

The dull chatter of quiet conversations in the background was pleasant, relaxing even. Although Matts loved his work, there was something therapeutic about the discreet buzz found in The Lunar Lure into the late afternoon; before the activity turned frantic and the music became near deafening. He was actually looking forward to his shift more so than usual as a local musician had offered to perform for relatively cheap; apparently he was just looking for experience, and Matts had a soft spot for the acoustic guitar. There was still time before the performance; the distinct sound of equipment being tested was audible throughout the bar as a bright orange hoopoe with blue tipped feathers tuned his guitar on stage. "Anything you need before you start, Regdeh?" called Matts across the floor. The club was quiet at the moment, only a couple of booths filled with casual diners and drinkers; but the lack of a crowd didn't seem to knock Regdeh's enthusiasm one bit. "Maybe just a glass of water," chuckled the bird with a wide smile. Hardly out of the question; Matts quickly made his way round to the stage as Regdeh set in for his performance. Perched on a stool centre stage, he strummed a few final testing notes on his guitar before leaning into the microphone.

"I want to thank everyone for lending me their ears this afternoon, so just do one last thing for me and let yourself get lost in my music for a just a little while, thank you." The bird spoke with a much softer voice now that he was performing, like honey flowing through the ears of everyone listening. Matts stepped back a bit, observing as Regdeh's entire demeanour changed; the bird leant into the mic passionately like he was going for a familiar kiss. However the vocal performance that followed made the bar stand still in awe, and his voice trembled with emotion unexpected from the unassuming hoopoe. It was moving, loving, beautiful. Every note played from the guitar was a personal serenade all on its own; Matts was utterly spellbound as he listened. His feet may as well have been bolted to the floor; he had no intention of stepping away from the bewitching performance even for a second. His mind was caressed by words of silk, gliding in one ear and never truly leaving his thoughts. But it was more than just his voice; Matts was mesmerised by the way Regdeh would form a beat by clicking his beak, all without missing a single syllable in the lyrics. He was more than just a singer, more than a performer; Matts looked up at the hoopoe with sheer reverence as if seeing his childhood hero for the first time.

There was a tightness in the wolf's chest as he watched Regdeh claim the stage as his own; the canine's thumping heart was so heavy it that he could have sworn it was audible. But nothing was cutting through the sound of Regdeh's performance, he wouldn't allow it. The hoopoe brought his gaze up delicately to see Matts still standing on the dancefloor, giving a sweet smile as he see could his spell had fallen over the canine. The warmth in Regdeh's face as the two made eye contact was enough to make Matts' breath catch with a hiss through his teeth. He felt like a deer caught in headlights, unable to move or divert his gaze, he would simply let Regdeh decide his fate and accept it with a blissful smile. Maybe it was the lighting, but it was as if the bird was radiating with a warm glow that invited comfort, and the opportunity to drift away from reality like a raft lost at sea.

As the song drew to a close Regdeh was met with a passionate applause from the bar's patrons, all beside the wolf who was still standing on the dancefloor utterly enchanted. This didn't go unnoticed; Regdeh sauntered over with a proud smile on his face, never taking his eyes off of Matts. "So, good enough for your bar?" chuckled the bird with some confidence. Matts was snapped out of his stupor momentarily, realising he'd been asked a question; the words caught in his throat as he sputtered and babbled for an answer. "Grood! Uhh-good, I mean great; it was great." He wanted to bury his face in the ground, certain it was turning bright red. But the hoopoe simply laughed charmingly, erasing the wolf's awkwardness and setting that familiar sense of comfort into him once more. "Well that's high praise coming from as handsome as you," Regdeh softly laid a wing on Matts' shoulder; the touch was almost enough to make the canine melt; it took every ounce of his resilience to not crumble to the floor right.

An orange wing tipped Matts' chin up a little, letting Regdeh stare into those deep purple eyes once more; they would have been pulsing with hearts if they could.

"You know I'd love to give you a private performance, if you've got some time," offered the hoopoe. Matts couldn't nod his head fast enough, though he still struggled to find the

words. "L-lov... would love to," he said shakily. Regdeh chuckled as softly, voice soft as silk. He wrapped a wing around the spellbound mutt and began to lead him backstage as effortlessly as a string-bound puppet. "And how about a more permanent contract?" "Anything you want," Matts uttered dreamily. Even now he could still hear Regdeh's song echoing in his head like an angelic choir; chest pounding with every beat, or perhaps that was just his heart thumping for Regdeh.