

“This is the place,” Craig announced as he parked in front of a large building that appeared to be a warehouse of sorts. It was plain and unassuming, especially considering what the fox claimed was inside.

Nephyr felt cold as he stared at the building. His shock had yet to wear off. “W-what do you mean, adult nursery? This was not in the agreement I signed!”

“Actually, it was, in a way. There was a bit of fine print that made it so you could be used as a candidate to test out certain experimental recreational activities during the length of your sentencing. In layman’s terms—or baby talk, if you will—you have to spend the night here, whether you want to or not!” Craig grinned, stepping out of his car.

The falcon whimpered, fidgeting with his seatbelt buckle and nervously shifting in his seat. The movement caused the crinkly undergarment poorly hidden under his shorts to rustle loudly, reminding him of its existence. Of course, it was a little difficult to forget about it. His first day at the correctional facility—a preschool classroom—had been humiliatingly stressful, and he’d so been looking forward to a night off, where he could just relax and forget his troubles for a while. But now he was on the other side of town from his home, about to enter a place that would, by the sounds of it, treat him even more like a baby than Miss Garland had.

“Come on, Neph, while we’re young! I’ve got a date tonight!” Craig growled as he opened the passenger side door. “The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can part ways.”

That, at least, was the one good thing about all this. Nephyr couldn’t stand the fox’s prickly personality, and not just because he was the one who’d ratted him out about stealing money from work. They had always been rivals. And now, he would be going on a date while the falcon would be stuck being treated like a baby. Feeling as though his pride had completely evaporated, Nephyr stumbled out of the car, not meeting his companion’s eyes as they walked towards the front door of the warehouse. There were a few signs and warnings about the place being a government building, and that entry without proper authorization would not be tolerated. Craig fished a keycard out of his jacket pocket and swiped it on a box next to the door. A buzzer went off briefly, followed by the sound of the lock opening. The fox led the way inside, with Nephyr close behind.

The bird looked around at the entry room as the door closed and locked itself behind them. It strongly reminded him of the waiting room at his doctor’s office,

with chairs arranged in half circles on either end of the room, and a pair of televisions hanging in opposite corners. Despite the seating capacity being at least two dozen, he and Craig were the only ones here, apart from a female husky sitting behind the reception counter. She waved them over, putting on a pair of reading glasses as she looked at a piece of paper. “Good evening, you two. Nephyr, is it?”

The falcon gulped as Craig nudged him forward. “Y-yes ma’am, that’s me. Erm, h-how did you know?”

“Because you’re one of the only two who haven’t checked in today, and the other one is a lady salamander,” the husky replied matter-of-factly, peering at him over the rim of her glasses. “My eyesight may not be what it used to, but I’ll be darned if I can’t tell a bird apart from a lizard.” She grinned, winking at him.

Despite his anxiety, Nephyr couldn’t help but giggle. “F-fair enough, miss.”

The canine nodded at Craig. “You can go now, mister. We’ll handle things from here.”

“Thank you, ma’am. Now, you be a good boy for the staff tonight, alright? They’re gonna take good care of you, so you should show them some respect! I’ll be by in the morning to pick you up for school. Seeya then, buddy!” The fox smiled toothily, giving him a pat on the back. Nephyr shuddered and turned away from him, but by that time, Craig was already headed back to the door. It was just him and the husky once his temporary guardian left.

She looked him up and down. “I can tell that you’re nervous, poor thing. Don’t you worry; we’re going to treat you very well, provided you’re on your best behavior.”

“I’m not a hatchling,” Nephyr hissed softly, scowling as he crossed his wings. He thought he was scowling—in reality, it was little more than a pout. “I don’t wanna be here...”

“We both know you don’t have a choice, dear...here, take this.” The falcon turned his head to see her holding out a wrapped lollipop to him. It was strawberry flavored, which happened to be his favorite. He churred softly as he hesitantly accepted it, unwrapping it and putting the candy head in his mouth, suckling on it. “There’s a good lad. Go on and have a seat, I’ll page your caretaker so she can come and get you. It’ll only take a minute or two.”

Nephyr nodded, feeling subdued as he licked the lollipop. There was no point in throwing a tantrum before things even started. He sat down in one of the chairs, looking up at the television nearest him. A cartoon of some kind was on, and he quickly surmised that the target demographic was just a few years younger than him. It was a show that was teaching the viewer about words, spelling, and pronunciation. Apparently, “puppy” was one of the most complex words in the English dictionary. It was really rather boring, but it was more interesting to look at than the rest of the dull, grayish-white room, so it caught his attention and didn’t let go.

