

CHECKMATE

by
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Daniel sat at the table, sipping casually at his wine. The badger had been waiting for he'd no idea how long. He wasn't even sure why he was at this particular restaurant. He had been there a few times before, with friends, and didn't particularly care for it. The bread was always too hard to chew. The meat would be overdone or a little too rare for his liking. And the appetizers never failed to come to the table cold. Every time a friend would suggest coming Daniel would do his best to persuade them otherwise, but to no avail.

Honestly, how has this place managed to stay open this long? Yet, here he was, sitting alone, on a Sunday night, waiting for something. A waiter, a lithe marten, approached his table.

"Have you decided what it is you would like?" he asked.

"Hmm? Oh! Um, no, I haven't. Sorry."

"No problem. Take your time." Though they had been smiling when they said this, as the marten turned and walked away, they frowned and rolled their eyes. This guy had been sitting there for nearly an hour. Was he waiting for a date? *If so, I think he's been stood up*, they thought. *Some people just can't take a hint. Poor, deluded guy...*

The badger looked around. Apart from the kitchens and small cubbyholes that passed for restrooms, the restaurant was split into two relatively small dining rooms. They were both dimly lit and burgundy drapes hung everywhere. The place had a gaudy but intimate feel to it as a result and would have been a perfect dating spot, were the food any good. Apart from himself

and the staff, there was nobody else in the restaurant—not unusual for a Sunday night, but unusual for this place. “Okay, really, what am I doing here?” he found himself asking aloud. “I should leave.” But he remained seated. Despite wanting to go home, Daniel couldn’t bring himself to even stand. Instead he took another sip of wine and began to look over the menu again.

He’d just made up his mind to order a bowl of gazpacho when the chair opposite him was pulled out and somebody had sat down. Looking up, Daniel was surprised to find a bat sitting across from him, white fur that was partially covered by slimming, semiformal wear. The stranger had the flattened triangle-shaped nose that was common to bats. Both their eyes, bright green, and mouth were smiling widely at him, fangs displayed. He didn’t know who they were, and yet something niggled at the back of his mind. Something familiar.

“Uuuuhh... hi?”

The bat’s smile grew. “Evening,” they said. Their voice was relaxed, and it sent a slight tingle down his back, so Daniel thought...

Couldn’t be. The place is just a little chilly. “God, do they ever have the heat on in here? It’s almost like a fridge.” Daniel chuckled weakly. But then he remembered that this bat had just sat down across from him without his invitation. “Look, I’m sorry, but, um, can I help you?”

“Oh, no,” they answered, still smiling. Those eyes regarded him with interest, lids dropped partially. Daniel realized that he had been staring back and shook his head as some dizziness came over him.

“It’s just that I don’t kn—”

“I am sorry if I kept you waiting, though.”

“What do you mean? I wasn’t...” The bat’s eyes had widened and

FLASH!

“No, no! It’s my fault. I got the time wrong and was here too early.” He was right. Daniel knew it as soon as the words had left his mouth. He had scheduled this meeting a little more than a week ago with the bat and had accidentally put the wrong time into his phone, causing him to come to the restaurant an hour ahead of time. “It was stupid of me.”

Again, the bat smiled. Daniel could suddenly feel some pleasure filling his breast at that smile. It felt good to make the bat happy. “We all make mistakes,” he said. Another shudder ran down the badger’s back. “Have you eaten?”

“No, I haven’t. To be honest, I’m not exactly a fan of the food here.” Daniel leaned forward a little while he spoke. He found it so easy to speak to and look at the bat, ever since they’d met at a chess tournament one evening in Barrett Park. Daniel had been watching while the bat had been a competitor, winning all but two of his games. Afterwards, as he left, the bat stopped him to ask if he enjoyed the show, as he put it. Daniel replied that he had and that the way the bat had maneuvered their pieces across the board, executing each strategy with such precision, had been fascinating. He had been struck by his calm demeanor and pleasant smile, as well. And those eyes. Even with the bat’s lids partially covering them, the green was vibrant, clean and deep.

“Do you play?” he’d asked.

“I’m afraid not. Sadly, I think I’m a bit of a dunce when it comes to chess.”

