



# Rhubarb 2 Go (The Rhubarb Effect)

**Author:** *JP Sayle, Sue Brown*

**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** A clueless omega and an oblivious beta dance around their fated attraction. Will they figure it out before the pride's past catches up with them?

Life in Valentine Growville is more exciting than Burke, a mini bull, expects when he comes face to face with Ricky. Now he's on a mission, and he wants to entice Ricky with his pole climbing skills—only he's a bull.

Ricky is hot and bothered by Burke, but only has experience with 'rhubarbs'. He uses his pole dancing skills to entice his fluffy eared mate. Now he has Burke where he wants him, but the fun is only just beginning as a stalk and a bull figure out their own mating ritual.

However, danger continues to stalk the town. Are the monsters roaring up the wrong pole?

Rhubarb 2 Go — book two of seven The Rhubarb Effect, where you'll forever imagine a pole dancing bull. Due to the continuing storyline, the authors recommend these books should be read in order.

**Total Pages (Source):** 19

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

The music didn't hold my attention the way it normally did, as my head was full of... balls.

Enormous balls.

Soft balls.

Bull's balls.

Was there something wrong with me?

Dismounting the pole went somewhat awry, and I ended up attempting to do the splits. It wasn't that I couldn't do them easily, it's just that doing them wasn't part of this routine.

Was I coming down with some sort of rhubarb ailment that no one had told me about? I felt my sweaty brow and went cross-eyed, trying to see if I was more flushed than normal.

All I did was make everything look weird and give me two poles. The one I reached for disappeared and I hit air. Scowling, I considered that maybe my alpha, Crimson, who had waved me off when I'd asked about some unknown illness like I was being silly, could have been wrong. Nothing affected my ability to twirl around my pole, yet here I was, out of time to the beat of the music and unable to swing the rhubarb if my life depended upon it. All because of...

I heaved a sigh. Beautiful balls.

“What’s with you this afternoon, Ricky? I could do a better job myself swingin’ ‘bout that stick,” Dom called from his seat at the bar counter where he, as far as I could tell, lived. The stalk was one of the biggest in town and was as graceful as a baby elephant. Thoughts of him doing better than me... well, that was just plain scary.

“Stick?” I sighed, offended for my pole and stroking a hand down the shiny metal. “This is not a stick, as well you know. This is the finest dancing pole money can buy.” I should know, I’d paid for it.

Dom was the tightest rhubarb in town, even though he was the closest thing I had to family, except for Mom. He’d agreed to let me dance in the hottest club in town, ‘Rhurbarella’. Okay, it was the only club in town, but when I found a TV programme with these dancers doing all sorts of magical things with a pole, I wanted to try, and he’d eventually agreed, as long as I paid for it.

It turned out, I was pretty good at pole dancing because I was really bendy in both forms.

Just not today. Today I was more like a stalk in the mud.

“Stick... pole...” he coughed, looking at me through thick rimmed specs, “you suck.”

“Thanks!”

“Just telling it how it is.” He kicked at the seat next to him.

I got the hint and walked over to him, swiping my arm over my sweaty face, and plonked my skinny ass on the seat. I met his stare, wondering if it was concern I could see for me, or more likely about what me falling on my ass would do for

business. “Do you need to tell me quite so bluntly?”

Dom was not known for his diplomacy, yet this was worse than normal for him.

Did I really suck that badly?

Oh Great Rhu, I sucked!

See, Crimson was wrong, something clearly wasn't right. Me and my pole never failed to make a crowd holler for more.

He patted my sweat soaked T-shirt clinging to my shoulder, then looked at his hand, his lips curling in distaste before he rubbed it on his pant leg. “Yep. You been working here, what, four years?” I nodded. “I ain't ever seen you looking like you're off the rhubarb.”

I sniffed, hiccuped, and attempted to stifle a sob. “I...” I sagged. “You're right... I don't know what happened. I was fine as rhubarb until the other day... then... it's all gone to rhubarb in a handcart.” I ran my shaking hands over my face, wondering how to mention my new obsession, or if I even should.

“What day?” His bushy brows merged, making him look like he'd leafed out. “Talk it through, maybe that will pinpoint when things went wrong.” Dom gave me an encouraging smile. At least, it could have been a smile, but it was hard to tell when he was toothless and more gum than lips.

“It was the day that Tim went all limp and I had to carry him to Crimson, then go find his lion.” When he frowned at me, I continued on. “You know, the day the lion flashed the town?”

“Yep. Yep, I heard he put on quite the show...”

I blushed, recalling exactly what kind of show he'd put on, and I had to say it was impressive. "It was. Anyway, his pride"—I rubbed at my chest—"they gave chase. Or that's what Tim said they were. And I met Burke. He's a small brown bull with big..." I coughed and tried not to focus on the size of Burke's balls, but it was hard when I got the oddest of urges...

"Why you blushin' like that?" Dom's voice penetrated past what I'd become obsessed with over the last couple of days.

Twirl around the pole, think about Burke's balls...

Dance to the beat, while executing a standing split, think about Burke's balls...

Shimmy my way up the pole, think about Burke's balls...

Ohhhh...

"I... Burke..." How was I supposed to say that I'm ball obsessed? Maybe I really was sick after all... ball sick?

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

I've got it. Yes, I can do this. I'll show Ricky just how limber I am. I can pole dance! I am king of the pole!

I hung on tighter as I wobbled a bit. No, I've got it. Swing around gracefully, one arm out, and—

Smack!

Stars tangoed in my eyes as I crashed into the rusty metal pole I'd erected in the garden. Ouch! My nose smacked into the pole and I dropped like a stone, landing on my back in the dirt, sprawled out like a starfish.

Ouch!

I hurt from my nose to my balls. Who said pole dancing was easy? The guy on YouTube, that's who! Lying liar. Pole dancing for beginners. It was laughable, or it would be if parts of me that shouldn't be hurting definitely were.

"Maximus, Apollo. Quick! Come here!"

Could this day get any better? Now I was going to get an audience, all because of Tim.

"What's happened, Tim?" Maximus called from somewhere. I didn't know where, I didn't care. I just wanted them to leave me alone.

“Burke is unconscious! He’s bleeding.”

I’m not unconscious, Tim. I just wish I was so no one could witness my shame.

And did my alpha’s mate have to scream by my ear? It was sweet how concerned he was, but could he dial it down a notch? Then I could just take a nap and pretend like life was a bunch of rhubarb.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Maximus growled from somewhere above me.

Someone nudged me with their sneakered foot. I opened my eyes and winced as the sunlight and my headache collided, making me want to toss my cookies.

“Sleeping,” I mumbled, because wasn’t it damn obvious?

“In the dirt?” Maximus asked, sounding disbelieving.

“It works for your mate,” I fired back, trying to deflect from the situation they were all making worse by staring. I could feel their pity.

“He’s a rhubarb,” Maximus pointed out. “You’re a bull. What the lion were you doing on that pole?”

“Your nose is bleeding,” Tim added helpfully, bending down to poke at my nose, making it throb worse.

“Ow! Just leave me to die,” I begged, closing my eyes again.

“Come on, teeny-tiny cow,” Maximus said, hauling me up and throwing me onto my feet, grinning.

Blood spattered across the dirt. My stomach lurched, and I had to practice deep breathing for a moment. I glared at Maximus for repeating Ricky's words, even knowing it was pointless. I am a tiny bull. Maximum is an alpha lion. And I would always have a build like hairy LEGO bricks stacked together. Short and square with fluff around the ears, bovine or human. The only big things about me were my balls.

Wait! Why did I think about my balls? I had balls. I am a damn bull. But I didn't think about them all the time. Just the times they were blue. Which, I had to admit, was pretty much all the time. I sighed heavily, feeling their weight.

In my last herd, I was the bull who sniffed out the ladies in heat. That was my job. Did I ever get any action? Eck to the hell, no. And what was worse about that job? I am gay! I wanted action with the bulls. Yeah, that didn't happen either. They all said I smelled like rhubarb and that was weird. What was wrong with that? It's better than smelling like cow shit, right?

Joining Maximus's pride hadn't helped with the blue balls, but at least I was with other gay guys who didn't fit in. We were a true herd, and I loved them all. Even when they were giving me those pitying looks. Like right now.

"He's bleeding into my soil," Tim whispered to his mate. "Shove him near the roses. He can fertilize them."

I held back what I wanted to say. It just wasn't worth facing the alpha's anger. But then Maximus turned and guided me into the house, his touch gentle. I swallowed hard, my swollen eyes stinging. My previous alpha never showed kindness like Maximus did.

"Drew!" Maximus bellowed.

I smacked my ear, wincing at the volume. He was so loud!



Maximus ignored me. Had falling done something to my hearing?

Okay, I was being dramatic, but my nose and balls still hurt.

The llama appeared in the kitchen doorway. “What’s wrong? Burke, did you play on that pole again?” He tutted at me like I was a two-year-old who didn’t listen to reason. “I told you, you’re a bull, not a rhubarb. You ought to get Ricky to teach you. Come here, I’ll clean you up.”

I submitted to my nose being wiped, poked, and prodded. Drew tried to be gentle, but seriously, it throbbed exactly like a nose hitting metal would.

“You’ve a broken nose, but shifting for a while will heal it,” Drew said, patting my shoulder.

“I’ll shift later,” I muttered, going cross-eyed to see if my nose was now wonky.

Every time I shifted, I got all horny again. And then I thought of Ricky. He was gorgeous. All lithe and limber, an excited look in his dark eyes that went straight to my dick. He was all I thought about these days. Me wrapped around his tight muscled body. Him pressing inside me—balls to bull. I sighed at the wave of heat coursing through me that had nothing to do with pole dancing.

“Stop that!” Drew glared at me. “It’s bad enough with our alpha broadcasting what’s going on in his head night and day. I don’t need a running commentary about your sex life, too.”

“I don’t have a sex life,” I muttered, disheartened.

“Not yet. Because you haven’t gotten off your ass and found your ma—”

Maximus coughed loudly. Drew scowled and spat out a yellow love heart with purple writing. I picked it up.

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I waved it at him. “What does this mean?”

“Work it out for yourself,” he snapped, and vanished with the bowl of bloodied tissues.

I turned the love heart over and over. Nope, no clue. I turned to ask Maximus, but he had vanished with Tim.

On my own, again. I groaned and buried my head in my arms on the kitchen counter.

“Wanna talk about him, brother?” Apollo came and stood beside me and poked me in the ribs...painfully.

I raised my head to stare at the second-in-command of the weird pride I was part of. “Him? Who him?”

Apollo stared at me. “Uh, Ricky. You know, the skinny stalk from town.”

“I know who Ricky is,” I snapped back in confusion.

“Then why did you ask? Wait, I don’t care. Why are you being a broody bull in here? Is it your nose? Did you know you’ve got two black eyes now?”

“I need to shift,” I muttered, “and I’m not brooding.”

“Uh-huh.” Apollo didn’t hide his skepticism.

“He doesn’t like me.” Now why did that slip out?

Apollo slung his arm around my shoulder and squeezed me hard. “Are you sure about that, Burkie? He didn’t run away from you, and you were behaving like a crazy bull.”

“Don’t call me that. He hasn’t called.” On a scale of one to pathetic, I was right up there at eleven.

Anyway, why would he call me? I was just the idiot raving about my jacket and forgetting all about personal space.

“Have you called him?”

“Uh...no.” I scowled at Apollo, even though it hurt. I didn’t need him to be logical.

“Why not?”

“Because I’m an omega. I’m not supposed to do the running.”

Apollo’s snort was long and loud. “Have you met Tim? You know him? Our alpha’s omega? The one who serenaded us for days and days?”

“I want someone to woo me,” I muttered uncomfortably.

I buried my head in my arms so I wouldn’t have to meet Apollo’s pitying gaze. I’d just admitted my deepest desire. I was an omega, and I wanted to be the one who was wooed.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

It was useless, I wasn't getting anywhere with my pole and Dom had all but pushed me out the door, telling me to get my act together. So here I was, an aimless rhubarb wandering the streets.

Thoughts of going to see Crimson again, to talk through my fascination with Burke's balls, could wait. Talking to a female about balls... yep, that would get me seven shades of rhubarb embarrassed.

"Look at you, acting all wilted rhubarb. What's with ya?" Red appeared from nowhere, making me blink twice just in case the ball situation was affecting my eyes now, too.

He was my best friend from the patch and a beta rhubarb like me. We shared everything. "I'm ball obsessed," I answered before I could get my head and lips in sync.

In the process of slinging his arm around my shoulder, it hung mid-air like he was considering waving at someone. "Ball obsessed?" he choked out and reddened. "You mean like soccer? Baseball? Basketball? Those kinds of balls, right?"

I shook my head morosely. "I wish." I looked him in the eye. "You know the new pride, the one Twirlie's mate is part of?"

"He's my brother," he answered, like that explained everything and I was being silly.

“Yeah, well... have you met the others in the pride?”

Red’s lips quivered. “What, besides the flasher?”

It took a moment, and I grinned. “Yep, besides Twirlie’s mate.”

“Actually, no. It’s been harvesting time and Crimson has been keeping me busy. And with how bad Twirlie had it for his mate, I decided I didn’t need to pay a visit to their house and get the full ‘Maxi and Twirlie naked together effect’. It’s bad enough,”—he tapped the side of his head—“hearing him serenade Maximus. So what’s this gotta do with balls?” His nose wrinkled as he finally plonked his arm on my shoulder.