Fortunately (or perhaps otherwise), he didn’t have to stare at the colorful screen for too long. Another door eventually opened, and he turned his head to see someone entering the room. The newcomer was a bird, like himself. She was a red-tailed hawk, as evidenced by the signature orange-red feathers on her tail. The rest of her plumage ranged from dark brown to dusky yellow, and she had a black stripe along the middle of her head, seeming to color most of her beak as well. Her eyes were a deep brown, complementing the most prominent color of her feathers nicely. Dressed in a purple gown and white apron and being at least a head taller than Nephyr, she had a motherly look to her as she smiled and paced over to him, her talons clacking on the tiled floor. She held a wing out to him in greeting. “Hello, little one! You must be Nephyr. So nice to meet you!”

“Um...y-yes, that’s me,” he stammered, standing up to shake her wing. “Nice to, um, m-meet you too, miss.”

“Evie! My name is Evie.” She ruffled his head feathers, making him wince, but he fought the urge to pull away. “I’ll be your caretaker during your stay. Come right this way, dear! Do you need your diaper changed before I show you to the playroom?”

Nephyr blinked and shook his head. “N-no ma’am, I don’t.” His claim was supported as she used a wing-digit to pull back the waistband of his shorts and diaper to check anyway, revealing that he was in fact clean. “Um, w-what do you mean, ‘playroom’?”

“Play. Room. A room where you play!” answered Evie, holding his wing as she led him through the door he’d entered from, nodding to the husky before leaving. “You have a little while before dinner and bedtime, so you’ll stay in the playroom for the time being. You won’t be alone, of course! There will be a few other babies in there, too. Some are like you and don’t have a choice to be here, but others are here voluntarily.”

Nephyr shook his head as he tried to process the influx of information. There were so many things that the hawk had just said that he needed her to elaborate on. “Others? Of their own volition? What do you mean?”

“I mean that there are some who signed up for our program on their own accord. They’re going to be babies with you! Your playmates! It’ll be easy to tell who wants to be here and who doesn’t, though.”

“Their own accord? W-wait a sec,” the falcon said, pulling away from Evie’s grasp. They halted in the hallway they were traveling down, looking at one another. “I have a g-good idea of what’s going on here. Y-you’re gonna be treating me like a hatchling as part of my sentence, or punishment, or whatever. B-but you’re telling me that...there are people here that *want* to be here? And not l-like you, where they’re just doing their jobs. People that signed up to be treated like children? *Adults* who willingly put their name down to—”

“That’s *enough*. Nephyr,” Evie hissed, her warmth and patience evaporating in an instant. The falcon clammed up, put off by her sudden about-face. “Yes. There are adults here who signed up to be treated like babies. And you *will* treat them with as much respect as you would your superiors. Or else there will be consequences. Severe consequences. Do I make myself clear, Nephyr?”

The falcon nodded meekly, his cheeks heating up as his talons curled, scratching the hard floor. “Y-yes, ma’am, y-you’re clear...”

Evie nodded, seeming satisfied. But before either avian could continue, someone interrupted them. “Laying it on a bit thick for the newcomer, aren’t we, Ev?”

Nephyr turned to see a yellow-furred kitsune standing halfway out of a door they’d already passed. She was dressed in white, her green eyes sparkling. Evie answered her, her voice returned to its gentle chirpiness. “Just gotta make the new babies know who’s in charge, Kris! Oh, and did you get someone to set up that changing stall for Nephyr?”

“Mm-hmm, stall one is all set for you. Have a good night with the little ones~” The fox winked and ducked back inside her office, leaving the two birds to continue on their way.

Nephyr furrowed his brow as he followed the hawk, holding her wing again. “But miss Evie, w-we already confirmed that I didn’t need a change.”

“Oh no, not *that* kind of change,” Evie replied, giggling as they turned a corner. “You’re due for a wardrobe change! That t-shirt and khakis simply won’t do. But don’t worry, you’ll get them back when you leave for preschool tomorrow.”

The falcon tilted his head as they arrived at a row of stalls. He realized that they were fitting rooms, identical to ones found at clothing stores. “O-ok, I guess...w-what do I have to change into?”

“Your new clothes are already inside the stall,” answered Evie, using a key to unlock the leftmost room, the door swinging inwards. “Come, I’ll help you get changed!”

