

Sibling rivalry:

Prologue:

A dreadful boom of the front door slamming snapped the human out of his daze. The precious thirty minutes of tranquillity since coming home from college had passed. Soon, he trembled from the soft footfalls that grew closer.

"... Oh no..."

His voice was faint whilst he whirled around towards the voice behind their bedroom door. Fear crawled across his black like tiny fingers as the doorknob turned, and that familiar hiss soon followed.

"Seriously! He's here...already..."

The words scraped across his throat whilst the door shifted ajar with a creak. His hand gripped to his bottle, crinkling as he succumbed to the adrenaline rush. Then, idly, his hand reached to a makeshift bandage. Again, feeling the physical manifestation of his fear towards his brother.

"Slakine's home, *human*."

A slurring groan projected to him, creating a physically noticeable bulge inside the human's oesophagus. That distant hiss rattled the boy's equilibrium as he lowered onto his bed as the door drew inwards.

The pair of vertically-slitted green pupils fired judgement at the boy, cementing the human in a plucking position. Slakine toying with its prey before sealing its fate under a muttering hiss and a footstep.

"And Slakine sees the human has chosen not to hide. Where's the fun in that?"

"Slakine...please..."

The boy pleaded with little strength, leaning back against the wall under Slakine's shadow.

"...not, today".

Charlie's pleas were dismissed by the Sissach that marched with gleeful purpose. Two huge blue lips parted to expose saliva-drenched molars on full-display, tightening knots within the human's stomach.

"Slakine? As much as they are pretty, may you put your jaws away, plea..."

The boy's request sparked a faint rumbling chuckle outside the Sissach's chest, ceasing those footfalls. A wave of Slakine's humid breath washed over him, the titan's roof like-snout hovered overhead.

Charlie gulped.

"Does human not like Slakine's jaws? Slakine is upset now."

Charlie's attention locked onto the sissach's hissing words of execution. The lizard crouched, extending a row of black clawed fingers on the table edge, eyeing the boy with an echoed growl.

"No wait! Slakine...please. That was not my intention."

The reptile grinned, shifting both hands to the bottom of his school shirt, lifting it up to reveal the blue scaled chest below. Slakine's fork-like tongue slithered out its lips, firing a grunt at the ankle-high creature.

"Slakine doesn't care. Slakine hurt. And now, Slakine will..."

"Oh, BOOOOOYSSSS! DINNNER!"

Their Lupari father's voice jolted the Sissach upright, stopping the shirt's elevation midway. A sigh of reprieve left the human whose eyes averted to the doorway.

"Yes, Yes! We are coming, Dad! Be down in a jiffy"

Charlie's daring tone was met with a huff of warm air from the creature's nostrils.

"Slakine and...*Charlie*...will arrive soon. Father."

Slakine's sibilant voice did little but nudge the human to his make-shift walkway. But, Charlie twirled around to give the sissach a weak smirk before setting off.

"I'll make my own way, Slakine."

He muttered gently to the looming figure.

"Slakine would be fascinated to see if you can manage this task. Or require father's and Slakine's assistance"

The sissach huffed, stepping past the boy with effortless strides as he spared a glance to the boy, waiting for a reaction. All the lizard saw was Charlie's feeble smile and his furless hand grip on his shirt.

As the pointed tail whipped past the doorway, Charlie treaded across the side of their shared bedroom. A bed, cabinet, and desk that could pass for buildings was furniture for his brother. Merely a testament to their size difference.

Yet, Charlie refused to agitate those thoughts, pursuing to walk towards the doorway. His brown iris' caught eye with the photo decorated hallway. The metaphor of a walk down memory lane took form before him. Each black-framed picture offered a warmth reminiscence that anchored the boy to reality. To the lupari and human couple that chose him. A sight that gave reason for Charlie to smile once again.

His attention shifted to the conversation down the hall.

"...and where is Charlie, Slakine?"

The human father asked in his British accent, stressing each syllable in a musical tone. The solace it provided was disrupted by the Sissach's hissing voice, removing the smile from his pink lips.