“In their pride they have a miniature bull called Burke...” I was back to looking and feeling like seven shades of rhubarb with how my head was full of certain body parts belonging to Burke, when Red nodded encouragingly. “He has enormous balls.”

“Erm... right... yeah... I’m not sure what you want me to say to that?” Red became the color he was when in his stalk form.

I scratched my hot cheek. In for a cent, in for a dollar of rhubarb. “I wanna do stuff.” That sounded so much better in my head.

“Do stuff,” he squeaked in alarm.

“You know, the sexy stuff.” To explain exactly what sexy stuff... I’d need a stiff rhubarb or two for that.

“To the Great Rhu, he’s your mate!”

“Huh?” How had me wanting to touch Burke’s balls gone to being mates? “What?”

How?” My little rhubarb heart did a mad flutter, the same way it did when Burke had wanted to sniff me.

“Ricky, when have you ever become ‘obsessed’, your words, by someone’s balls? It’s just like Twirlie. He got obsessed the minute he met Maximus. You got rhubarbed by the Great Rhu.”

“I did...” Feeling faint, I swayed right into Red’s body and would have hit the pavement if not for him grabbing me under one arm.

“That pride must be having a free for all on mating passes. Maybe they’ll have one for Glass and change his grumpy ass into a stalk of rhubarb sunshine.” Red laughed hard enough it felt like he was trying to whisk me up in a bowl.

Everyone in town knew his older alpha brother for his grumpiness. I was positive not even a lion as pretty as Apollo could make Glass less grumpy.

I shook off the thought when Red didn’t stop laughing, standing on my own two feet because no one liked to be whisked into a rhubarb custard pudding. “Can we get back to me,” I huffed in frustration as my brain and Burke’s ball saga pieced together. I had... a mate with enormous balls!

I’d won the ball lottery!

“Why are you grinning at me like that? It’s kind of creepy with all your teeth on show.” Red eyed me, finally having stopped his merriment at thoughts of Glass finding a mate.

“Burke’s my mate.”

“I thought we’d established that?”

The grin wasn't wanting to leave my face, even at Red's sarcastic comment. Nothing was going to dull my rhubarb shine. "I need to go and see him right now."

Red grabbed my arm, a frown appearing, making his forehead look like tilled earth. "What are you planning on doing?"

"What do you mean 'planning'? I'm gonna go and announce we're mates and then get"—blushing harder than a rhubarb caught with his stalk out—"a hold of those balls," I murmured, my palms tingling better than when I slid down my pole.

"No, you can't do that," he exclaimed. "Haven't you seen any of those romancing movies? Even Twirlie romanced his mate."

"He sang to him through their mate connection. You've heard me, I can't sing for rhubarb! And I haven't heard Burke in my head." I shuddered. "Oh... maybe you're wrong."

I wilted at the thought.

"You're mates. I've known you your whole life. An interest—obsession about balls proves it to me. I'd bet my last parcel of rhubarb on it." He sighed loudly when I gave him a skeptical look. "Maybe try concentrating real hard."

My eyes crossed as I tried. Nope... just me in there! "It's not workin'!"

"Don't stress. Crimson, remember, she explained, mating for us is different. Not one rhubarb is the same as another."

My smile was back. "That's right." Then it fell right off my face. "How am I supposed to win my mate's heart when I don't know how to romance anyone?"

“Who is the finest pole dancer in the world?”

I eyed him. “Me?” I would not play down the fact that I was a fantastic pole dancer... when I wasn’t thinking about a certain bull’s balls.

“Yep. Dance your way into his...” he coughed, “balls!”

I could do that... I think?



## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

The trouble with me is, I overthink everything. Like everything. Bovines were supposed to be simple creatures. Even the shifters. I'd missed that memo. Which was why I was in the middle of a meltdown over a rhubarb stalk.

I had made an idiot of myself in front of Apollo. I knew that. What bull wanted to be wooed like a sweet cow? I needed to learn to keep my mouth shut in future. But, strangely, he didn't give me grief for it. He just patted my back until I told him to get off me and I headed for the door. Then I turned back, hugged Apollo without a word for being so kind, and left the kitchen. I'd never been in a herd like this one.

Now I needed to do something physical, and that did not mean making an idiot of myself on the pole. I sighed and grumbled about my misfortune. I needed lessons from an expert before I tried to show Ricky what I could do.

I'd promised Maximus I'd dig out another bed for vegetables as Tim had co-opted the first bed. Who knew rhubarb shifters slept and ate in the soil? I wasn't the only vegan in the pride. The lions were carnivores, of course, but most of us were vegan. Yeah, we could have just eaten grass. One advantage of our house was that, out the back, there were acres of fresh green grass and Drew, Randy, Gordon, and I spent a lot of time out there, chewing the cud. Who needed a mower when we had four herbivores in the herd? But we were humans too and loved our food. It was great using mealtimes to connect around the table as a pride.

Then I remembered my previous confrontation with Ricky and grimaced. Food! How did I convince the stalk that I didn't want to eat him? At least, not like that. For a

moment I imagined being on my knees, my mouth around his stalk, pleasuring him. My rhubarb scent increased as I got more aroused. He was rhubarb, would he like that? Rhubarb smelling rhubarb? Even the thought made me release a little rhubarb aroma.

I had to quit thinking about that luscious stalk. He wanted, no, he needed an alpha like Leonidis. Not a teeny-tiny cow like me. I clenched my jaw. Ricky's throwaway comment to Tim still rankled. I was all bull...even if I did want to be wooed.

I banged my head against the wall by the mudroom and instantly regretted it. My nose, head, and eyes went for maximum pain reminder. I was in a mess.

I shuffled outside and spent the afternoon grunting and sweating, digging up the bed. Every time my gaze slid to the rusty pole, I looked away and slogged through more of the weeds. No way was I going to try my luck on the pole again. I had the grace of a barge pretending to be a yacht...or something like that.

"Burke? Where are you?"

I was tempted to ignore Maximus's call, but he was the pride leader and I knew better.

"Behind the greenhouse," I yelled back.

Maximus appeared, Tim by his side as always. They looked and smelled like mates who'd been screwing each other's brains out all afternoon. I tried not to be jealous.

It was an epic fail, so I swallowed a sigh and forced my lips into a half smile.

"Get showered," he ordered. "We're going out." He squinted at me. "Have you shifted yet?"

“Uh, no.” I’d forgotten about that. I was too busy brooding. “Where are we going?”

Maximus ignored my question. “Shift, shower, shave, whatever. You’ve got thirty minutes.”

I slammed my fork into the dirt, grimacing at Tim’s wince. He was always urging us to be gentle to the soil. “What are we doing? We don’t go out.”

“Today we are. Hurry up.”

“Okay, big guy.” Tim left Maximus’s side and joined me and wiggled. “Get along, little doggies.”

I stared at him. Maximus stared at him.

Tim threw his hands in the air. “It’s an old cowboy song about herding cows. I’m gonna herd you back to the house.”

I scowled at him, ignoring the pain from my swollen eyes and nose. “But you said doggies. I’m not a dog.”

He put his hands on his hips. “Do you want me to make it about rhubarb, Burkie? Because I will.”

Oh, hell no. After all the days of wooing Maximus? Not that. Anything but that. I fled to the house, his mocking laughter behind me. I only breathed again when I shut my bedroom door.

Catching sight of myself in the mirror, I realized they were right about one thing. I needed to shift. My face was a mess. I stripped off my clothes, kicked them to one side so I wouldn’t fall over, and shifted into my bull form. I bellowed as my broken

nose reformed and the bruising hurt like hell. Then I was on four legs, and I trotted up to the mirror to inspect myself. I was kinda pretty, even if I said so myself. All golden brown with fluffy ears. I may have been small, but I had a decent set of balls. Would Ricky like playing with them?

Gah! Quit thinking about the hot rhubarb.

What was it about Ricky and my balls?

I shifted to distract myself, pleased to see there was minimal bruising left and my nose was fixed. I showered quickly, trying to ignore my hard-as-nails dick and taut balls. I could deal with that later.

I was drying my head when Maximus bellowed from the first floor. “Move it, Burke.”

Seriously, what was his issue? He was never that bothered about leaving the pride house.

I dressed in tight jeans and a tight green shirt with tiny pineapples wearing shades. I left the rhubarb shirt behind.

“Let’s go,” Tim said as I jogged down the stairs.

“Where is everyone?” I asked, noting it was just Maximus, Tim, and me by the door.

“They’re busy,” Maximus said, avoiding looking me directly in the eye.

I frowned as we piled into the minivan and he drove us into town. Outside what looked like a club, I followed Tim and got out of the van to stare up at the sign. “Rhurbarella?” I glanced about, trying to figure what kind of place this was. “Why

are we here?”

“You’ll see,” Maximus muttered evasively, which was so unlike him it made my stomach turn into a pile of knotted fur.

He looked resigned, while Tim’s amused smirk made no sense at all to me. Until we stepped inside, and then we got confronted with a ginormous pole. I turned to leave, ready to storm outside and well away from whoever could be going to use the pole.

Ricky!

It wasn’t rocket science. I knew who the pole dancer was.

Tim laid a gentle hand on my shoulder, making me pause and look at him. “Just watch how it’s done,” he suggested. “Maybe you can get some pointers from whoever is performing.”

I was kinda offended that he thought I was stupid not to know that Ricky was the stalk of the town when it came to pole dancing. It had to be him because I’d done a little investigating... stalking. But I was also touched that they were thinking of me. Did that mean Apollo had said something to them?

Maximus herded me to a table in front of the pole before I could decide if it annoyed me or not. The club was empty apart from us. I felt sorry for Ricky if he was indeed performing and no one else had bothered to turn up, meaning he’d be dancing to just the three of us.

Maybe it wasn’t Ricky, and I’d jumped to the wrong conclusion?

Then the lights dimmed.

A spotlight focused on the man wrapped around the pole. The performer turned to face me... us.

I stopped breathing at the sight he made. I was right...

Any thoughts I had after that disappeared at seeing the man in front of me. Ricky was beautiful, dressed in the shortest of shorts, the rest of him bare to my greedy gaze. He was a stalk of perfection, lithe muscle flexing as he worked the pole. Everything faded, there was no one else in the club, just me and him.

My mouth watered. His junk was framed perfectly. He was everything I'd dreamed of and so much more. My balls tightened just thinking about him.

Did he just wobble a little?

Nah! He was all grace swinging around the pole, so elegant. He wrapped one leg around the pole, and I wished it was me when he turned upside down, his mouth in a perfect place to...

His gaze locked with mine, and I swore my balls became the size of watermelons.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

The call I'd made to Tim, asking him to convince Burke to come to the club, had worked. Now I needed to get my act together. I'd worked hard all day to create a perfect performance just for Burke. Something totally different that no one else had seen. By the way his beautiful eyes were glowing, that had to mean I'd done a good job?

Bewitched, the bull held all my attention. Some of which I really needed when I nearly slid down the pole and smacked the floor.

Get it together , I reprimanded myself. This is for my mate.

No one else existed for me as I showed my big-balled bull what I was capable of doing with my body, in both forms. Flipping upside down, Burke's eyes gleamed with a lusty light that set off a spark inside my rhubarb heart. It fluttered harder than birds' wings as I licked my lips and winked saucily at the bull who'd inched his ass to the edge of his seat, not taking his gaze away from me.

I twirled around the pole, losing eye contact for a moment before I came back to do a mid-air splits, giving him a good eyeful of my other stalk, one that was getting hard at how his gaze roamed over my body.

The music continued to play as sweat slicked my skin from the effort. I did a dismount a minute later as the song came to an end and bowed. There was silence. Nothing from Burke.

I looked at Tim, frowning. Was I missing something? Tim, who'd confessed to knowing Burke was my mate, and had assured me he'd help me woo Burke, shrugged.

"You... wow... flexible..." Burke muttered, his pink skin had a dewy quality to it under the spotlights.

I'd rendered him speechless. I could work with that.

Breathless and aroused enough to give everyone a different show, one Dom would never permit—unless it brought in a lot more money—I stepped closer to the edge of the stage. "Wanna be my pole?" I cough snorted. "I meant, try my pole."

Oh, that was so much better! Real smooth, you silly rhubarb. You might as well have invited him to mount you on stage!

Crap, I did...

My eyes widened when not a second later Burke rushed the stage while Tim and Maximus darted for the door, their sneakered feet hardly touching wood.

I blew out a breath as the door banged shut, leaving me alone with Burke and my pole. My gaze dropped to his crotch—and his big ass balls. I swallowed and rubbed my tingly palms down my oil slicked skin, ignoring the obvious stalk situation in my shorts.

Burke's gaze followed the move and my heart beat a little faster as I slid my hands to the waistband of my tiny shorts. Back was that hungry look.

Yeah... I could work with that... maybe.



I grinned cheekily. “You ever ridden a pole?” I asked sweetly, my rhubarb custard smell going a little crazy.

I was a beta. I had double the custard. My slick and cum were both a custard delight. I mean, I hoped they were. I’d not shared them with anyone, so I could only play the guessing game on that score. If my mate liked lots of custard, then he was in for a surprise if he ever got close to my ass, which I’d offer if that was what he wanted. Hell, he could have all of me. But how to say that aloud without looking like the dork-stalk of the town? I hadn’t quite figured that out yet, beyond dancing my way around his balls.