“Oh, th-that isn’t necessary, I-I can do it myself.”

“It wasn’t a request, dear.”

Nephyr licked the rim of his beak, then nodded as he ducked into the dimly lit stall. Evie shut the door behind them, locking it from the inside this time. The falcon looked around, trying to locate his new change of clothes. All he saw was a ridiculously puffy pink dress; he could see that there was a similar one in the stall next door, the way the very bottom of it was dangling below the portion of wall that was absent.

“Wings up, sweetie!” Evie instructed, gripping the hem of his shirt.

Nephyr groaned softly. It was so weird disrobing in front of the female bird, who looked several years older than him—more so that she was *helping* him disrobe. But he knew better than to make a fuss, so he did as he was told. “W-where are those new clothes, ma’am?”

“Right there on the wall,” she answered bluntly, nodding at the wall to his right. Once his shirt was off, she started unbuttoning his pants.

He stared at the wall. “No they aren’t...a-all that’s there is a dress that someone left—HEY!” He twittered indignantly as his shorts were tugged off, trying to use his wings to cover his baby blue diaper.

“No need to be shy, silly! I’ve seen plenty of baby diapers, yours is nothing new. And yes, someone *did* leave that dress there...for you!” Evie smiled innocently, retrieving the excessively feminine garment and showing it to him.

Nephyr stared wide-eyed at the dress. He’d never seen so much pink before in his life, let alone all in one place. The skirt of the garment was decorated with

layers of lacy ribbons, a white strap going around the waist, likely to tighten it. The chest was emblazoned with a similar design; lots of lace, a small row of buttons for show rather than functionality, and a v-shaped collar. It was completed with a pair of puffy, shoulder-length sleeves. “You...no, y-you can’t be serious. This is all a mean joke, i-isn’t it? Hahaha, y-you got me good, miss Evie! Y-you, uh, can show me my ACTUAL clothes now...”

“There *are* your actual clothes, silly birdie!” Evie stated, her expression never changing from that joyous smile. His heart sank. She really WAS serious.

“What...why...d-don’t you have any boy clothes that I can wear instead? I-I don’t care how ridiculous they are, I-I just don’t wanna wear a dress!”

“You don’t have a choice, little one. But don’t worry, you won’t be alone. You’re going to the sissy room, which means lots of boys dressed up just like this—well, there are a few extra girly girls, too. It’s mostly sissy boys, though.” Evie hummed casually as she unzipped the back of the dress, unfurling the strap around the waist. She didn’t spare him a glance as she added, “It’d be in your best interest not to make a fuss, though. You wouldn’t want a spanking on your first night here, would you?”

Nephyr winced. He’d already been spanked once that day by Miss Garland, and he didn’t care to double that number. “N-no, ma’am.”

“I thought not! Now, step into this.” The hawk held the dress low to the ground, keeping the spread apart. He tilted his head. Was that how dresses went on? He had always assumed that they were supposed to be put on like shirts, not pants. It wasn’t like he’d ever bothered thinking about them much. He was male. Maybe he wasn’t the most masculine one to have ever lived, but he was more than certain of his gender.

And now he was being made to put on the most absurdly girlish dress he’d ever laid eyes on. It was somehow even more embarrassing than his diaper...well, almost. He wasn’t quite sure which was worse yet.

Gulping, he cautiously pushed his featherless legs into the dress, holding onto Evie’s shoulders to balance himself. He also made sure to keep his sharp talons in check; he couldn’t imagine anything good would come out of ripping the pricy-looking dress, accidentally or otherwise. When he was standing inside the dress, his caretaker pulled it up with a single swift motion, and his wings were guided through the flamboyant short sleeves. As Evie stepped behind him to secure the dress,

Nephyr saw that there was a mirror in the dressing room and couldn't stop himself from looking into it. He groaned softly. The bright pink garment was a stark contrast against his black feathers. Though it was quite feminine, it didn't make him look like a girl. He was quite clearly a crossdressing male. As if it couldn't be any more humiliating, once the back of the dress was zipped up and the ribbon around his waist tightened, he realized that the hem of the frilly skirt didn't cover up his diaper all the way. Even when he was standing perfectly still, it was easy to see a little bit of blue padding peeking out from under the dress. If he had another accident—and he had a feeling that he *would*, as the chances of him being allowed to remove it were low—it'd be incredibly easy to see it sagging.