"Charlie instructed Slakine to let him 'make my own way'. Slakine was fulfilling Charlie's wishes, father."

Slakine replied softly when addressing his father. An indifferent tone to the sissach's usual interaction with Charlie.

"Alex, let me check up on him."

The Lupari insisted, singing softly down to his ankle-sized lover. His father's voice was a melody of tranquillity that was unchanged since Charlie's adoption. Except, the meaning behind that comment hit Charlie like a hammer.

"No Dad, wait! I'll...I'll be there soon, I promise. Just taking the scenic route."

Just as Charlie tried to deter his father's actions, a white-furred paw came into view. What followed was the rest of his apartment-building sized father. Both blue eyes honed in on the human with admiration, whilst his nostrils began investigating the human's scent.

"Son? Wanna tell me whats up? We'll always listen, you know that right?"

Lupus cooed down, crouching to level his black nose with Charlie. The human's eyes locked onto the ocean blue orbs that filled his view, reflecting back the boy's deceitful smile.

"I know, Dad. I know...."

Charlie's whispering voice almost directed away to the distance, attempting to avert the gaze of his titanic father.

"Has Slakine been good to you? I know it's been rough between you two, especially since you called him a...."

There it was, the dreaded reminder inviting the human's regret as it consumed his inside's. A wide-eyed stare manifested across Charlie's visage, shaking his head to tear away that singular memory before it could manifest physically.

"He's...been...good."

Charlie replied weakly in sync with the wolf's finger strokes, hoping that his deception would earn the human good praise with the Sissach.

"I see. Perhaps I shall speak to Sla...."

"No! He's been good! Great even! So kind and...so...so gentle. You gotta trust me, I won't lie ya big goof"

Lupus rested his snout on the walkway near Charlie, continuing to let an idle finger weave itself around Charlie and towards his tickle spots.

“A goof, huh?”

His father’s light snicker had revealed the wolf’s teeth in response, but Charlie faced them with open invitation. The sight of an 83-foot wolf giggling untangled that knot within his stomach.

"Damn! Just stay away from Isaac and all my other friends, yeah?"

Charlie regretted that request as the canine’s chuckling slowed, revealing a single-eyebrow raised expression.

"Oh gosh! No! No, please! Have mercy! Let me at least have dignity until I am eighteen!"

The human begged, but the canine's curious expression remained.

"Oh, I'll always howl my affection for my Brainiac."

That last word was a wave of serenity that shifted Charlie to hug his father’s snout. Lupus’ cheekbones widened at the small palms ruffing his fur.

“I love ya, Dad. Cannot believe it's been almost a year”

Charlie whispered, wrapping his arms around the side’s of the wolf’s muzzle.

“And I’ve loved...every moment. Now, come on. I’ve cooked some...what would Alex call it again...tea governor?”

The 83 foot canine responded in a delicate undertone, winking to Charlie as he attempted to mimic Alex’s accent.

“Pretty sure Dad, or anyone British for that matter, doesn’t speak like that...”

“Wanna repeat that again? I am sure a giant wolf would *love* to visit your friends with you in my pocket, hmmm?”

"Wait what? Don't you dare, or those videos of you singing in the shower go...LIVE!"

The human asserted, staring with mischievous intent at his father. A wave of warm air transcended down to the boy as Lupus whispered.

"In space...no one...will hear you...scream."

Charlie only refrained from laughter at the wolf's feeble intimidation attempts. We should not have shown him Alex's collection of alien movies.

"I will upload it after dinner. In the meantime, can you carry me to the table?"

Charlie asked the towering father, unmoving as a leather platform awaited the human's feet.

"Always, my son."

Lupus insisted.

As the boy glanced up towards the glistening blue pupils, he walked onto the paw without hesitation, sitting in the normal cross-legged position. A procedure that is second nature at this point. Lupus rested his hand on the exposed field of white fur, allowing his son to hear the rhythmic heartbeat inside whilst he walked. The wolf's shallow thumping strides massaged Charlie's anatomy before locking gazes with his human father resting against the Sissach's chest.