I eyed the bull, who was staring at me with a look I totally couldn’t read and hadn’t answered me. “Have you?” I asked again.

“Yep... no... sort of,” he replied, back to being all pink, glowing, and adorable.

“So, is that a yes?” I asked, frowning, trying to work out if this was some form of bull code. Give all the answers, and one of them was bound to be right?

His hands waved in the air. “I got a pole and tried it.”

How cute. “You did?” I exclaimed excitedly. I slung my arm around his shoulders, feeling the need to touch when I got a dose of Burke’s rhubarb smell. It was sweeter than mine and I wanted to lick him to find out if he was tasty everywhere. “How about I stand against my pole and you show me your moves?” When he didn’t answer, I kept my sigh to myself and kept going. “That way I can give pointers and could catch you, help with limb placement.” Yeah, like limb placement was what I wanted to help him with.

“How would that work?” he asked, sounding more breathless than he had a moment ago.

Was he excited?

I let him go and placed my back against the pole, spreading my legs, I wrapped my arms around the pole above my head, stretching myself to my full length, giving him one of my brightest smiles. “Climb me like you climbed your pole,” I encouraged, feeling giddy at the thought of him climbing up me and his balls touching my oiled skin.

He made a kind of squealing noise that didn’t sound too healthy.

Had I said the wrong thing? Was my position off?

I looked down and blushed at how my cock tented my shorts in a way that looked as if it was trying to poke its way out the top of the band.

Oops.

“It’s a handhold to help you get your balance,” I blurted out like the total dork-stalk I was. Who said shit like this?

Who?

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

I couldn't take my eyes from his lickable stalk, I mean pole, I mean handhold. For bovine's sake, I didn't want to climb any pole except his. Didn't he get that? I wanted to sink to my knees and take him in my mouth. I couldn't focus on anything except the flushed head of the dick poking out the top of his gorgeous, tight shorts.

I licked my lips, chewed on the inside of my cheek, just staring at his dick. I wanted to take it down to the back of my throat.

"Burke?"

"Huh?" The smell of custard had kinda distracted me, amongst other things. It really needed to go with my rhubarb any which way I could get it.

"You can climb me like a pole," Ricky suggested.

I stared at him, horrified. "I couldn't do that. I'd break you."

Ricky snorted, then shook his head. "I'm stronger than I look, teeny—"

I put a finger over his mouth. "If you call me a cow again, I'm outta here."

He tilted his head to look at me. "Because you're all bull," he said against my finger, which sent a direct line to my dick.

"Yeah. Bulls don't take kindly to being called cows, yeah."

Ricky deliberately looked down. “I can see that.”

I glanced at my erection, desperate to drill through my jeans, and blushed. “We’ve got the stalk and—”

“Balls,” he breathed out.

My balls twitched in appreciation at the sound of awe in his voice, but I shook my head. “They’re just your...I mean my balls.”

“Oh no, honey, you were right the first time. They’re all mine now.” Ricky practically purred the words at me.

I didn’t know what to say. If my balls could have danced the macarena, they would have. They wanted to belong to this stalk forever. They wanted to be his mate!

Oh! My! Bovine!

Oh fuck! He was my mate! But he couldn’t be. We couldn’t talk to each other through our mind link. I listened, but there was nothing there.

I opened my mouth...

He grabbed the waistband of my jeans, yanked me in closer, and pressed his mouth against mine, swallowing the word I’d been about to say. “Mmfmfh.”

Then he cupped the mountain growing in my jeans and my brain melted into ice cream that had been left out for too long. This stalk could kiss. He was sweet and tart, firm and soft all at once. Not that I had anything—much—to compare it to.

Ricky dragged his head back and stared down at me. “I don’t know what you’re

thinking about, but stop it. It's so loud. It's overcooking my pudding."

"I'm sorry," I said helplessly. Could he hear me?

He swung me around with a skillful spin of his hips, my thoughts sliding right out of my head. Then I was the one pressed into the pole, his mouth back on mine, and please, bovines of the world, let us be alone until I've been stalked to custard and back. He had one hand cupped around my neck and one hand cupping my arousal and—

"I'll teach you how to pole dance another time, but right now we've got to come stalk to stalk, you and me." Ricky sounded desperate.

I nodded, because that sounded like an awesome idea, but then my head went back to my thought. "Is anyone here?"

Ricky gave me the sweetest of smiles. "We're on our own for another thirty minutes."

"Is that enough time?" I asked worriedly. I was positive that Tim and Maximus had needed way more time than that.

He paused. "Burke, have you done this before?"

What should have come out of my mouth was, "Of course I have." What actually came out of my mouth was, "Um..."

He stroked my cheek. "Baby? Are you unpicked?"

I clonked my forehead on his shoulder, not wanting to meet his gaze, feeling like someone was trying to roast me from the feet up. "If by unpicked you mean a virgin, then yeah, I'm a bull with no cow."

“Thank Great Rhu for that,” Ricky said enthusiastically, beaming like a hyena I’d once seen, “or you wouldn’t be interested in me.” He tilted my chin to look at him. “You are interested in me, aren’t you?”

Since I’d laid eyes on him, he was all I was fascinated with. I looked down at where Ricky’s hand remained pressed. “Do I actually need to answer that question?”

Ricky’s lips twitched. “I guess not.” Then he moved his hand up until I felt him unbutton my jeans, and he pushed them, and my briefs, down over my ass. His next sound caught in his throat.

“What’s wrong?”

“Fuck, baby. How did you manage to keep these beauties hidden for so long?” He cupped my balls and I gasped. For a moment, it was as if I was in his head and I could sense every person in Valentine.

Ricky let go of my balls and the feeling faded away as he wrapped his hand around my dick. “One thing at a time.” He sounded breathless. “Hold on to the pole.”

For a moment, I wasn’t sure which pole he meant. There were three in the room. Then he pushed me back gently, and I got it. I clasped the pole behind me, doing what I was told.

He pushed down his shorts and grasped both our stalks together. “Next time it’s bull and rhubarb.”

I hummed in agreement or I would have if it hadn’t got stuck somewhere in my throat at the feel of his fuzzy stalk against mine. The way his hand worked us both together was driving me nuts. “More,” I begged breathlessly, panting hard and fast. “Need you inside me. I want to be filled and feel your body pressed against mine.” Whatever I

considered I'd feel when we touched, wasn't even close. Those fuzzies set my balls alight.

"Next time, baby," Rick promised excitedly, and glassy eyed. "Next time. Now you're coming with me to make sweet sundaes."

I choked out a cry as I came over his hand and his custard joined my cream. He lifted his hand, his pink tongue poked out. There was a long pause before he blushed and a second later, he licked his fingers, groaning in delight.

My balls clenched, and I stared longingly at him. One little taste?

As if he'd plucked the thought from my head, he offered his sticky fingers to me. "Custard and cream to go?" he giggled, sounding very naughty.

I didn't hesitate and swiped my tongue over his hand. Sweet, oh so sweet and damn yummy. I licked again until his hand was clean and my balls were throbbing once more with how sexy this whole scene was.

His eyes danced the way his body did on the pole as he came forward. "I was unpicked too," he breathed in my ear. "We've trifled together and now we just need to pop our cherries."

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

Watching Burke lick my hand clean was making my custard ready to do a highland fling all over my bull. It was also why I confessed I was the same as him. I didn't want him thinking something silly like I was some hip to the rhubarbness ways of getting down and dirty.

Not that I wasn't a stalk just ready and waiting. I was all for it.

In fact, I was just about desperate enough to taste those enormous balls, roll them around my mouth and forget the club would open in an hour's time.

Who cared who got a free show!

Then rhubarb common sense returned, knowing Dom would be back any minute and the last thing I wanted was to give anyone that kind of show. Those enormous balls were all mine, and I was greedy for them. One taste of my teeny-tiny-bull and I could tell he was gonna be my new favorite thing to eat.

"Let's tuck this away and go find somewhere a little more private," I explained while shoving my hand into his trousers, copping a feel of those silky balls. I found I could hardly wriggle a finger in the tightness of his pants. His balls hung out, and no matter which way I slid my fingers all around them—there was a lot of sliding—there was no way they were getting back in there.

A strangled noise came from Burke on my third attempt, and I glanced up.



“If you keep that up, they’re never gonna fit in this lifetime,” he exclaimed through panting breaths, his skin back to being flushed. His stalk waved at me like a sideways dance pole.

I reluctantly let go and grabbed his hand. “Come on, we’ll slip out the back to the changing rooms and head out through the fire door.” I dragged him along with me. And I really was dragging him, with how wide his legs were. Almost walking like he’d sat astride a horse. Or what I imagined someone walking while riding would look like.

We stopped briefly for me to slip on my sweats and a hoodie. I pulled a spare pair of gray sweats out of my carryall. “Maybe you could put these on for now?”

Under the bright lights of my changing room, I got the full bull effect. My gaze went to the door, which had a lock, then back to the man wriggling out of his too tight clothing. I slipped around him, shut the door, and clicked the lock in place. Spinning back around, I got the glorious sight of my bull's ass and balls hanging low between his legs, and nearly creamed my custard again.

Going with the urges that had led me to lick my hand, I bent forward, took hold of his ass cheeks, spread them and ran my tongue down his crease.

He mooed and shuddered, backing up onto my face. My nose got a good whiff of his rhubarb, and I was a gonna. I licked at the rosebud that twitched against my tongue, making me do it again, swiping over the flesh as his scent got stronger. My rhubarb and his did the Argentine tango, maybe the rhumba. Whatever it was, my tongue got frisky with each moo he made.

When he hitched up his hips, making his balls sway and nudge my chin, I didn’t need to be asked twice. I lowered to my knees, muttering, “Hang on to something, I’m gonna suck me some bull's balls.”

Smacking my lips together, I cupped a ball in each hand, loving the heaviness. They were almost too heavy to hold, but I was a stalk up for the task.

My stalk was waving to the ball gods in gratitude as I mouthed one, almost dislocating my jaw to pop it into my mouth. The ache was so worth it. Silky skin rubbed against my tongue as I licked and sucked. I rolled the other ball so it didn't feel left out, then I slipped the tip of a finger into his wet hole.

The noises he was making were so loud they could probably hear him at the pride house.

The ball popped out of my mouth as I hissed, "Shush my gorgeous ballsy-bull, someone will hear you."

"I can't," he rasped, releasing another loud moo as I wriggled my finger deeper into his ass, hoping I was doing it right.

There was no manual that came on how to do this, was there? Maybe the noise he was making was because I was doing it wrong.

Going to pull my finger out, he groaned, "Don't stop! Don't ever stop. Suck my balls again!"

Okay then, not stopping it was. And the ball sucking? I must be rocking it, if he wanted me to carry on.

His ass was dripping, along with his balls, as I dribbled and struggled to cram both in my mouth because I felt challenged, just like when I started pole dancing. His mooing was at an epic level when someone hammered on the door behind me.

"Dear Great Rhu, are you slaughtering a cow in there?" Dom demanded, sounding

very unhappy.

“He’s a bull,” I said, or tried to with my mouth full.

“I’m a bull,” Burke shouted at the same time, looking back over his shoulder. Only he didn’t look angry, far from it. His glassy eyes were unfocused, and his skin was pinker than my rhubarb flesh.

“Whatever he is or isn’t, this isn’t the place for doing whatever it is you’re doing in there!”

Like Dom didn’t know exactly what I was doing with my mate.

“Don’t stop,” mewled Burke. “Please.”

I totally blamed the whimpering noise that came next for taking my fingers out of his ass, cracking my jaw to release his balls, and getting up to grab his hips. Sorry Dom!

“You asked for it.” I pushed my stalk right in, not stopping, because if I had, I would have sprayed custard everywhere in my excitement.

He was all hot and slick around my stalk, making my legs resemble a c-r-u-m-b-l-e mix, something I’d never admit aloud. He moaned and his bottom and balls hit my groin. The frantic sound of skin and balls slapping added to the encore of mooing, which made me boil hotter than being threatened with the pan.

I shouted as my balls exploded, custard erupting like a fountain deep into my bull’s ass, and he creamed the seat back he’d been gripping with a final moo that shook the room.

I had no clue if Dom was still outside the door, and I didn’t care. I’d apologize to him

later. For now, I collapsed over Burke's back and bit his neck, my stalk giving him one more good measure of custard.

I wonder if he'll lick me clean again?

I jerked upward and a second later grinned at my shuddering mate, who had rested his head on his arms. "I'm more than happy to lick you clean. Where do you want me to start? Front or back?"

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

You heard me!

Ricky smirked at my exclamation. I heard you, my bull. I can hear you loud and clear now. And I don't have to sing!

I wasn't having a freak out at the thought. I really wasn't. I stood there, belly and chest dripping in cream, custard running down between my legs out of my well-stalked ass, but I wasn't having a freakout.

I can do this.

Slow, deep breaths, bull. Deep breaths. I am calm. I am a bull. I am not freaking out. Well creamed, yes, but not freaking. See how calm I am.

Talk to me, Burke.

I jumped as someone thumped on the door, and Ricky grabbed my bicep.