“There we go!” Evie chirped as she finished securing the outfit. She wrapped her wings around his collar, smiling at him in the mirror. “You look like such a cute girl now! How do you feel?”

Nephyr was almost surprised that the feathers on his cheek hadn't turned red from how hard he was blushing. He clasped his wings in front of them, trying to tug the hem of the dress over his diaper. It was tight around his waist and was a little scratchy around the frilly seams...but it was undoubtedly his size, and wasn't particularly uncomfortable. “I-I feel ridiculous.”

“...-ly adorable, you mean!” Evie giggled, ruffling his head feathers once again. She gathered up his discarded clothes and grabbed ahold of his wing, pulling him out of the stall. The falcon chittered in protest, using his free wing in a feeble attempt to cover his outfit, his diaper rustling with each step he took. There was no one else around to see him...but he knew that was going to change soon. Evie stuck his clothes in a locker. “Alrighty, Neph, your locker number is twelve! Try to remember that when we come back to get your boring adult clothes. Now then, off to the playroom!”

The falcon was practically dragged along behind her as she led the way out of the dressing room area, emerging back into the hallway they were in before. He twisted his neck back and forth, frantically looking around for anyone who would see him, his heart hammering in his chest. It was only a matter of time, but he liked to imagine that keeping a sharp eye out would delay the inevitable for as long as possible...

Neither his heartbeat nor his blush had been put back under control when they stopped at a door. There was a window next to it, allowing him a glance of what lie within the room before he would be thrust in; he caught a glimpse of childish toys,

colorful floors and walls, and a leopard and wolf, one male, one female, both wearing the exact same dress as him. This didn't comfort him much, however, as he quickly realized that the duo seemed quite happy to be where they were. They were smiling and giggling as they played together, playing with some toy horse dolls. They were two of the people who'd signed up to be here willingly...he just didn't understand it.

Nephyr took a deep, shaky breath as Evie opened the door, urging him inside. His eyes were already teary as he entered the playroom, where it took several moments for him to take everything in. The room was somehow even more colorful than the dress he wore, but perhaps that was simply due to its larger size. Speaking of which, almost everyone in the room was wearing that same dress; there were well over a dozen people apart from the two avians. Some were playing with the same carefree, childish innocence that he'd observed in the leopard and wolf, while the rest were hanging back, sitting on cushions or against the wall, keeping to themselves as they glanced up at the newcomers. It wasn't hard to guess that the latter were all in a similar situation as him. The remainder of the populace all wore the purple gown—other than two males, who had a shirt and long pants of the same color—and white apron that Evie had on, marking them as caretakers.

“Attention, everyone!” the hawk chirped, putting her wings on Nephyr's shoulders. His heart skipped a beat, and he wanted to collapse in on himself as he knew exactly what was coming next. He had never liked being the center of attention, even more so now given his apparel. “We have a new baby girl joining us this evening! Introduce yourself, dearie!”

Nephyr groaned, looking down at his talons...or at least, he tried to. He could only see the tips of his toes past his frilly, flared skirt. It took several moments of wrestling with his beak before he managed to choke out, “M-my name's N-Nephyr...” He whimpered. This was somehow even more awkward than it had been with the preschool kids earlier that morning. He glanced around at the other victims and volunteers. A few were eyeing him with hostility. Others, with excitement. All in the willing group were looking his way excitedly, tails wagging and swishing as they whispered excitedly amongst themselves about a new playmate. The falcon fought hard to push back his tears of embarrassment. He'd just gotten here; he couldn't afford to break down already.

He winced as Evie patted his padded backside, urging him forward. “Go on and play now! Mama's got some boring papers to fill out. I'll come back to escort

you to dinner when it's time!" She giggled, rubbing his back before exiting the room, leaving the other bird to stand there and feel frustratingly awkward. Had she called herself "mama"? As in mother? Things were getting more bizarre by the second.

Nephyr was rooted to the spot for several long moments, paralyzed with fear and indecision. The unwilling... "sissies", as Evie had called them, returned to their own personal bubble, allowing themselves once more to be consumed by general loathing and ill will towards everyone else in the room. Some of the caretakers returned to their duties, but one tried to coax him forward. Still, he stood in place, immobilized. That is, until someone crawled over to him on their hands and knees. It was the silver-furred wolfess he'd seen through the window earlier.

