. "Pain for the monsters and only pleasure for my gorgeous mate."

The shiver he gave was very rewarding.

"You'd better show me the pleasure then," he said in a sexy whisper. "I want your body."

How could I resist a comment like that? I grabbed his hand and turned to the door, then stopped.

"Gordy, what now?" he whined impatiently. "You, me, soil, sexy horns stroking my stalk. Why aren't we there?"

I bit my lip, turning to face him. "There's something I haven't mentioned about goat mating."

He patted my cheek. "It's okay, I did some research. I know about the pee thing."

I breathed out a sigh of relief. He didn't seem too disgusted. "I can't always control it. It's okay in my human form, but bucks get a little excited, you know... in the moment?"

There was a reason I had a little space of my own at the far end of the yard no one knew about except Maximus. I could be excited and not freak anyone out.

"I know. Now, will you get a wiggle on?" There was a touch more impatience in his voice. "I want to see my new bed."

That, I could do. I grabbed Red's hand and rushed him through the house, ignoring the snickers and "go get him, Gordon!" from Tim. I managed a quick nod at Tartie, who stood close to Randy. Real close!

But I had other things to think about right now.

"I didn't buy the headphones yet," Drew grumbled as we headed out the door.

I closed the door on his complaints, only one thought in my head. Red, as his rhubarb, and me getting all goaty.

Clothes flew off, landing on bushes and branches before we'd gone halfway through the yard. I wanted to nibble on his gorgeous nipples, just for a taste, but the second I pointed out the new bed, he threw off his boxers and jumped into the soil, shifting to his stalk.

I felt rather than heard the 'ahhhh' as he buried his roots in the dirt.

Quickly dropping to my haunches next to him, I asked, Would you prefer to have a few hours' rhubarb time? I could guard you or sleep with you.

Don't be stupid. Get your goat on, mate. I need to be rammed by my buck.

Heart slamming against my ribs, I grinned stupidly at my stalk.

Well, that was clear enough.

I stripped off, aware of my rhubarb's attention on me the whole time. When I shoved down my jeans and briefs, Red sighed in my head.

My shift was fast, and I joined my mate in the bed, gently gathering Red against my long coat. He ran his fuzzies along my horns before he settled.

Fucking gorgeous, alpha mine. Those horns are making me horn-y.

Likewise, you're the best-looking stalk in the town.

I confess, I was nervous. I wasn't entirely sure of the logistics. Goat and rhubarb, where did my stalk go? But an embarrassing conversation with my alpha convinced me when mates were in the zone, it would all work. Maximus had told me it had to happen to avoid my mate's wilt and ending up in the pan.

How it hadn't happened before now, who knew, but I was ready. Desperate to feel my mate all over, I licked Red from roots to leaves, feeling the fuzzy hairs caress my long tongue. He squealed in excitement, wriggling so hard I had to hold his stalk between my front hooves so he didn't go flying. When I repeated the action, his groan sent a thrill through me. Bending my head, I traced the tip of my horn down his stalk, feeling a buzz around my tail.

He became still. So still, I started to second guess myself and I reached out for our connection, worried he was scared of my horns. But all I got was the same sense when I tongue fucked him. He was blissing.

Licking his fuzzies the other way, I got a full stalk shudder, confirming fear was the last thing he felt. I alternated between licking him, then teasing him with my horns, sensitizing him over and over. My mouth was alight to every sensation, every taste explosion from his fuzzy delight. Fuck, he was all rhubarb and delectable custard.

The end of my horn became directly connected to my leaking dick, I fucking swear it, with how it throbbed, bobbed and leaked.

Stalk.

Mouth.

Horn.

Dick.

And my mate on repeat in my head.

Oh my goat.

O.M.G.

Great Rhu.

Oh my goat.

More!

More!

Oh my goat!

O.M.G. that again, he gasped breathlessly.

Red seemed fixated on moaning words between the horns and my tongue. The three words he used most I was more than happy with.

O.M.G.

That's right, my little stalk. I am the O.M.G.

I nibbled his stalk, needing more tart rhubarb, then deep throated him, careful not to catch him with my teeth. The scream in my head shot straight to my dick as he flooded my mouth with sweet custard, still thrusting and giving me a fresh creamy

mouthful of his cum. I held him in my mouth and rode the aftershocks as Red rolled around on my tongue through his climax.

I hadn't intended to make him come so soon. No, I'd planned to stretch this out for hours. But my stalk had other ideas.

Red wiggled in my mouth so I got closer to the ground so I could place him in the soil. Before I could move back, his stalky body twisted, and his leaves brushed my cheek. So flexible, his stalk landed on my neck and fuzzies dug deep.

Goaty gods, he was biting me.

He bit me.

I sure did. Another twist and he turned, and I saw his rhubarb asshole winking at me. Your turn!

Oh. My. Goat.

Maximus was right. It just happened. Magic or not, I didn't care. My dick leaked in anticipation of plunging deep into my stalk. Red, who panted in my head, was just as ready for me.

One goaty deep breath, riding the high of his mixed scent, and I plunged deep into his tight hole, burying myself fur deep into him, and the sounds in my head made me a rutting goat.

The words made little sense as he groaned and moaned about goats, flowers and love... and love . He told me he loved me with every thrust into his tight rhubarb.

He probably disturbed the whole town with his out of control, wild thoughts. Did I care? No. I wanted them to know how happy I made my omega.

I love you .

Not 'I love you, too'. No qualifier. Just... I love you.

It was that thought which sent me over the edge, hips frantically pumping as I filled him up with my juicy cream.

Bite me! Red whispered as cum ran out of his stalk, down his length, and into his leaves.

Coming forward, I nibbled just under his leaves, then bit true, getting a mouth full of juicy, tart rhubarb. His stalk tightened around me and more cum trickled out.

So damn tasty.

More.

In a minute or three, maybe more, my mate. I chuckled ruefully, needing time to recover even if Red was up for more. But who could blame him, I was O.M.G.

If you give me ten . I wasn't ready to shift, not yet. Licking my stalk clean, I moved him until he was in a clean patch of soil, getting a contented sigh. We can both have a snooze, then have another round or two, okay?

His response was a snore, and I chuckled and fell asleep, curled around Red buried in the soil, knowing we were safe because our pride protected us. That was all we needed.