"It's okay." Ricky grimaced. "That's Dom. He owns the bar."

I remembered someone yelling as Ricky plowed my ass, something to do with cows, but I'd been more interested in my balls trying to empty themselves through my dick.

"Get your asses out here!" Dom bellowed through the closed door.

“He sounds angry.” Was what happened going to get my mate in trouble? I really wanted that tongue... just not with the threat of Dom barging in seeing my balls swaying in the wind.

Ricky ran his thumb along my cheekbone and I leaned into his touch. “I’ll protect you.”

“Will you lose your job?” I asked worriedly, deciding that was the supportive mate thing to ask. It also distracted me from asking for the other thing, which I couldn’t stop thinking about. Was I kinky weird?

“He couldn’t get rid of me. I’m the entertainment,” Ricky said, sounding unconcerned, glowing brighter than a Christmas tree.

“Don’t push me, kid,” Dom growled through the door. “And clean the damn room.”

Ricky didn’t seem anxious as Dom stomped away, but I had to ask, “What if he does fire you?”

He shrugged, “I’ll give pole dancing lessons. You can be my first client.”

I touched my nose as I remembered my last experience with a pole. “I’m like...well...a bull. No grace. I’d probably kill you.”

And possibly crush his rhubarb.

His grin said he’d heard my thoughts. “Baby, I can teach you anything. Now, you mentioned something about me licking you clean?” Ricky licked his lips and I shivered at the thought of his tongue sliding through my cream, but then I sighed, remembering I needed to be sensible.

“I think that moment went in the middle of my freakout,” I said pathetically, admitting I had actually freaked out and wasn’t hip-to-stalk like my mate. “I need a hug.”

“I can do that, too.” Ricky patted my cheek and then kissed me on the lips, giving me a taste of myself, which wasn’t helping the situation with my balls. “Let’s clean you up. We can re-stalk later.”

I stood in the middle of the dressing room while he cleaned me with a washcloth like I was a new-born calf. Ricky was really thorough as he cleaned me up. My dick perked up in anticipation.

“Down, boy,” he said, in amusement.

“You’re talking to my dick,” I pointed out, blushing at how close he was.

Ricky raised an eyebrow. “You have a problem with me talking to parts of your anatomy? Cos I’ve got to say we might have an issue if you ball block me.”

“You mean cock block.”

“No, ball block.” Ricky cupped my sac in his hands, and I groaned, leaning into his touch. It was as if I’d become connected to the whole of Valentine again. That glimpse I’d seen before, now it was wide open.

“It’s the power of your balls. That’s our mate power.” He leaned forward and whispered, “All I can think about is your balls, isn’t that great?”

I stared at him skeptically. “We’re connected through my balls? I don’t have magic nuts.”

He cupped my balls again, and once more, I became connected to the town. I looked up to see Ricky regarding me with a knowing look, and I flushed.

“You get more rhubarby when you’re embarrassed,” he said, leaning forward to sniff me, his nose wrinkling adorably. “You smell so sweet.”

I shoved him back, because seriously? “Are you going to walk around Valentine with my balls on a leash?” The little buzz I got at the thought... yeah, I wasn’t sharing that!

“No one would blink an eye if I did,” Ricky replied, grinning cheekily. “We’re relaxed here. Come on, let’s get dressed. Wear the sweats, then your balls are easily accessible.”

I gawped at him as I dressed in sweats, like he asked. “Seriously?” There was relaxed and then there was ‘relaxed’. I was a shifter. Being naked in front of my pride meant nothing. But being walked through town on a leash to my balls was a whole new level of kinkiness. I shivered again.

“Your pride leader flashed the whole town. Did anyone say anything?”

Well, no, but it had been an emergency. “He was in his lion form when he ran through town,” I pointed out. “But he needed to carry Tim back to the pride house.”

I growled a little at the memory because that was my brand-new jacket Maximus had wrecked to keep his rhubarb covered in dirt.

Ricky chuckled in my head. I’ll buy you a new jacket.

I grunted. I loved that jacket.



Then I'm going to wear nothing but the new jacket and give you a show on the pole you'll never forget.

My rhubarb scent flooded the room as I imagined him twirling around the pole in just a jacket he'd bought for me.

"See, no one cares in this town," Ricky said, as though he hadn't just nearly made me come on the spot. "Apart from my mom, maybe."

Pulse doing a jig, I stared at him in horror at the thought of being introduced to Ricky with my cock and balls hanging out. "You have a mom?"

Oh, this was not good. Would she want her son mating with a bull?

He blinked at me. "Of course I have a mom. How do you think we're seeded?"

I realized I needed to have a serious sit-down conversation with Ricky about rhubarb living. I knew nothing. I mean, nothing. Tim and Maximus had been together for five minutes. At least we weren't going to need the bull and the stalk mating talk. He couldn't make me pregnant.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

If my ballsy-bull thought he was keeping his thoughts to himself, he'd be totally wrong. I was getting everything loud and clear, and I didn't have the heart to tell him that if seeded just right, he'd be just like any other stalk with a belly full of seedlings. That conversation wasn't one I wanted to have now, not when we had to go see Dom.

Was I worried? Nope, Dom needed me, and he knew it. I believe he was just jealous. I was totally getting my stalk on, and he hadn't seen any action in years. I mean, who wouldn't be jealous—besides Tim, who had someone to stalk on—of my gorgeous ballsy mate?

“Are we going out there?” Burke questioned as he looked nervously at the door, looking all kinds of cute in my clothes, which were a bit too long for him.

I grabbed his clammy hand, squeezing gently and tugged him unwillingly to the door. “Yep. We might as well face the rhubarb.” I unlocked the door and opened it, the familiar noise of music and chatter hitting us like a wave. The club was open for business.

Oops! No wonder Dom had gotten annoyed. Had the whole of Valentine Growville heard us? Did I care? I had won the ball lottery. Smugly, I guided my bull into the busy club, nodding at other stalks as we passed. And making sure to give them warning looks. Yeah, look all you want, stalks. He's mine.

Nice as that is, no one's gonna look at me.

I glanced at my blushing mate. “ Why not? You're gorgeous. All pink and flushed, smelling like a little bit of rhubarb heaven.” I got closer and whispered in his ear, “With balls to stalk on.”

He coughed and glanced at the other stalks close by. “Erm... thanks.”

“You’re welcome.” I kissed his cheek. “Now let's see what Dom wants before we go and have that conversation you want.” Still close to his ear, I added, “By that, I mean getting you to moo for me.”

His whole body shuddered, and his scent flooded my nose, making me grin wider than Glass’s rhubarb stalk. He was the longest stalk in town.

“Hey Ricky, looking good my friend,” said Tartie, a rhubarb stalk that lived in town, but often traveled out of state as he had decided sheep shearing was his thing. Although why anyone would choose sheep shearing to hair cutting on stalks, I’ll never know. “Aren’t you gonna introduce us to your friend?”

Burke’s hand clutched mine, and he tugged me closer to him. Wasn’t that sweet. “Tartie, this is Burke, my bull .”

I felt Burke’s big-ballsy swagger in my head as he grinned at me.

“Hey there, little cutie.” Tartie, who wasn’t all that tall but had some muscles on him, arm flexed in his shirt. His bicep bulged as he held out his hand to Burke, smiling sexily.

Was he showing off to my mate?

Flirting with him?

“We’re mates, Tartie,” I pointed out very quickly. Nobody was going to get any ideas about my bull. I’d never been possessive over anything—ever. But Burke was mine!

You don’t need to scream it at me. I know I’m yours.

Sorry.

“All good, you know I was just bein’ friendly an’ all.” Tartie smiled charmingly at us, dropping Burke’s hand. “You got any friends? A sheep that needs shearing, I’m your stalk.”

Burke blinked. “Actually, one of my pride is a ram. Randy mentioned the other day he could do with a shearing.”

Tartie perked right up. “We got a ram in town? Well I never. Send him my way. I’m taking a vacation, so I’ve got plenty of time on my hands.”

“Yeah... okay... but you should know he’s a little... different.”

Tartie tilted his head to one side, looking all kinds of rhubarb intrigued. “How so?”

“He’s pink.”

“Why, I ain’t never sheared a pink ram before. Does he do anything with his wool? I could use it to make some knitted jumpers.”

“You knit?” I asked, seeing Tartie in a whole new light.

He blushed full stalk pink and nodded. “Not all the wool gets sold, so I keep some. I taught myself how to make the yarn and... well... it’s a waste not to do anything with it.”

He shrugged, but didn't have time to say more as Dom stalked up to us. "You... you... did you have to do... that, here? I said you could use the place for dancing!"

I chuckled at how Burke cough-snorted and looked at the ground. "We were dancing. It was the rhubarb mating tango, wasn't it, Burke?" I winked at him when his head fired up and he glanced between me and Dom.

"Er... yeah... whatever he said."

I released his hand to wrap it around his waist, before stroking down over his ass to give it a good squeeze, getting a good whiff of his rhubarb yumminess. "We'll need to do some practicing before we perfect it. And you know what they say. Practice makes perfect rumba rhubarb."

"That, I'd like to see," Tartie said, grinning from ear to ear.

I was shaking my head before he stopped speaking. "Sorry, that's a private show. For my rhubarb only!"

"Spoilsport." Tartie said good-naturedly whereas Dom was giving off serious rhubarb vibes of pissedoffness.

"Did you clean up after yourselves?" Dom's question got a full body shudder from my mate.

"We did. Now I think it's time I took Burke home."

Dom thrust out his palm as if he were stopping the traffic. "Wait a minute, young stalk. You're going nowhere. You've got a performance to do!"

Oh rhubarbs! How had I forgotten that?

Sorry. Wanna watch me spin around my pole?

Hello! Of course I wanna see that. Just make sure that it's me you're looking at.

That won't be a problem, you're all I wanna look at.

I focused my attention on Dom. "Alright, but just one show and then I'm outta here as I'm mated, don't you know!"

"The whole damn town knows now," Dom muttered, blushing like I'd never seen before.

I smirked at him. "Sharing is caring."

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

I swear I was almost as pink as Randy when Ricky led me to a seat in front of the stage and pressed me down with a loud order to watch his ass because it was all for me. Stalk whistles erupted around the club as he punctuated the order with a thorough grope of my balls.

“I’m gonna cream your sweats,” I muttered, doing my best not to squirm under all the attention I was getting.

He gave a wicked chuckle in my ear. “Do I care?”

Clearly not, and you know what? Neither did I. My mate was wicked, and I loved him for it. In all of my dreams, I’d never envisioned this would happen to me.

To my relief, Dom quit looking as if he’d wanted to spit a lemon at Ricky once he sashayed back to the dressing room to get ready. I hoped he wore more than the tiny shorts for this performance. Those little shorts should have ‘for Burke’s eyes only’ written on them. I licked my lips at the memory of his ass cupped in the tiny piece of fabric. I really was going to have to mention that they should be just for me. I couldn’t help noticing every stalk staring at his ass, so I glared at them. No one else was going to get a taste of him.

Tartie, who’d pulled up a chair next to me, chuckled. “Oh Great Rhu, you’ve got it bad for our Ricky.”

My Ricky. No one else’s except mine .

He tilted his head and looked at me. “I’m envious, you know. I’ve always wanted to find an omega stalk of my own to call a mate.”

“You want a rhubarb mate?”

“Doesn’t everyone?” Then Tartie blinked, looking sheepish. “Shit dude, I don’t mean... you know what I mean... Ricky’s gonna kill me. Me and my big mouth.”

I gave a wry smile at his babbling. “It’s okay. I never thought I’d have a mate who wasn’t a bovine.”

“What’s it like having a rhubarb mate?” he asked, looking all kinds of interested.

At that point, the music suddenly cut and the whole club heard me yell, “He’s everything I imagined in a mate and more.”

I went bright pink again as wolf whistles erupted around the club. I groaned and buried my face in my hands. Subtle, I was not.

Tartie winked at me when I raised my head, knowing I didn’t want to miss the show despite my discomfort. “You just made yourself a lot of friends. Ricky is a well-loved stalk in town.”

I breathed easier, giving him side-eye at the well-loved stalk comment because the only one loving on him was me. “I should have told Ricky that before I told the whole town.”

“You just did, fella.”

He pointed upward as the lights cut. Then one spotlight shone on the pole and a stalk of gold shimmered at the top.



From his place at the top of the pole, dressed in tight-fitting gold, Ricky beamed down at me.

You are gonna get so stalked tonight, my ballsy-bull.

It was as if the spotlight was on me. I swallowed hard, fidgeting in my seat as my balls tightened in anticipation. I didn't have a problem with that.

The music started and my mate swooped down the pole. I gasped, along with half the club, which could be heard regardless of the music playing in the background. The other half filling the club had obviously seen it all before. He stopped halfway down in a complicated maneuver that had me envying his grace and loving the fact he didn't take his eyes off me the whole time. This performance was just for me and there wasn't any stalk here who didn't know it. I was so fucking hard for him.

I was on my feet, clapping and whooping as he flung his arm out and bowed his head as the music finished. My mate was perfection.

Ricky swung down and dropped at my feet to haul me into a sweaty kiss. "Gimme a taste of your rhubarb," he muttered.

I chuckled against his sweet mouth. "Shouldn't I say that to you?"

"Whatever. Just kiss me."