"Hiya, mister Nephyr!" she yapped, her tail wagging fast enough to fling stray strands of fur about. It wasn't hard to hear the violent rustling of the diaper she was wearing under her dress. "My name is Jasmine. You can call me Jamie!"

He stared down at her, a little taken aback. She was going out of her way to make her voice sound as childish as she was acting. "Erm... nice to meet you, J-Jamie."

"Nice to meetcha too!" Jamie giggled, somehow wagging her tail even faster. "Wanna come play with me and Roger?" She pointed at the leopard, who waved at him eagerly. "We're playing with horses. But you can choose a different animal if you wanna!"

"Um, n-no thank you, I-I'm alright," Nephyr stammered, rubbing his wings against one another. He was a touch put off by the oversized infant talking to him.

"Awwww, pleeeeeease?" the wolfess insisted, pouting. "It'll be fun!"

"S-sorry, I just really need to—"

"Please?"

"I have to sit down and collect my thoughts—"

"Pretty pleeeeeease?"

"NO! I don't w-want...to..." Nephyr trailed off. He'd shouted rather loudly and meanly, judging by the hurt look on the wolfess's face.

“Hey!” one of the caretakers snapped, glaring at him. It was a male tiger who looked to have quite the short temper. “Inside voices, *princess!* You don’t want a paddling already, do you?”

The falcon gulped and shook his head, trying to ignore the name he’d been called. “N-no, sir, I—”

“Then apologize to little Jamie. Right now.”

“Okay, okay...” Nephyr whimpered, looking back down at the wolfess. She still looked hurt. “I’m...I-I’m sorry, Jamie.”

“It’s okay, Nephyr, I understand.” She nodded, smiling sadly. “Sorry for bothering you. I won’t do it again.” She turned around, her tail low as she started crawling back to her feline playmate.

“A-actually, wait,” the falcon spoke before she got too far. Jamie’s ears perked up as she looked back at him curiously. “Really, I’m sorry. I’m just a little overwhelmed and confused. But that doesn’t mean that I should have yelled at you I-like that.” He was uncomfortably aware of how many pairs of eyes were on him, but he kept talking. “I, um...I-I’ll come and play with you, I-I suppose. S-so we can get off to a better start.”

Jamie’s eyes lit up and her tail started wagging, causing her to accidentally flash her diaper at him—it was thicker than his, pink, and even had a few frills—though she didn’t seem to be too concerned about this. “Yippee! Thank you Nephyr! Come on!” She continued crawling across the soft, spongy floor, moving faster than before. Nephyr found it impossible to fight away a small smile as he watched the wolfess. Even if she was an adult, her childish actions were...kind of cute. Or maybe it was simply because she was a female adult, though he couldn’t think of a time that he’d ever been attracted to a mammal before. He decided it was best not to think about it. He followed her, his talons sinking into the floor, which felt a lot like what the floor of the preschool classroom had been.

“Heya Nephyr,” Roger meowed as his friend returned with the newcomer. He held a plastic brown horse out to him. “Thanks for comin’ to play with us!”

“S-sure thing, Roger,” the bird replied, taking the horse as he sat down, trying to figure out how he was supposed to sit with the frilly dress. He eventually figured out that it was easiest to keep his legs crisscrossed while making sure the hem of the

skirt wasn't pinned under his butt. He could still feel the eyes staring at him, though they were fewer now. "Um...what d-do I do, exactly?"

"You play, silly!" giggled Jamie as she grabbed her toy horse, making it prance around. "There's no rules or things you *have* to do. Just have fun!"

Nephyr blinked, staring down at his plastic horse. He remembered how he'd played with his toys as a hatchling. Everything had come naturally to him back then, and it never took very much to keep him entertained. But now, his gaze fixated on the toy, his mind was drawing a blank. What was he supposed to do? Bounce it around like Jamie was? Chase after hers like Roger was doing? He looked at them. They were both giggling and squealing, tails wagging and flicking, excitement sparkling in their eyes. They were letting go of their adulthood and sinking back into a state of infantile joy. Why couldn't he find it in him to do the same?

"I think Nephyr's horse is broken," commented Roger, poking at it with his own.

"Nephyr? Are you okay?" inquired the wolfess, meeting his gaze with her violet eyes.

"I, uh...I-I dunno. I think I am. M-maybe."

"How about we play a different game?" Jamie suggested, her tail never ceasing its wagging. "Ooh, go and grab Hungry Hippos, Roger! That one's fun!"