"Anddddd, there he is. Come on, son. Lupus spent ages cooking tea..."

Alex responded, raising a palm to half-cover his lips as he whispered.

"...by the way, pretend to like it. It's gonna be bloody sh...."

A light chuckle exited the mouths of Slakine and Charlie, who almost paused as they faced one another. However, their silence was interrupted by a rumbling growl from the wolf.

"I spent ages! I followed the recipe...at least I think"

The wolf softly barked in defiance as Charlie was lowered onto the marble table, firing a glare to his chuckling husband. With a childish smirk, Lupus extended a tongue to lap drool across Alex's entire form. A yelp was all the little lover could muster as saliva oozed down him.

"B-Bloody hell! Gaaaahhhhhh, no licks! Bad Lupari, bad!"

Alex's building-sized beloved continued to cover him further in saliva despite the shouting demands. The idle tail appendage wagged excessively, whooshing as it displaced the air.

Charlie gave a forced smile as he vacated to a safe distance from the wolf's tongue, trying to find a splash-free zone. Little did he know that the human's left heel made contact with Slakine's log-like finger, knocking the boy off balance. The shock was enough for Charlie to shout, triggering the attention of the two dads who rushed to the boy's aid.

Lupus and Alex ceased in their valentine-like paramour, feeling their parental instincts kick in. But unfortunately, even the wolf's attempts to rush a paw to cushion Charlie's fall did not arrive in time as the boy landed on his back with a groan.

"Slakine! Why didn't you catch your brother!"

The 83-ft canine projected to Slakine, knocking the sissach's posture upright.

"Charlie! Charlie, are you alright?!"

Alex rushed to Charlie's aid, ignoring the orange-haired human-created saliva footprint. The human boy groaned, staring upwards to the Sissach's lower chin cast over, and the lined pupils refused to address the boy's presence.

"I'm...okay, yes. Don't worry, sorry about that Slakine. Always the clumsy one, huh"

Charlie muttered, fixating his vision upon the deliberately oblivious brother that overshadowed the human pair. Whilst Alex inspected the human for injuries, slightly louder booms rumbled on the ground below as a near snarl vacated Lupus' snout.

"Slakine! You didn't even attempt to catch Charlie. Why?"

The wolf growled down to the Sissach, who was locked in place. Slakine's eyes warded off to avoid eye contact, only to meet the low-browed expression from Lupus. A jaw-dropped presentation and a mumbling hiss were all that came out of his reptilian snout.

"Answer, now! He's your brother!"

Lupus' eyes burned with frustration, singling out the speechless Sissach.

"...Slakine's not sure"

Slakine mumbled, hissing as the fork-tipped tongue barely exited the mouth. But, Lupus remained unfettered by the sissach's divergence from the topic.

"Answer!"

And it was with that growl from Slakine's father that birthed a growl from the Sissach, locking those slitted pupils down to the humans near his palms.

"Slakine and father already have one human to look after! So why is *this* human...Slakine's responsibility?"

As he spoke, he realised his mistake. Both of his parents stared down in disbelief. Rage boiled in Alex's face as he crossed his arms. Soon the Sissach felt his knees buckle, now awaiting the repercussions of his outburst.

"What...did you say?!"

The 83-foot lupari grunted with conviction down to the sissach, having to pause in thought to process his large son's words. Slakine's vertically slitted eyes locked onto Charlie as if the lizard was stalking its prey, waiting to pounce. His lack of reply only added to the dreaded ambience that filled the dining room. An atmosphere that Lupus' following few words sought to cut away.

"Answer, now. What did you say to your brother?"

Lupus' voice grew more profound with each passing syllable as those two leather pads grabbed the corner edge of the table, feeling the wood splinter under his grip. The tips of his digits rested a few feet away from the human pair but were constantly aware of their presence.

All Charlie could do was bare witness to their more prominent father locking eyes with Sissach, seeing the cocktail of rage and pain burn within his heart.

"Slakineee..."