So I did.

Eventually, Ricky dragged me out of the club, just as soon as Dom let him go, promising me a night of blowjobs, blowstalks, and being stalked by my mate until we had made sweet, glorious sundaes. It made my thighs wobble until I saw Ricky was exhausted and just wanted to lean on me.

“You need to sleep,” I insisted.

“Maybe,” he admitted. “Two hours and I’ll be a new stalk.” He leered at me, which might have worked if he hadn’t punctuated it with a huge yawn.

I pressed him up against the wall of Barb Rhu. “Your bed or mine?”

Ricky grimaced. “You can’t sleep in my bed.”

That stung. I thought wherever he’d sleep, I’d be there too. I was his mate. I wanted to sleep in his arms. Maybe he didn’t want that.

“You remember I can hear all that?” He tapped my forehead. “I’m a rhubarb. I sleep in the soil like Tim. There’s not enough room in my bed.”

I slung my arm around his shoulders and guided him down Main Street toward the pride house, giddy at the thoughts of our backyard. “I’ve got it covered.”

Although that was another bed in the backyard that wouldn’t get used for vegetables. Did I care? Heck no, I was going to play hide the stalk in the soil.

I guided Ricky around the house to find the three lions barbequing steaks on the grill. I wrinkled my nose at the smell, but we had a live and let live policy in our herd. As long as the lions didn’t try to fry us, me and the other herbivores didn’t worry about their need to eat meat. We had plenty of lush grass.

There was no sign of Tim, which I found odd. He and Maximus were joined at the hip now.

“Where’s your mate?” I asked Maximus, looking around.

“He said the smell of the steaks made him want to hurl. He’s asleep in our bed.” Maximus pointed behind the greenhouse, then squinted at Ricky. “You look as bad as Tim before he headed off for a nap.”

Ricky waved a weary hand. “Too much pole playing. I just need time to recover, and then I can play with my balls.”

I flushed at the lions’ amused smirks. “Don’t even go there,” I ordered before Maximus, or the others, could get started on my ball situation. “I’m going to need to use the new vegetable bed.”

Maximus shrugged and grinned widely at us. “We can always buy the veggies if our rhubarb needs the whole yard.”

I sniffled a little because that was just what our alpha was like. He never minded thinking about other members of the pride. “Thanks.” Then I sniffed at the meat. It smelled rancid. Maybe Tim had a point. “What are you eating?”

Apollo looked at his steak. “Beef.” He shoved the whole steak in his mouth.

It made me want to gag. Lions were strange creatures.

“Take me to my bed,” Ricky murmured, leaning against me, and I forgot about the meat. My mate needed my help, and I was here for that.

“Do you need me to undress you?” I asked when we reached the newly dug bed.

Ricky held up his arms. “Have at it.”

Ricky

Burke's thoughts filled my head. He seemed amazed I was his rhubarb. I couldn't come up with just the right word for how it made me feel. Instead, I got all pink and leafy and did one twirl in his hands, rubbing my fuzzies against his palms, sending delightful sparks straight to those glorious balls. Then I wriggled, feeling the last of my energy drain. Gimme the soil, ballsy-bull.

He dropped to his knees in the twilight and, holding me carefully in one hand so as not to squish me, he used his free hand to create a little trench. Then he placed me down and tucked the soil around me like it was a blanket.

I was grinning on the inside at how unsure he was about fully covering me up and if he did, would it suffocate me. He was the cutest. The soil is my friend. But your fingers rubbing it against me feels soooo good. Don't stop.

A sigh followed my demand, and in my rhubarb, all I got was his contentment at being told what to do by me, making me feel all kinds of special. I was about to tell him that he could stop when I went to sleep. My brain switched off fast, like it always did when I was in the soil. I had a level of consciousness, but not the type that could make conversation because I was so tired.

Although on my stringy insides, I grinned, stupidly happy that he didn't stress because we had such a strong connection already. It was as if he knew what I needed without asking. Did Tim have the same connection with Maximus? I'd have to ask, just not now, when I was a rhubarb on a mission to recover my stamina.

Did I doze off? I was uncertain if Burke's arms must finally have protested at the constant movement, because I scented a change in my bull. The soil moved around me, but I sensed the air vibrate against the soil. I stirred briefly as my bull's hide touched my stalk.

My bull snuffled at the dirt, making sure to not trample on me. I might be small, but I wasn't concerned when he plonked himself down right by me, pushing more soil over me. His head right next to that of my stalk, his tongue licked at my leaves. Still not fully regenerated, I nudged a little closer when he settled down to have a nap next to me. I needed him to be ballsy fit for me when I woke up. No one wanted empty balls, no siree.

Movement in the bed of soil made my body vibrate with the renewed energy I'd lacked hours before. I noticed that the sky was lit with the first signs of daybreak as I lifted my leafy head at the sound of a mooing.

Wow, how long had I slept for?

I wiggled in the soil and couldn't figure out where my bull was. I felt the earth move, but it wasn't close to me. Burke mooed loudly and—I grinned at the thoughts of him seeking out my rhubarb—it came with a flood of panic.

I spun in the dirt. My bull was not stealthy as he tried to stalk me. He was careful as he stepped in the soil, but he was heading in the wrong direction. I giggled, about to give him a clue, when my head filled with Tim making loud gagging noises.

I shifted in time to watch my bull, tongue lolling out of his mouth. He had the most spectacularly long tongue which, it appeared, could twist and flick as good as me on my pole. Then I got all of Burke's thoughts on how much I liked to lick him.

He flicked out his tongue with enthusiasm at thoughts of impressing me once more,

only it wasn't me he was impressing.

There was a roar from inside the house, then the sound of feet thundering on wood before a door hit something and Maximus shouted, "Who the fuck is licking my mate?"

Burke's head lifted. Huh?

When he glanced back down to find Tim at his hooves, rubbing his hand over his dripping face, I started laughing at his oops!

"Did you tongue the wrong rhubarb?" I asked through my laughter.

He shifted, and I got a dose of his alarm when he swung around, his balls slapping against his thighs.

Ouch, that had to hurt. I'll need to kiss them better for him.

He stared from Tim to me, and I got another dose of his thoughts at seeing me naked and covered in soil. "I thought... he... was you... against my back... a leaf tickled my hide, rousing me from the best sleep I'd had in days and..."

Maximus skidded to a stop, growling. Burke buried his head in his hands right as Maximus scooped Tim out of the dirt. "You're a little drippy there, Twirlie."

"I got good and licked for sure. That's some tongue you got there, Burke."

"I'm sorry," he mumbled, not looking in my direction.

I've done it now, licking the wrong stalk!

Maximus seemed more amused than angry now he had Tim in his arms, who was looking like the stalk who got all the custard with his mate wrapped around him.

“It’s an easy mistake to make, just don’t do it again,” Maximus warned, even as he smiled. “Tim’s mine.”

“Honest, I felt something tickling my back, and it woke me up. I was thinking about...”

Oh yeah!

Heat, the epic kind that made him glow hotter than the sun, hit his cheeks as everyone grinned knowingly at Burke.

“Licking Ricky’s stalk?” Tim supplied helpfully.

I hope so, my mate.

Apollo, Leonidas, Drew and Randy appeared, looking sleepy.

“What’s all the fuss about?” Randy asked, coming down the steps, his pajama bottoms dragging in the dirt as he strolled over to us.

“Burke licked the wrong stalk,” Tim said gleefully, as he gave his wet hair a tug, squinting at it. “His tongue is huge and drippy, I tell ya!”

I’ll take some of that action, I demanded, because that tongue was all mine.

His eyes widened at the flood of arousal that came from me as I eyed him, smirking so big there was no doubt he could think I was pissed at him.

“You want my bull to lick you?” he asked aloud, forgetting we had an audience in his excitement.

“I’m outta here,” Apollo muttered. “I thought it was bad with a singing Twirlie, now we’re gonna have a licky bull. Whatever next!” He stomped back into the house, losing the effect when he was wearing a cute pair of sunshine yellow shorts and a baggy T-shirt. The slogan printed on it read, “Moon the rhubarb to shine some light on your day,” with two stalks bent in half with cute little ass’s painted on them. He was clearly getting in the swing of the rhubarb.

A naked Burke grabbed my arm, and I gave him a sexy grin because it was time to show him just how energized a rhubarb got after a soiling. “Wanna play hide the tongue?”



Burke

If any bull could be mortified at tonguing the alpha's stalk by mistake and then getting really horny at the same time, it was me. Hell yes, I wanted to play hide the tongue in every orifice my mate possessed. What bull wouldn't?

"Where are we going?" Ricky asked, as I hauled him away from the others and into the house.

"My bedroom." I headed through the shabby house to the stairs, determined to show my stalk a bull time.

Ricky pulled away from me, but before I could panic that I'd made the wrong move, he did a weird twisty action and mounted my back like I was his pole.

"Oof!" I let out an involuntary moo as I staggered under the sudden weight, but I kept my footing and didn't throw both of us into the wall. His stalk pressed against my ass and showed me plenty of excitement.

"Yeehaw, my bull! Up the stairs!" He wrapped one arm around my neck and slapped my ass. At how it tingled I hoped he'd do it again. Behind me, I heard a wicked chuckle. He knew exactly what I wanted because my head couldn't stop projecting my thoughts at him. Not that I was going to stop, why would I?

From somewhere, I heard, "Not again. Where are my headphones?"

From the snicker above me, Ricky must have heard it, too. "Good idea," he called

out. “I’m gonna make lots of sweet, stalky love with my ballsy-bull tongue lover.”

I didn’t blush at the groans from the bedrooms. Not at all, with my dick leaking at the thought.

Rhubarb and cream. You smell so good.

In my bedroom, I tipped Ricky onto the bed, then I turned to look at him and realized he was filthy. I mean, as in head to toe, covered in dirt, smeared from where he’d ridden on my back.

“I could shower,” Ricky said, obviously catching my thoughts.

Was it too late now to be honest? If I was going to have to change the sheets...I licked my lips...we could make it worthwhile.

From his beaming smile, he knew exactly what I was thinking. “We can do that. Come to your rhubarb.” He wiggled his hands at me, right along with his stalk.

I climbed on the bed before he could finish and shifted into my bull. I leaned forward to lick him on his belly, leaving a figure of eight of clean skin over his taut abs.

“Oooh.” He wriggled away from my questing tongue.

Oh no you don’t. I snickered a little and did it again. He wiggled and giggled, and I loved it. My mate was ticklish.

“I need my bull,” Ricky crooned, his fingers deep in my hair, trying to pull me away. “My rhubarb bull.”

Then give me my stalk. It wasn’t an order. It was a please yes, do it. Because I’d

licked Tim as a stalk, I'd admit, he was tasty, but I'd bet my balls Ricky tasted better.

He shifted, and I leaned forward with my big bull's tongue to lick my stalk from leaves to root, feeling the fuzzy hairs on my tongue.

Long tongue, huge balls. Oh, baby, you're driving me wild.

I mooed in agreement. I wanted to lick Ricky until he was clean, then suck all the custard from him.

Do it! Do it. Make me clean, then dirty me up. You know you wanna suck my custard!

His dirty talk was making my bull shake with eagerness. I licked him again and again, swirling my tongue up and down his stalk. He writhed under my touch as I groomed the fuzzy hairs one way, then the other.

Take me in your mouth.

I took him gently and balanced him between my hooves. Then I sucked him in, his fuzzy hairs doing amazing things to my tongue. His stalk made love to my tongue just as Ricky made love to the pole.

Bite me, baby.

But—

Do it!

My stalk was so fucking bossy, and I loved every order. I bit down, my mouth exploding with the taste of tart rhubarb and sweet custard.

Oh Great Rhu, you're amazing...your tongue... I love your tongue. Wiggle it, baby. Bite me again. I'm hanging upside down, the crowd is going wild...

Ricky's excited babble of praise in my head drove me to the edge. My balls tightened. I was so close... almost there... I just needed one last thing to tip me over the edge...

Next time I'm gonna fuck you like this, my stalk buried deep in your ass.

I moored at the top of my lungs and my balls went wild, spraying my cream over him—over me, over the entire bed—at the thought of his stalk dancing in my ass.

Then he wiggled frantically, yelling in my head, and my mouth flooded with custard. It kept coming until he was a limp stalk.

I placed him on the pillow, and collapsed onto the covers next to my stalk, not ready to shift yet.

Clean me up?

I did as I was told, swirling my tongue over his stalk until I'd swallowed every drop of the mix of my cream that covered his body. Then I lay back and maybe dozed for a while.

Ricky nuzzled me. "I don't think I can move for hours. I'm drained of my custard." Having shifted while dozing, he nudged my thighs apart and stroked his fingers down my limp dick, then gave my balls a comforting squeeze. "But I'm sure there's plenty of cream for me in there, my ballsy-bull."

He wasn't wrong; I had all the cream he could ever want. Like this, I was in no hurry to move away from him, even though we'd wrecked the bed, and I swore one corner

dipped lower than before.

I've never felt so happy. You're all mine.

I loved the satiated happiness rolling from him. The restless energy had quieted just for a while. I pressed a kiss to one nipple, and he shivered a little.

You're my Licky, I mean my Ricky! Dammit, even my thoughts got twisted up with how much I'd enjoyed the tonguing I'd given him.