"N-no, don't change the game just because I'm being a letdown," Nephyr insisted as the leopard went to do as Jamie had asked, crawling along on the floor just as she had done. "Th-that's not fair to you guys."

"What's fair is making sure that everyone is having fun!" countered the canine, grinning at him. "Besides, I was getting bored of horses. We can play a game with rules, so you know exactly what it is you have to do!"

The falcon's tail feathers rustled. It was as though Jamie had read his mind. A game with rules might do the job at making him feel a little more relaxed. "W-well, alright, then...th-thank you, Jamie."

"No problem, Nephyr! I like you, you aren't like some of the...other people in here," she told him, lowering her voice to a whisper in the middle of her sentence. "I know we're supposed to be nice and stuff to everyone, but some of these guys just sit around and don't do *anything* at all. So I'm glad you aren't like them."

Nephyr licked the rim of his beak. “W-well, I guess I should make the best of things, s-seeing as I’ll be stuck coming here for a little while.” He helped to set up the board game once Roger returned with it. “I dunno if I’ll ever like this stuff the way you guys do—no offense.”

“No worries,” the leopard assured him, giggling. “We’re weird.”

“Maybe, m-maybe not. Anyway, I dunno if I’ll like it, b-but there’s no point in being all mopey about it. It’s easier to deal with things if y-you’re at least trying to have a bit of fun.”

“Yeah! And let’s have that fun now!” Jamie yipped, turning the board around a few times. “What color hippo do you want, Nephyr? You get first pick!”

The bird looked down at the game. There were four toy hippos, one on each side of the square board: blue, yellow, green, and red. “I’ll have...yellow, please!” he declared, turning the board so that the yellow hippo was facing him, leaving Jamie with blue and Roger with red.

The wolfess held a bag full of plastic marbles above the middle of the board, her other hand resting on the handle built into the butt of her hippo. “Ready...set...go!” She overturned the bag, resulting in a calamitous clatter as the marbles poured onto the board, clacking and bouncing around. The clamor was added to as all three of them started pounding on the levers, causing the necks of their hippos to extend and gobble up the marbles one by one. Jamie and Roger laughed and squealed as they played the game, and Nephyr let out a reserved chuckle every now and then as they built up their points. Once the final marble had been devoured, they sat back as they dug the marbles out of their collection plates.

“I got ten!” Roger announced.

Jamie pouted. “I only got six.”

“I got eight,” said Nephyr, smiling. “You win, Roger.”

“Yahoo! Let’s go again!” giggled the leopard, gathering up everyone’s marbles and putting them back in the small pouch.

Jamie looked at Nephyr, still pouting. “Don’t worry about losing, Nephyr. It happens sometimes.”

“I’m not worried. I-I think you might need to tell that to yourself, though.” Nephyr winced. He’d meant for that to come out a little more playful than it actually had...

The wolfess blinked. Her lips twisted into a smile as she laughed, her tail starting up once more. “I guess you’re right! I’ll hush up!” She suddenly pulled a pacifier out of a hidden pocket of her dress, suckling on the rubber nipple after she stuck it in her mouth. It was unexpected...but again, rather cute.

The trio played many more rounds of their game, and they each won their fair share. It was a simple, straightforward game that lasted less than a minute per round, accompanied by a cacophony of noises. Despite the repetitiveness, Nephyr found that he was enjoying the playtime. It wasn’t the worst thing in the world. Even though he was as different as could be from the mammals, he was having fun with them.

Perhaps it was the fact that they were all wearing the same outfit, but Nephyr was beginning to wonder if he was really that much different from them after all...

“DINNERTIME!” called a voice loud enough to be heard over the chomping hippopotamuses, interrupting his musings. The three of them looked up to see that Evie had returned, holding a piece of paper in one of her wings. “We’ll be going in three different groups one at a time tonight, since there’s such a full house. The first group is: Marley, Jamie, Cameron, Jordan, Nephyr, and Devon. Right this way, princesses!”

Roger pouted, flicking his tail. “Aww. Seeya guys later.”

Jamie’s ears twitched. “Will you be okie, Roger?”

“Mm-hmm! I’ll see if anyone else wants to play. Enjoy your din din!”

Jamie smiled and nodded, clambering to her feet as she hurried over to Evie. Nephyr said his farewell and followed her, They were joined by the other four whose names had been called as well. One was as excited as Jamie, but the others were quite reserved and wary.