The wolf's voice almost growled as it sought to extract an answer from the reptile, but that was

merely a catalyst for Slakine's frustration to emerge.

"Slakine sees only little people that ask Slakine to do everything for them. Why can't humans just do it themself...."

Slakine's careless words dug that hole deeper, practically tossing himself inside. Lupus' eyes widened further at the comment, leaning closer as those monstrous-sized paws dragged across the table. Whilst he took up more of Slakine's view, he let his parental instincts guide an idle finger to rub against Charlie's back.

"Apologise to your brother, Slakine. I will not ask again."

As Lupus sought to enforce the sissach to realise the danger of those words, Alex's hand held onto Charlie's. Those flesh-furless fingers wrapped around one another, holding onto one another as the looming wolf took charge of the situation. A barrier of white-furred arms rested on either side of the human pair to chase away any worrisome thoughts from their human son.

"Slakine will not apologise to the creature that called me a...."

His hissing words were directed down to Charlie, trying to pierce the armour that the two parents sought to provide. But, all that did was incentivise the boy to speak up. Charlie left the confinement of his parent's embrace with a soft breath, fixating on the sissach's black iris'.

"Forgive me, Slakine. I did say sorry. What else would you like me to do?"

Charlie asked empathetically, knowing what strength and power one of those reptilian fingers held. A single huff of his adopted brother's nose sent a wave of warm air that ruffled across him, accompanied by the reveal of those piercing molars.

"Slakine wants *that* human to...leave!"

Those unkind words sent a shiver across the room whilst Charlie merely turned back to watch their two parents stare blankly at the lizard. They watched as Lupus retreated from the table with an empty visage, treading out the room and letting that snow-white tail droop across the floor.

That moment of seeing the wolf's light leave his face and body was replayed over-and-over inside Alex's mind. Seeing his lover phased by his son's comments was the final straw. Rushing his head upwards to fire a stare towards the sissach.

"Slakine...QUIET!"

Alex interjected, projecting his voice to rock the sissach out of his defensive demeanour. However, all Slakine could do was close his maw, letting out a prolonged whispering hiss. The older human's eyes remained focused on the sissach, trying to hide heartache inside his chest.

"D-Dad...?"

A simple hush from Alex's lips stopped Charlie's whispering voice to his father, ceasing the two adopted brothers' antics until Lupus returned. The sissach's lowered gaze crawled cautiously to inspect his human sibling, seeing a calm and unaltered composure as Charlie laid back, retreating from his father's vicinity.

"Slakine's father said quiet, human."

Slakine's hissing voice was a perfectly carved knife that cut away Charlie's equilibrium.

"Slakine, I said..."

"Charlie! It's Charlie...you...."

The boy projected to the grinning sissach, cutting off Alex mid-sentence.

"Slakine wants to hear the human say it...."

The lizard grinned wider, leaning to encompass the two human's in his shadow. Alex's attempts to cease the two brothers were overshadowed by their rising tones.

"...you...you..."

"Slakine commands the human to say it..."

"...you are just a...."

"Slakine orders you human, say it!"

"You RYNAR!"

The sissach wore a grin with pride, awaiting his father's response to Charlie's outburst. Letting those vertically slitted eyes look down at Alex's jaw-dropped expression.

"Boy's, please...this isn't the way..."

Alex's pleads were silenced by a familiar rhythmic thud growing larger in the distance.

"Charlie! What did you call your brother?!"

Lupus projected slightly, ensuring not to test the communicator's volume modifiers. Their human further turned towards the lupari, trying to provide context for Charlie's outburst.

"Slakine heard Charlie call him...him...."

A prolonged hiss replaced that dreaded word as it exited that reptilian snout lips, calling over his parent's attention, who only froze on the spot.

"We heard, Slakine...enough"

Lupus sighed, rubbing the tips of his eyebrows with two fingers, silencing the sissach in a second. An irritated sigh left the wolf's inflated chest, composing himself for what's to come. He walked, greeting the waist-high table with a stern visage as he crouched down.