Ricky laughed softly in my head. You're Licky and I'm Ricky. We're a perfect match for each other.

What could I say to that, except to raise to kiss my mate, loving the way he arched up into me, while I captured his moans.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

I whistled as I made my way down the street, waving at Glass, who was on the opposite side, looking cross. “Hey, what’s got your rhubarb in a twist?”

“Whoever had a go at Bart has been back and decided to try and kidnap Red,” he snapped angrily.

I didn’t take offense, Glass’s usual state was grumpy, and trying to kidnap a stalk? That was a new level of c-r-u-m-b-l-e.

“How did he manage to escape the monster?” Oops. “I mean, whatever the thing was.” Was that any better? I knew that Maximus didn’t like Tim calling him a monster. Did this count? Whoever—or whatever it was—was a monster if it was trying to grab a stalk or two.

Glass, dressed like he’d come from work, came across the street. Evidently he wasn’t up for shouting at me. “He shifted and gave the monster a leafy thrust that seemed to give it a fright, so he let go of him and Red scarpered. He’s at home, recovering.”

“Does Tim know?” I was sure he’d be upset knowing someone had tried to nab the rhubarb. I had been headed home to check in on Mom, I wanted to explain about Burke before bringing him home to meet her. She could get a little overly dramatic and no one wanted to meet the screechy side of Mom. But if they needed me, Mom could wait.

“Yeah,” Glass replied, “he’s heading to the house with his pride to get some

answers.”

Was Burke going too?

I am. Tim’s upset and Maximus isn’t happy as he’s worried we brought trouble to town. You... you aren’t upset about that, are you?

Huh? I looked at Glass, scratching my head. Why would I be upset, my ballsy-bull? You coming here meant I found my mate, as did Tim. What’s to be upset about? I felt his worry and grinned, sending him an image of me covered in his cream and him tonguing me enthusiastically. That should help.

“What... to the Great Rhu? Why have I got that image in my head, Ricky? Fuck, please stop!” Glass growled like the grumpy rhubarb he was. He ran his hands over his eyes, shaking his head as if to dislodge the image I’d sent the whole parcel by mistake. However, embarrassed was not what I felt. I’d won the ball and tongue lottery. I hadn’t known I needed to play and still I’d won. I was a happy stalk.

“What can I say?” I shrugged, catching a few amused stares from those roaming on the other side of the street.

“Nothing, please say nothing and keep your thoughts to yourself. I have bigger rhubarb to worry about.”

“What is Crimson going to do?” I asked, feeling kind of bad because this was a serious situation, and I was thinking about my love life.

“She’s calling a town meeting and inviting the pride, too. See if we can figure this all out before a stalk gets hurt... or worse... c-r-u-m-b-l-e-d.”

We shuddered in unison. No one wanted that.

“I was just heading to see Mom, but I could come with you to your house instead,” I suggested.

His hand came up before I’d finished talking as if to brush off my idea. “No, it’s fine. I don’t think I need you and your mate in the same place doing... what you’re thinking about.” He groaned dramatically. “Can’t you think about anything else, like a normal stalk?”

I grinned at him. “Don’t be silly, this is all I wanna think about. My custard and his cream, it’s—”

He shoved his hand over my mouth, his eyes wide with terror. “To Great Rhu, no more! It’s not normal and I’ve had enough with Tim! Don’t need you to be spouting this nonsense at me.”

“Nonsense?” I mumbled against his palm, then shook his hand free. “It’s not nonsense. It’s all about finding your mate and getting rhubarb happy!” I exclaimed, insulted.

“Whatever you say. I have to go, it seems that your pride has arrived at the house and caused a bit of a commotion.” He groaned. “Now what!” Then he was striding off in the opposite direction to where I was headed.

What’s going on Burke?

Silence.

Burke?

More silence.



Burke answer me... or I'll spank your bottom. Did that sound weird? Too kinky?

Ohhh.

Panting filled my head, and I came to a halt. What are you doing?

I'm struggling to hold on to Apollo. He's got the scent of something and it's sending him doolally!

Oh, that doesn't sound good, so I'll stop pestering you.

Not pestering... and the spanking...

A wave of heat hit me in my stalk, and I grinned all the way home. At the door, I reconsidered the state of my sweats when I glanced down, feeling my stalk waving around looking for its ballsy-bull. Well, this wasn't going to work in front of my mom. I tried to think of non-ball things, like a sudden attack of wilt.

"Why are you hovering outside the door?" I glanced up, seeing Mom in the doorway, and I wilted like I'd had a blast of icy cold. "Is it 'cause you know I heard the news from Ma Baker three doors down that my son got himself a mate? And not a rhubarb," she screeched.

Yep, totally called it. I patted her arm. "He's a bull with the biggest..." oh yeah, maybe that was gonna be too much of an overshare, "heart. He's adorable, Mom, you're gonna love him."

She poked her head out the door past me, looking up and down the neighborhood. "Then where is he?"

"He's dealing with a crisis." It was the truth, so I didn't feel bad. "I'll bring him

around tomorrow before work. We could have dinner together. I'll cook."

"He doesn't eat himself, does he?" She shuddered at the thought.

I had a whole different image in my head, but I didn't imagine my bull was that flexible. I was...

"Nope, he's a veggie, like us." I guided her inside, making sure to work on keeping my thoughts to myself. "Let's see what you got in the cupboards. I'm sure we'll find something."

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

“Stop thinking with your dick and get your other head in the game,” Maximus scolded me as he came back into the kitchen of the rhubarb house with Crimson. “This is serious.”

I hung my head (the big one) and the little head sulked. But my pride leader was right. This was serious. The trouble had only arrived when we did. Now, two stalks had gotten attacked and one of our lions had lost his shit.

I wanted my mate’s arms around me, but I didn’t want him to think I was a needy bull who couldn’t cope without him. Shit, maybe, just maybe, I was a needy bull.

Focus on something else...

What the hell had gotten into Apollo? One minute he was fine, when we were deep in conversation with Crimson, the next he’d shifted to his lion form and was behaving like a lioness in heat. That was the last thing we needed. Leonidas, Gordon and I had to sit on him until he calmed down, and that wasn’t easy. Have you ever ridden a lion? We’re all built on the small side, and Apollo was twice our size.

Apollo sat on the kitchen floor in his human form, naked, with his head in his hands. “What just happened?” He seemed out of it, but Leonidas, Gordon and I stood by, ready to sit on him again. His behavior was not what we were used to, I wasn’t going to take any chances.

The rhubarb stalks huddled at one end of the kitchen, glowering suspiciously at

Apollo. Was it his fault his lion scented something, making it crazy?

“Maybe he’s one of them Jekyll and Hyde types you hear about on the news,” an older stalk declared. She was on the stringy side with bright red hair that needed a redo.

Crimson huffed so impatiently, it made me wonder if she’d held back the eye roll. “Ma, he’s not a secret serial killer.”

“How do you know?” the older woman declared. “He can’t remember a thing.”

She had a point. Then I caught Apollo’s betrayed expression and realized he’d caught my thought. I kneeled beside him. “I’m sorry. That was stupid of me. I don’t believe for a second that you’re responsible for the rhubarb snatching.”

“But she’s right,” Apollo muttered, not looking at anyone. “I don’t remember just losing it. I don’t know why I did. One minute I was talking to Crimson and the next, I was waking up with you guys sitting on me.”

Are you all right? I can feel you’re upset. Ricky’s soft voice was a welcome interaction.

I feel guilty. I said something really stupid and upset Apollo.

Do you need me?

I always need you.

It didn’t seem so bad, making the confession to my mate.

I’ll be there soon.

Maximus turned to Red. “Did you smell your kidnapper?”

Red nodded jerkily, still looking pale and shaky, although I wasn’t sure what he looked like normally. Although I’d say it was a good guess it was from the ‘attack.’ “He smelled like a lion.” Red looked at Gordon, then back at Maximus, only for his attention to go back to Gordon, who I could see wasn’t paying any attention to anyone. His small nose wrinkled, twitching in a way that said he was sniffing something out. He was a good pride member, trying to help Apollo like that.

“See! I told you,” the old woman declared triumphantly.

“Hush, Ma,” Crimson said. “Sniff Apollo, Red.”

Not taking his wary gaze off Apollo, Red came closer, hesitating as he walked past Gordon, and then inched closer to Apollo. He looked to inhale, his shoulders slumping, then he shook his head. “He doesn’t smell like the shifter who attacked me.”

Thank the Great Rhu for that. It seemed Tim was rubbing off on me, or was it Ricky?

Come on, concentrate! At least Maximus’s command wasn’t said aloud to add to my embarrassment.

Crimson turned to Bart. “You too, old stalk.”

Bart shuffled closer, staying behind Red. He sniffed too.

“What do you think, Bart? Is this the shifter who attacked you?”

He shook his head, and I think all of our pride released a collective breath. “No, he’s not the one. Whoever it is, he’s not part of this pride.”

Red nodded in agreement. “We smell these guys around Valentine. The shifter who tried to kidnap me is a stranger.”

The old woman huffed and folded her arms across her chest, clearly not convinced.

“We’re getting distracted,” Crimson said. “Apollo, we’ll find out what happened to you soon, but first we need to deal with the danger to the town.”

“I don’t recognize the scent on Red,” Maximus muttered, his brows tugging together. “But that doesn’t mean to say this has nothing to do with us. We left trouble behind us when we left our pride, and it might be following us here.”

All of this was above my pay grade. I sat in the corner with Drew and listened to the discussion and kept my thoughts to myself. Then Ricky bounced into the kitchen, ignored everyone else, and came straight to me. He wrapped his arm around my shoulders, tugged me close, and I relaxed against him, inhaling his sweet aroma. All my worries melted away, I was safe in his arms.

“Better now?” he murmured, pressing a kiss to the top of my head.

“Much, now you’re here.” I rubbed my head against his chest, wishing I could shift and beg him to scratch behind my ears.

“You needed me, my ballsy-bull. Of course I’d come here for you.” Ricky glanced around the room, giving me the best hug. “Where’s Glass?”

“Right here,” said a large man with a mop of dark hair, who strolled in filling up the space with wide shoulders that nearly didn’t fit through the door. “I got waylaid,” he explained, his nose wrinkling. Then his eyes narrowed on the naked man sitting on the kitchen floor.

That's when the shit really hit the fan.

Apollo shifted and roared loud enough to burst my eardrums, and we were back to all hands on deck once more.

Could this day get any worse?

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

My ass hit the ground as Burke shifted and charged for Apollo, who was snarling and pawing at the kitchen floor while Maximus stood in front of him, pushing him back. “Apollo, what the fuck? Shift back, now.”

Did Apollo listen? No. I had no clue why not, because I wasn’t officially a part of the pride—or was I?—although I did want to do as Maximus said. That commanding voice was something else. Crimson wasn’t that kind of alpha, although she was very protective of all of us. Maximus had a big growly alpha power. It snapped at the skin like an elastic band pinging in quick succession. Not pleasant at all.

“Apollo,” Maximus growled, and the room flooded with the scent of arousal. “Do as I say!”

Tim shrugged when everyone looked at him. “It’s hot,” he said, not looking or sounding unrepentant. “What can I say?”

Apollo’s mane blew out and he eyed Maximus like he was going to eat him whole to get to what he wanted—Glass.

I glanced at the rhubarb in question, who remained rooted to the spot like he’d been planted in the soil.

What the heck was happening?

Glass continued to remain motionless while everyone else in the room just looked at



each other. Glass stared wide eyed at the snarling beast, whose head kept moving, trying to get a good look at Glass who was large enough to be seen behind our pride leader. Or that was how it looked to me.

My scrambled rhubarb brain, from the noise and the shock of seeing a lion going all... lion, took several seconds to catch up. My bull plonked his hairy ass on top of Apollo, along with a goat and another lion, until Apollo was prone on the floor.

Did that stop the growling? Heck no, it made it worse. My fuzzies were getting a workout, but Glass finally unglued himself from the spot and stepped around Maximus.

My mouth hung open when he pushed Maximus back a whole two steps, then demanded of the others, "Get off him, now."

Ohhhhh. Mates. I announced it to everyone but met a stunned silence inside my head I'd never experienced before. It was like radio static, nothing came with it.

Burke, Gordon and Leonidas rose at once and Apollo got up slowly as the room erupted with excited chatter.

Are they really mates?

I grinned at Burke, whose tongue lolled out the side of his mouth working on distracting my mucky mind into the rhubarb gutter when there was clearly a situation that needed addressing.

I think so.

The questions fired around the room went unanswered because no one paused long enough to let that happen.

“Another one!”

“How many are in the pride?”

“Do you think they got some kind of poison to cause this?” That came from Crimson’s mom who loved to watch true crime and spouted conspiracy theories if anyone made the mistake of standing still in her vicinity.

“Sniff everyone, can you smell if one of the others belongs to us?”

“Behave,” Crimson said, giving the other stalks one of her hard stares. “Let’s give Glass and Apollo some space.”

“What? It was just getting interesting. And aren’t we here to figure out who tried to hurt Red?” said Crimson’s mom.

Glass blinked slowly and looked around at everyone as if seeing them all for the first time. I got a funny feeling. Disquiet? I couldn’t say for sure when he closed everyone out.