Once the squad had assembled, Evie had them all get organized into a single file line. “Alright, princesses, lift up your dresses so I can check your royal diapers!”

Her order was met by a couple of groans, including one from Nephyr. Nonetheless, he lifted up the front of his skirt, as did everyone else. He heard a quiet

sigh from Jamie. Maybe she didn't like diaper checks? Of course, he couldn't fault her for it, though it was a little odd considering her behavior thus far. He watched as Evie went down the line, first feeling the front of each individual's diaper, then turning them around to peer into the back. She paused as she got to the wolfess, looking at the front of her padding and grinning. "Is this little princess having an accident as we speak?"

Nephyr blinked, staring at Jamie. He couldn't help but glance down at her pink diaper and confirm that it was indeed growing dark and saggy. He felt a pang of pity for her. She must have been so embarrassed at the revelation and loud announcement, making her the center of attention while she was urinating...

Jamie beamed, her restless tail wagging yet again. "I am, miss Evie! I had to tinkle and couldn't help it. Teehee!"

The falcon was in such a state of disbelief that he almost didn't hear the other bird's reply. "You've been a piddle pup since day one. Well, let me check you for stinkies, and if you're clean, then you can wait a little while until you get changed."

"Yes ma'am!" Jamie yipped, turning on the spot and winking at Nephyr as the caretaker lifted her dress to examine her crinkly backside. Nephyr's face was hot, though he didn't know why he was embarrassed when the focus wasn't on him. How could the wolf be so...confident? She had just wet herself in the midst of several other adults, in a diaper no less, and owned up to what she'd done without batting an eye. If anything, she seemed to take pleasure in her actions. He found himself feeling envious of her demeanor. If only he could care that little about what others thought of him...

"Nephyr? I asked you a question," Evie said, startling him.

He jumped, turning to face the other bird. "Ah, s-sorry, ma'am. I was just...thinking about something. W-what did you ask?"

Evie smiled patiently. "I was asking about your diaper. You still haven't wet it! Don't you want to get one of the pretty pink diapers that your new friend is wearing?"

Jamie spoke up before he could answer. "Ooh, that'd be so much fun! We could be matching and stuff! Matching dresses, matching diapers!"

"I, uh...I, um...w-well, I dunno..." Nephyr stammered, wringing his wings as he was turned around so that Evie could inspect his rear. He didn't want to

disappoint the wolfess, but his blue diaper was the last shred of masculinity that he possessed...pathetic though it was.

Evie patted his head. "It's ok, Neph. I was just teasing. You'll have to go potty eventually, and then I'll be there to change you." The bird trilled and moved on to the next person in line, leaving him to exchange a glance with the wolf.

"S-sorry, Jamie..."

"Don't worry about it, Nephyr. I know this is all new to you, and that you aren't here by choice." She seemed to drop her childish façade as they spoke, and his heart sank.

"Y-you...know? You know that I'm here c-cuz I'm in trouble?"

Jamie nodded. "Well, yeah. It was kinda obvious, no offense."

The falcon's talons dug into the floor. She knew that he was a criminal. "S-so why did you invite me over to play with you?"

She tilted her head, looking confused. "Because you seemed like a cool person. And you looked like you needed a friend."

"Alright, princesses! Forward march!" Evie said, saving him from responding as the group walked out of the playroom, marching down the hall together. Nephyr tried not to make a sound as he shed silent tears as he followed close behind Jamie, whose words had struck very close to home. They'd had a more intense emotional impact on him than they would have otherwise due to what he'd been thinking.

The group walked in silence—mostly due to the ones who didn't want to be here—as they followed Evie, soon reaching a cafeteria. There were several rectangular tables arranged neatly, all surrounded by a multitude of what were unmistakably highchairs, sized up to fit adults. A lump formed in Nephyr's stomach. He really had to sit in one of those...? His qualms were verbalized by some of the other people in their small group, who started making quite a scene. Evie actually had to call for some help as one of them, a male coyote, began protesting in a fit of rage. A pair of security officers came over and subdued him swiftly, leading the sissy away. The falcon blinked. Was that what he looked like when he threw his tantrums? He really *did* look ridiculous, and his dress wouldn't help him much. Not wanting to cause a fuss, he obediently climbed into a highchair, sitting next to Jamie and allowing Evie to lock the tray in place, securing him in his new seat.