"Charlie, explain. Now"

The lupari ordered, levelling both blue iris' with Charlie. All the boy could do was see the distraught gaze that reflected himself back through those pupils.

"D-Dad, I am sorry. I shouldn't have said that..."

"Slakine shouldn't have pushed you..."

Alex's words washed away the sissach's smirk, knowing full-well that Slakine was the next target of the lupari's stoned look.

"He pushed you, and what exactly did Slakine do..."

The wolf asked in a near robotic-voice to Charlie, focusing both blue eyes on his sissach son.

“Slakine did nothing...it was all...”

“Quiet, Slakine! You antongnised him! Pushed him to say that *word*”

The red-haired human spoke back to the reptile.

“Slakine is sorry, it won’t happen again. Can father’s forgive Slakine?”

His fork-like tongue extended out of his lips, prolonging a hiss.

“Slakine. This isn’t the first instance, is this? What did you say to Charlie earlier, in your bedroom?”

Lupus insisted, leaning over to invade the sissach’s territory once more. Yet, Charlie’s silent protest refused to add fuel to the fire as Slakine’s slitted eyes shifted abruptly to Charlie freezing him still.

“Did the human *lie* about Slakine’s good deeds?”

A light rumble emanated from the blue-scaled chest as the sissach growled, locking on his prey as Charlie stared. Those lizard lips parted, revealing the saliva-drenched cavern and teeth on full display. The sissach’s warm breath was about to wash over Charlie until a white-furred paw was thrust between us.

“EEEEEnough! This...has gone on long enough...”

The two brothers tried glancing at one another to part blame, but their father’s leather pad had denied them the opportunity.

“...we have tried to get you two to see eye to eye. To see one another as...brothers.”

Trying to translate thoughts into words whilst maintaining composure proved difficult for the lupari.

“It is clear....it is beyond...our capabilities. You’ve known each other for a year...and nothing. This ends...”

Leaning forward, extending the tree's thick neck, the wolf sought to finish his sentence with conviction before he felt the impact of those unkind words.

"...now. I did not fight during the Invasion, risk...everything."

Lupus slightly wheezed, the glistening eyes serving as perfect projections of the horror of the war.

"...and your father didn't overcome his fear of...well, us Slakine...for you to just tear it down."

A white-furred finger rubbed across Alex's back with each passing word, locking on his lover's scent for any disturbances.

"You two are spending the summer together. A summer camp for multi-size species...."

Raising the other index finger up to the two sons, silencing their protests before they began.

"...that your father and I were told about from a falashai friend of ours. There are multi-size staff that all want to help bond *all* species."

The wolf slightly smiled warmly to persuade his two sons. A message that Alex sought to jump as he spoke.

"It looked great in the pamphlet. There are said to be activities designed to maximise multi-size cooperation, all of which are supervised.."

Their parents' attempts to sooth the two brothers proved difficult as Slakine huffed and Charlie looked away.

"...and you leave tomorrow."

The wolf locked eyes with the startled Sissach and human, ignoring their human father, walking over to hug the white-furred digit.

Charlie and Slakine looked back at one another one last time, imagining the dread the next six weeks would be.

"Slakine...with human...for summer! Slakine refuses!"

His vertically-slitted eyes enclosed, letting that rumbling grow return. Charlie leaned ever slightly back from the hissing titan.

“Father’s, please. Any other idea, just not that...”

Charlie’s pleas were overshadowed by the escalating snarl from his brother.

“Your father and I did not want to do this, Charlie. But, you both have to learn to get along”

Lupus replied softly, refusing to hide the torment that would soon follow from his suggestion.

“The alternative is, you both spend the summer on ground...”

“It is grounded, Lupus”

Alex whispered.

“Grounded then. No friends, no TV, no extranet. Well?”

Raising an eyebrow to the groaning Sissach and silent human, they contemplated their losses of social activities. The very suggestion made their hearts sink, they both nodded in obedience with Lupus and Alex before replying in unison.

“Slakine says summer camp”

“Ummmm, summer”