“Yes, Red... we’re here to figure this out,” he said, sounding nothing like his usual confident self as his gaze returned to Apollo. “Figure out what lion wants to kidnap us. That’s what’s important here.”

Apollo made a chuffing noise, which wasn’t a happy sound. He gave Glass a look that was all big, sorrowful eyes. That’s how it seemed to me. He slinked towards the door that remained open from when Glass came in, then disappeared outside. His grumbling sounds were the only noise in the room for a second before everyone was back to talking over each other.

I went to Burke and knelt at his side, giving him a hug and then rubbing behind his

furry ears like he'd wanted earlier. I felt his sadness.

It's gonna be okay, my ballsy-bull. They'll figure it out.

Apollo's so upset.

I could see that. I thought for a minute, not listening to the talking happening around us. Maybe we can help.

How? He sniffed, his tongue came out, and he licked my cheek.

I'm not sure, but I'm sure if we put all our heads together, we can come up with something. Look how Tim and Maximus helped us. Two rhubarbs are better than one. Although one is all you're getting. You know, cause you're my ballsy-bull.

A dollop of warmth hit me in all the feels.

I only want one. His tongue tickled my cheek, and I felt a shiver all the way down my stalk. Concentrate, no big ball thoughts, none.

Not even a little one? My bull gave my ear a suggestive lick.

Maybe one... but let's keep that for when we're alone, okay?

Alright, but I want more than one.

You got it.

I'd give my ball—bull—whatever he wanted.

"So what's the plan?" I said, looking from Glass to Maximus.

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

Plan? What plan? Pride and town had spent hours talking over each other and my head ached so much I felt like my eyes were crossed. My stomach spun in dizzying circles, like Ricky on his pole.

Lean into me, baby.

Ricky hauled me against him, and I laid my head on his lean chest, listening to the steady sound of his heart thumping under my ear. It was comforting, and I relaxed a little under his soothing fingers.

What's wrong, my ballsy-bull?

I don't feel so good .

That was an understatement. I felt dreadful. I wanted to go back to the pride house, graze on lush grass, then fall asleep in Ricky's arms, either in the soil or in my bed.

That sounds good, he agreed. We'll go home soon.

Warmth spread from my ears to my balls at the way he called the pride house his home.

My home is where you are.

I wanted to go right now and show Ricky just what that meant to me, but first I

needed to support my pride, especially after the weirdness with Apollo. And Ricky needed to support the town. It didn't escape my notice that Glass spent more time staring at the door Apollo had vanished through, rather than keeping his attention focused on the proceedings. Would he find his lion after the meeting?

I sighed and focused on the speaker, a rhubarb who clearly didn't like our pride but had a good point.

"The fact is no one knows who's sneaking into Valentine to snatch innocent stalks off the street. We're Valentine, a town of good rhubarb shifters who keep ourselves to ourselves," he said querulously as I spied the deputy badge tucked in his pocket. Why didn't he just take charge then?

"And everyone knows everybody else's business," Ricky muttered in my ear.

"We've no CCTV," the stalk continued. "We need eyes everywhere." If he was in charge of the town security, why didn't he come up with a plan?

"It's a good point," Crimson replied, eyeing the stalk thoughtfully.

"I have a plan for that if Crimson and the townsfolk agree," Maximus said. "The pride will install cameras all over town."

There were unhappy mutterings among the rhubarb residents, but the deputy stayed quiet. He clearly wasn't up to the job, but no one seemed to notice, so I kept quiet.

"Who would be looking at the video footage?" one young stalk asked, his expression worried.

I wondered what he got up to that being on camera would concern him so much.

“It’s an excellent idea, and we’d take shifts,” Crimson said firmly. “Teams from the town and the pride.”

“The monsters are outsiders, how dare they take our stalks for themselves,” the young stalk muttered.

My head ached so hard I couldn’t work out whether he was talking about the attempted kidnapping or the mating, but I felt anger rolling from Maximus and Ricky.

“We don’t call them monsters now and you know the Great Rhu decides who is our mate,” Crimson snapped, her stern gaze fixed on the stalk who shrank away from her scowl. “Not every rhubarb needs to go through the entire town to find the one for him.”

The stalk flushed an angry red, and he looked away. I heard Ricky’s snort in my mind. I guessed the stalk came with a reputation.

You have no idea. Ricky chuckled.

“Be quiet, Howie,” Glass reprimanded. “The monsters—the pride—are going to help us.”

Howie subsided with an annoyed huff.

“The pride will pay for the cameras,” Maximus insisted, “but we’ll need volunteers to help man it. One from the pride and one from the town. Just until we catch these lions. If we see something suspicious, we’ll be able to relay it to the whole town. Tim and I will take the first shift.”

“You’ve got to focus on the cameras,” Crimson said pointedly, her gaze going to Tim, then Maximus.

Maximus flushed bright stalk pink, but Tim just smirked at his former alpha.

“We can do that... and have some fun. I can multitask.” Then the color drained from his face, and he clapped a hand over his mouth. “Sorry, gotta go,” he said, his voice muffled. He bolted for the door.

The smell of vomit tipped my delicate stomach, and I rushed after him. We stood on opposite sides of the path, tossing our cookies into two poor shrubs that didn’t deserve such abuse. One vomiter was bad, but two were just plain terrible when they were sicking up the front of Glass’s home.

When my stomach quit trying to crawl out of my throat, I looked over at Tim, who was still heaving. I closed my eyes and focused on my breathing and ignored the bitter taste in my mouth. What I wouldn’t give to go brush my teeth, but I didn’t want to leave Tim on his own. I felt better now, although I wasn’t used to being sick, so I was still a little wobbly on my legs. Shifters didn’t get sick as a rule, or not that I’d heard about. Was there something wrong with me? With Tim? Had we caught the same bug?

Tim stared at me over the path, wiped his mouth with a shaky hand and gave me a wan smile. “You too?”

“Is this what humans call a bug?” I questioned. “Do Rhubarb get sick cause I gotta say, it sucks.”

Tim gave a wry smile. “No, honey, this is no bug. This is something much bigger.”

I was confused. “What’s wrong with us? Is it like the wilt? Because Ricky is fine. It’s only me who’s sick.”

We’d made sure to bite each other, everywhere, during sex, after the scare of nearly

losing Tim to wilt. I wasn't taking any chances with my mate and if the biting was fun, then doing a thorough job wasn't a crime.

He stared at me like I'd nearly lost my mind. "Burke, do you really not know what's wrong with you?"

I shook my head and regretted it instantly. My head and stomach protested as they pitched, and I had to bend over again. Tim came over and rubbed my back, which was really brave with what had splattered the soil earlier.

"Why've you got your hands on my mate?" Ricky asked from the doorway, his tone icy.

"Get your hands off him," Maximus snarled at his side.

Tim rolled his eyes, but he took a step away from me. "Calm down, you're both being ridiculous. He was sick, that's all. We both were."

Maximus strode over and hauled Tim into his arms.

"Careful," Tim said, looking queasy again.

Ricky wrapped me in his embrace. "You were sick?"

I rested my head on his chest. "I feel better now. I've never been sick before, I want to go home."

"Take him back to the pride house," Maximus ordered.

"There are saltines in the kitchen," Tim added. "That should settle your stomach."



I was relieved they didn't need us to stay, but I was worried about Tim, too. And why would saltines help me when I'd up chucked everything I'd eaten? "Shouldn't you come too? What if others get sick because of us?"

Ricky's chest jumped beneath my ear. I raised my head and discovered he was laughing. And the other two were beaming from ear to ear.

"Am I missing something?" I asked cautiously, feeling Ricky keep his thoughts to himself.

Maximus waved a hand. "Go with your mate. He can explain the bovines and the rhubarb."

"The stalks and the bulls," Tim added, laughing despite how pale he remained.

"What are you talking about?" I asked in exasperation, feeling I was missing something vital but too tired and queasy to figure it out myself.

Ricky drew me against his heart and held me close. You're pregnant, my ballsy-bull. You're suffering from morning sickness, like most pregnant omegas.

My jaw dropped open, and I mooed loudly.

What. The. Fuck!

I did what all bulls did when confronted with such earth-shattering news. I fainted.

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*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Ricky

“Bull down!” Maximus yelled.

I jumped at his bellow, nearly missing what was happening to my mate. Thank Great Rhu, I caught Burke before he slumped to the ground in a dead faint. I shut out the laughter from Tim as I heaved my bull into my arms.

“You’re not funny,” I aimed at Tim and Maximus, who joined Tim in sniggering loudly. “My baby’s in shock.”

“Yeah, sorry, we should have told you he’s prone to fainting,” Maximus agreed. “His brain short-circuits and it’s ‘bull down’.”

I growled at him. My new alpha didn’t look sorry, and their laughter followed me as I stomped off, holding my bull protectively.

Truth was, my brain was just as fried at the news.

Baby rhubarb.

We were going to have baby stalks.

My feet faulted. Ohhh, baby cows.

How cute would a baby cow be?

“I’m going to be a daddy.” I shouted the news to the empty street.

If I hadn’t been carrying a large-ass—okay, cute ass-bull in my arms, I might have done a twirl.

Okay, maybe that thought could take a back seat until I got my mate back to the house safely. Being dizzy wasn’t an option.

My hours of pole dancing practice meant the trip to the house was not too difficult. What I didn’t like was seeing my bull still out cold when I laid him on his bed. I sat next to him and stroked his cheek.

“Baby, wake up,” I crooned.

Nothing.

“Sweetie, you need to open your eyes.”

Still nothing.

I scratched at my jaw, staring at my beautiful mate. Babies. We were gonna be daddies. My knees knocked together, and I slumped to the edge of the bed. Okay fainting, yeah that could be a thing for sure. I needed to focus. We needed our own patch for the babies. That was a good place to start preparing, right?

Did bulls give birth in a patch?

I dug my hand into my pocket to pull out my phone and typed in ‘bull’s giving birth’. Noise assaulted my ears, and the screen showed a cow mooing for all its worth as legs dangled out of her ass. And I’m out.

I closed the screen, shutting out the awful mooing. That was a cow, what was it like for bulls?

Please let my ballsy-bull have rhubarb. That wasn't painful, was it?

Crimson, is giving birth to rhubarb painful?

I waited and waited some more. Crimson, help!

What is it? What happened? Is it another lion attack?

No. Burke's pregnant.

My oh my. How amazing, him and Tim together. New stalks for town.

She didn't sound surprised, and I wondered if she'd already suspected. Our alpha knew everything going on in the town.

What if it's not a stalk? Bull's... the video to Great Rhu... I'm not sure I want that for my mate. Although I'm not fussy, rhubarb or tiny cow. Just... I don't want my mate to suffer.

The Great Rhu will decide, and whatever it is, you're a strong rhubarb. You'll be there for your mate.

I nodded, looking at my unconscious mate. She was right; I was strong and determined. Thank you. Gotta go, I have a mate to wake up.

She was gone in a hurry when I might have projected exactly how I was going to do that. I stripped my mate, thinking about what he'd wanted earlier. I took a minute to rub toothpaste around his teeth and clean them. Do you know how hard it is to clean

teeth when someone isn't cooperating? Hard.

After rinsing my hands, I climbed on the bed, my hands stroking his flat belly, grinning when his cock thickened despite his brain remaining offline. I could work with that.

I stripped next to him and shifted so I could roll my stalk up his leg, lifting my tiny fuzzies to rub his skin. A noise whistled past his teeth, and he fidgeted. I grinned, knowing my fuzzies drove him wild, and rolled to his enormous balls, then wiggled in between his legs. My stalk pressed to the underside of his cock and between his sack, I twirled and imagined myself dancing.

The groan was low and needy. That's it, my ballsy-bull, sing our song of Great Rhu love.

Oh... yeah... p-please. His hips tilted forward as his thighs closed, keeping me right where he wanted as he rode the stalk.

His musky scent increased, and I twirled faster, sensing his growing need before he thrust into the air. Cream flying about, he rolled to sitting, grabbing my stalk and bringing it in front of his firing cock and covering me in it. The sticky cream ran down my fuzzies and I leaked custard. That's it, my ballsy-bull, cover me in your cream. Dirty me up so you can lick me clean.

Panting and groaning, he sucked me into the warm, wet cavern of his mouth. His tongue snaked around my stalk, lapping up my juices.

So tasty.

Only for you.

Breathless and sticky, he flopped back on the bed and I shifted, pinning him to the mattress as I lay on top of him. I cupped his cheeks, staring deep into his beautiful eyes. “Feeling better, Daddy?”

His lips widened into a big grin. “We’re gonna be Daddies.”

I kissed him just because. “We are.” I kissed him again, thinking I needed him to clean his teeth properly, but that could wait. My Burke was feeling all kinds of happy at thoughts of babies now the shock had worn off.

“But will it be baby rhu’s or calves?” I murmured, intrigued and impatient to find out.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:53 pm*

Burke

“This is not my fault,” Ricky protested.

I grinned. He sounded as if he’d been caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

“I’m gonna stage an intervention if he keeps doing that,” Maximus declared.

“How exactly, oh custard of my loins, are you going to intervene?” Tim asked, rubbing his belly. He was such a slim stalk, it made the pronounced baby bump really obvious.

“I’ll cut it down. It’s more rust than metal, anyway. He’s not safe up there.”

‘Up there’ was ten feet off the ground. I clung on and rested my forehead against the pole as I listened to them talk. Maximus was right about one thing. This pole was a rust factory.