After the episode with the coyote, all rebelliousness in the group had faded, resulting in a rather uneventful dinner. A pair of plastic bowls were put on Nephyr's tray—one had fruit slices, the other a strange, orange mush—and a sippy cup full of juice. Evie was about to start spoon-feeding him, but when he insisted that he could do it himself, to his surprise, she nodded and moved on to Jamie. The wolfess happily accepted the help, and the falcon was left to continue his pondering as he ate. The mush was, in fact, baby food that tasted like carrots. The texture was awful, and the flavor left much to be desired, but he knew that he wouldn't be getting anything else to eat. He was grateful for his less active gag reflex as he worked on the mush first, hoping that the fruit slices would chase away the icky flavor.

Nephyr stole glances at his new friend as she allowed Evie to feed her, once again showing how her tail seemed to not need any energy to wag about. The wolf didn't seem to have a care in the world, but she'd shown him that she was aware of what was going on around her, and was very perceptive of other people's emotions. There didn't seem to be anything 'wrong' with her, for lack of a less harsh-sounding term. She was just a kind, caring person with some unusual interests. She was very sure and confident in and of herself. He had only just met her, but he admired her. At least something good had come of his sentencing. He had a friend to wait out the coming weeks with.

The bird eventually managed to finish his dinner with nary a complaint. The day hadn't been a long one, but it had already left him physically and mentally exhausted. So much had happened. He'd been humiliated and embarrassed, confused and bewildered, angry, sad, relieved, and a whirlwind of other indescribable emotions. He couldn't stifle a yawn as he sat back in the cushioned highchair, his belly full as he idly drank from his sippy cup.

Evie immediately took notice of this, looking over at him. "Are you tired, little one?"

Nephyr gulped. "Um..a-a little, yeah. Is there like, a nap room, maybe?"

"Ooh, there is, but it's too late for a nap. If you went to sleep, you'd have to stay there for the rest of the night."

The falcon curled and uncurled his talons, thinking. Jamie spoke up. "You look really tired, Neph. I think you should go nini. I'll tell Roger where you went and stuff."

Nephyr nodded. “Well...alright, then. Y-yeah, I’d like to go to sleep, m-miss Evie.”

“Of course, sweetie. Carol, can you take over here, please?” Evie beckoned another caretaker over, a grey fox, who took the bird’s place and continued feeding Jamie. Evie then helped the other bird out of the highchair, guiding him towards an exit after he’d waved goodbye to his friend. He was led to another changing area, smaller than the first one, where Evie stuck a pacifier in his mouth as she undressed him, checked his diaper, and helped him into a pink onesie patterned with fluffy white clouds. Again, he didn’t protest or put up a fight, even when the hawk fussed over him and called him an “adorable little princess”. He just wanted to get all of this over with so that he could get to sleep.

On the way out of the changing area, they stopped at a closet of sorts. When Evie opened up the door, Nephyr beheld dozens of stuffed animals in all sorts of colors, sizes, and species.

“You can choose one to help you sleep, if you’d like,” Evie told him, turning on a light so he could see better.

Nephyr was about to refuse when one of them actually caught his eye. It was a small one, maybe half a foot tall. It was a stuffed bird with black feathers, a white collar, grey underbelly, and a yellow beak tipped with black. He reached out and grabbed it. “I...h-had one just like this when I was a hatchling. M-Mordecai was his name.”

Evie smiled, closing the closet door again. “He suits you, dear. Come, your bedroom is this next door here.”

Clutching Mordecai the Second, Nephyr entered his new bedroom. It was rather cramped, containing little more than an oversized crib and changing table, and it was colored similarly to the playroom from earlier. Another time, he would’ve protested vehemently; now, the crib looked wonderfully inviting, with all its pillows, blankets, and thick, fluffy mattress. He yawned as he hugged his plushie close, climbing into the crib as Evie opened it up for him. Exhaustion was starting to overtake him as he laid down, resting his head on the soft, cool pillows, gnawing on the pacifier still in his mouth.

Evie hummed, turning on a mobile above the crib, causing it to slowly turn and produce a quiet, chiming melody. She pulled the blankets up to his chin, gently patting his head. “Sleep well, little princess. See you in the morning.”

Nephyr didn't reply. He was already snoring peacefully, the woes of the day forgotten temporarily. His caretaker smiled as she turned off the overhead light, a small nightlight casting a gentle blue glow over the room, and quietly shut the door as she left him to sleep.

The next day was surely going to be just as big as today, after all.

*End*