I looked down at my mate and pride leader. “It’s not my fault either. You know I have no control over this.”

Ricky looked up and grinned at me. “Want me to come up and rescue you, heart of mine?”

“Yes please,” I confessed sheepishly, doing my best to hide my embarrassment.

He climbed the pole as if he were born to do it, reaching me in seconds.

“You’re going to have to teach them how to get down,” I pointed out. Or was that me who needed teaching? Who knew, but right then I wasn’t thinking about anything other than falling flat on my face.

Ricky groaned aloud. “I’ve tried. They’re not listening to reason.”

I sighed heavily because he was right. The babies never listened.

We had... an issue .

My babies liked to climb. Problem with that... they weren’t even born yet. They loved climbing just like their Papa. How that was possible when I was as agile as a bull, Great Rhu would need to explain to me. So far, I’d found myself up trees, poles and ladders, with no clue how I got there. The first several times, it freaked me out. At least now I can say I’m damn good at climbing.

The problem was none of my little stalks knew how to get me down. I had an alarm and a tracker now, so Ricky could find me and come rescue me. He found it funny. The pride and the town, not so much. It could be the fact I was nearly always stark ballsy naked, and my balls were the first thing they saw when they looked up. It wasn’t a show anyone needed to see, except my stalk, if only I could get my babies to agree.

Ricky guided me down, and I reached the ground, sighing in relief. I shifted, needing the comfort of four hooves in the soil. My mate scratched behind my fluffy ears, and I mooed low in pleasure. He could do that all day.

Maximus gave me a stern look, but I could see the worry behind his eyes. “This has got to stop, Ricky. What happens if your mate faints again and falls to the ground? It could hurt your babies.”



“I’ve had that conversation with them,” Ricky muttered, his hand stroking my belly. “I don’t know who they take after, I was never like this.”

I mused to make a point that until I’d gotten pregnant, I’d never been adventurous. My baby rhubarb sure had changed that, and we both had tried over and over to talk sense into them. But they were babies, and they didn’t understand danger. When you were giving birth to a calf and a crown of rhubarb, it seemed the rules were thrown out the window, or off the top of the pole. They loved climbing, and I was the only way they could get there. The town had locked away its ladders, but unless they wanted to cut all the trees down, there was no shortage of places for me to climb—them .

I was giving birth to alpha shifters. We knew that already. How a beta and an omega could produce alphas we didn’t know, but they’d informed us the second they started talking. Did I mention they could do that? Apart from freaking out the town, the other thing they did was talk, endlessly. To me, to their Papa, to Tim and his babies, to Maximus and Crimson. Anyone who would listen. Ricky was enchanted by his chatty babies and spent hours with his ear pressed against my belly.

I shifted back to my human form and kissed Ricky. “I’m hungry,” I confessed. I usually munched on fresh grass while Ricky took time out in the soil, but there were times only human food would do.

“Drew made us a veggie lasagna,” he said, slinging an arm around my shoulders and holding me close as I leaned in. “When the alarm went up, he said you’d need it.”

Drew knew me well. I was feeding for seven now and I was always hungry. It was amazing I wasn’t twice the size.

As we walked to the house, Ricky pressed a kiss to my forehead. “Maximus is worried.”

“I know.” I heaved a sigh.

“He’s got a point. If you faint halfway up the pole...”

I was glad he left it there. No one needed to remind me I had precious cargo on board.

“I know that, too.”

“Baby, we’ve got to convince the little rascals that they can climb with Papa when they’re born. Everyone who talks to them has got to convince them.”

I snorted. “Good luck with that one, Papa.”

He shoved me up against the side of the house, pinning my hands above my head, his mouth hovering over mine. “No one's gonna hurt my beautiful, glorious, sexy ballsy-bull. Not even our babies.” He placed a hand over my belly. “You’re mine, all mine.”

The aromas of rhubarb and custard intensified between us. Then he kissed me so beautifully, my toes curled, and my inner bull was ready to roll over and show his belly. All that possession was mine.

The whole pride was waiting impatiently for us when we joined them, looking a little more flushed, but who could blame me.

“We thought you’d gotten lost,” Maximus said impatiently.

“Just having a discussion with my omega,” Ricky said cheerfully, giving me a saucy wink.

Tim arched an eyebrow. “With your tongue down his throat?”

“That’s the one,” Ricky agreed, not at all embarrassed at being called out.

I was not going to blush.

I was not.

I rolled my eyes at my epic fail. I went the same shade as Randy's hair. Ricky smirked and led me to the table. We'd barely sat down when there was a knock at the door.

Randy sighed, dug out his wallet, and handed a note to Drew.

"Told you he'd be here today," Drew crowed in delight.

"Who?" Apollo asked.

Randy grunted and headed toward the door. To absolutely no one's surprise, except perhaps Apollo, Glass appeared behind Randy.

"Hey." He looked uncomfortable, his gaze zeroing in on Apollo.

Apollo went several shades of rhubarb and he looked as if he was about to bolt when Tim clamped a hand around his wrist. The lion couldn't go anywhere unless he took Tim with him, and that wasn't going to happen with Maximus right there.

"Come in, Glass," Maximus said. "Do you want to eat? Drew made veggie lasagna."

At Glass's nod, we all shuffled up, which meant Drew had to press against me from head to foot. Like I'd mind that when we were the best of friends? Of course, that meant the only place available then was next to Apollo, who glared at his alpha.

Maximus gave him his 'you wanna fight me?' expression.

Like Apollo would fight his alpha. But to my amusement, Glass was glaring at Maximus. Now this was a stalk who'd fight the alpha lion without thinking about it.

Ricky laughed in my mind. You know if Glass joins the pride, the fights are going to be spectacular. He's the grumpiest stalk in town.

Maybe Apollo will mellow him, I suggested, because he was more chilled than Maximus.

Ricky's snort told me what he thought of that idea. I rested my head on his shoulder and let the chatting and laughing wash around me as I cupped my belly. I was such a lucky bull.

Ricky

“How long?” I gawped, wiggling a finger in my ear because Burke couldn’t have said what he’d said.

“Two hundred-seventy-three-days, give or take,” he answered me again as I eyed his dancing belly, trying to consider how big my little bull would be at the end of his pregnancy.

I patted his hand, continuing to cuddle him against my chest as I stared at the wall over his head, unseeingly. Crimson?

Hmmm?

Crimson, how long do stalk pregnancies last?

We’d started this conversation after Glass had left, looking like he’d gotten a kick to the nuts when Apollo didn’t get up and follow him to the door as he clearly wanted. Lions were clearly good at holding a grudge. Then things had gone a little rhubarb-shaped.

Drew had given Apollo an eye roll that left no one in doubt he thought Apollo was being a dick. Then Randy had offered to take Apollo’s mate off his hands and that had led to a bloody lip and a black eye, despite it being a joke. We could all see he was joking, but not Apollo.

To avoid the drama, I’d hurried Burke out of the room, much like Maximus had done

with Tim, and we'd come up to his room. Then I'd started this silly conversation—

Stalks vary from season to season, could be four weeks or eight to twelve. Is there a problem?

Oh, I'd stalk there is! Cows are pregnant for two hundred-seventy-three days. What does that mean for my bull? My stalks?

All of that I kept strictly for Crimson. My ballsy-bull did not need the stress, not when he got uncontrollable urges to do things he wouldn't normally. My brain was doing a pole dance, a complicated one that left me figuring out how to get me back on the ground, ready for a bull birthing like no other.

We don't have a doctor in town. We've never needed one. I could always figure things out. I think we need help.

You don't say! I wasn't willing to take any risks with my mate. Help from who? I was screeching, and my heart was beating hard enough to break free of my chest.

"What's wrong?" Burke lifted his head, his eyes narrowing as he looked up at me.

"It's... you see... oh Great Rhu. We need a doctor," I exclaimed, making a mockery of not sharing any stress with my mate.

His brows tugged together. "We do? For what?" he asked, confusion swimming in his eyes.

"Your pregnancy. Tim is just having stalks. You are having both stalks and a calf. The difference between the two... we need to figure out." I'd opted for the truth, then wished I hadn't when he mooed in distress.

"My babies." His hands cupped his little round belly. "What does that mean for my

babies?” he continued.

“We’ll figure it out, I swear we will.” Won’t we, Crimson? We’ll figure this out. There was no way I wanted to be a liar.

I’ll make some calls. That doc from Potatoville, he’s been on the news talking about cross species. I’m sure he’ll help us.

Cross species. I shuddered, not liking the implications of that, tucking Burke back against me and making soothing noises. “It’s going to be fine. You, me, the babies, everything will work out. If an alpha wolf can give birth to potatoes and a potato can give birth to pups, we got this.” Did I sound convincing?

“You promise?” Burke made an undignified sniffing noise, then pushed his face into the curve of my neck, snuffling.

“I promise.” If I crossed my fingers when I replied and chose to send a request to the Great Rhu, my ballsy-bull didn’t need to know.

~/~/~/~

Three days later

I smiled at the man—potato sat at the kitchen table drinking a cup of tea, looking right at home. Burke clung to my arm after he’d spent two hours letting Doc Picker examine him, draw blood and do a scan thing with a portable machine he’d brought with him in the bed of his truck. Doc Picker definitely had come prepared. “So, what can you tell us?”

He swallowed the sip of tea he’d taken and gave us both a kindly smile that crinkled the edges of his eyes.

Does he look worried to you?

No, baby.

Are you sure?

Yes.

“Now you have to know this ain’t my area of expertise, but the girls all look to be the right size after talking to Crimson. I’ll need to wait for the blood panel to come back, but I’d say from the scan, all your babies are growing at the same rate. The little calf is keeping up with your stalk.”

“G-girl’s,” I said, choking with emotion.

“Yep, two girls,” he replied, his grin spreading over his craggy face,

I looked at my ballsy-bull. “We’re having girls!”

“I can hear,” he muttered, then promptly burst into tears.

I quickly pushed my seat back from the table and scooped him up, placing him on my lap. I patted his back and gave Doc an apologetic smile. Burke clung to me, and I rocked him in my arms, thinking of it as practice.

“Hormones. They’ll be rife for a while,” Doc explained, before taking another sip of his tea, not looking at all concerned. “You’ll get used to it.”

He was looking at me when he said it, so I nodded, hoping like all rhubarb, we wouldn’t get time to get used to the hormonal swings. “So the pregnancy, our girls, they’re all alright?” I asked once more for clarity.



Doc nodded. "Looks like. Crimson has offered her spare room to me to stay at her house to be close by for you both. Support you through this."

"Don't you need to go home?" I asked, my brows rising when he looked at his cup wearing a scowl.

Oops, what have I said?

Huh?

Sorry, I was thinking about the potato, he looks... upset.

Burke glanced up, appearing happy to have a distraction. He does. He looks like Apollo.

You're right. Could be he has a mate he's having problems with too.

Apollo was being lion-headed, and Glass was letting everyone know how pissed he was about not getting any lion hugs.

"Nope, I'm not needed at home right now." When he glanced up, I had to focus. I got the impression whatever he was thinking about made him unhappy, especially with how his mouth tugged down at the corners. "So I'll stay and help here. I brought some soil to see if it helps as much as it does for our kind."

My thoughts changed track when Burke perked up at the idea. "That's generous. Maybe you might like to do some tests on our soil. It's magical too." Or it was for rhubarb.

"Great. I can do that after I've settled at Crimson's."

"I told you, I'm not doing it with him!" Apollo roared and Burke jerked out of my

lap, running for the door.

“You are,” Maximus roared back. “We are all pulling our weight watching the cameras, and it’s your turn.”

I darted up. “Sorry, looks like we have a situation.”

He waved me away, placing his cup down, and getting up. “It’s fine, I’ll leave through the back door and take some soil. You know where I’ll be if you need me.” Then he slipped out the door as I went after Burke.

In the large living area, I went to stand behind Burke, rubbing his tense shoulders. Apollo was snarling at Maximus, who looked unconcerned.

“I ain’t sitting with Glass for eight hours. Nope, not happening. Nope.”

The doorbell rang, and everyone looked at the door before we all looked at Apollo. “Then you can tell him.” On that, Maximus nodded to the rest of us. “You guys, let’s give them some space.”

We all trooped out of the room. “Do you think that will work?” Randy whispered to Burke.

He shrugged. “Who knows? I’ve never known Apollo to be as bull-headed as me,” he whisper-shouted.

“Shush,” Maximus murmured as we entered the kitchen before he shut the door. “Let’s give them time to figure it out.”

We’d set the monitors up in the upstairs attic after clearing it out, as it was the only empty room in the pride house. We’d all be taking turns with a rhubarb to watch the monitors.

Just the thought of it was boring, unless a stalk had his ballsy-bull sitting on his lap. I cheered up at that. Hours of being alone with my bull? That wasn't so bad. Maybe Glass could persuade Apollo to sit on his lap, that might make them a little less grumpy.

Talking about sitting on your lap...

I grinned and took hold of my ballsy-bulls hand. Whatever my baby wants.

Oh, ice cream with pickles... or pickles ice cream. He looked expectantly at me, his big brown eyes begging. Do you think they'll have that in town?

Wasn't he just the cutest? I gave him a lip-smacking kiss. Let's go find out.