“I could teach you if you’d like.”

“Really?” Daniel didn’t understand why he’d been excited by the offer, and he caught himself. “I mean, that would be great, but—”

FLASH!

“I’d love it if you would,” Daniel said, mirroring the bat’s smile.

“Fantastic,” said the bat. “Tournaments are fun. But I don’t get to play casually anymore. It will be nice to have someone to do so with.”

Daniel nodded. He figured that tournaments would be fun. Most furs liked a healthy amount of competition, but to not be able to just relax... he was sure that would cause the joy to eventually wear thin. “When could we start?” he asked.

“I could give you your first lesson tonight.”

“Great!”

“Just meet me back at the pavilion in an hour. That’ll give you time to eat.”

“Okay.”

“... we get out of here then?”

Daniel realized that he had zoned out, staring intently at the still-grinning bat. *Shit! I missed everything that he said.* The badger could feel his face grow warm as he blushed.

“What’s wrong?” asked the bat.

“Oh... I kinda spaced out... I’m sorry.”

The smile returned to the bat’s face and he chuckled. “I was saying why don’t we get out of here then? I can give you your next lesson.”

“Okay. We can go to my place. I just bought a chess set the other day.”

“Wonderful!”

Paying for his wine, and making sure to leave a generous tip for the patient waiter, Daniel led the bat out of the restaurant.

As they walked down the street in the direction of Daniel's apartment, the badger would look up at the bat, who walked by his side. Every now and then the bat would return the gaze and smile at him, sending another wave of happiness through his chest.

"Come here, you cute thing," the bat said, and he threw a wing around him, pulling him close. Daniel let out a purr as he felt pressed to the bat's body. They walked in this fashion until they reached the brownstone that served as his apartment complex.

Thankfully they only had to go up one flight of stairs to reach Daniel's hallway. Coming to a stop outside the door, the bat released Daniel from his wing. Daniel's shoulders sagged a little at the loss of contact, but he reached into his pocket, pulled out his key, and unlocked the door. He stepped inside. He turned, expecting the bat to follow, but they remained out in the hallway.

"You have to invite me in," they said simply.

That was when the feeling that had been persistently nagging at his mind finally forced its way to the front. **DO NOT LET HIM IN. DO NOT LET HIM IN. DO NOT.**

Something flickered across the bat's face, but it passed quickly and was replaced by the smile again. "Little badger, look at me. Look into my eyes," he said calmly. Daniel did. He couldn't help himself. It was so easy to obey.

The bat's eyes widened, exposing their green to full intensity. They seemed to glow and the light seem to pulsate with a fluctuating intensity. They were beautiful, and the bat seemed to be the most beautiful animal in existence. A fog seemed to seep into Daniel's brain and wrap snugly around his mind, almost caressing it, as he stared. He widened his own eyes so he could take in their full majesty. "Invite me in." The bat's voice seemed to echo from all around, drowning out the ambience of the city coming through the windows.

“Won’t... you... please... please come inside?” Daniel barely recognized his own voice. It seemed to come from miles away.

“Thank you,” said the bat, stepping gingerly across the threshold. He never broke eye contact as he did so. “To the couch.”

Daniel walked backwards, subconsciously remembering where everything was so he didn’t trip and so he could keep sight of those wonderful eyes. Once they had reached the couch, the bat sat and pulled him down next to him. “You’re doing so well, doing what I say. So well. And to take in those memories back at the restaurant. You’re such a good boy, little badger. Such a good boy.”

Daniel began to purr again, chirping every so often. He would do anything for this bat, so long as he got to keep looking into those eyes.

“Are my eyes...?”

“Pretty...” Daniel practically sighed as he said it.

“Then, by all means, keep staring. Stare all you like. I don’t find it rude. I find it cute. Stare. Deep. Deeper.”

The eyes flashed a little and seemed to grow brighter.

“Watch,” said the bat, his voice almost coming out in a purr. “Watch. Watch. Waaaaaatch... Good boy. Don’t blink. Don’t even blink. Blink and you’ll *sleep!*”

And just like that, a snap seemed to ring out in Daniel’s head, his mind blanked, and he dropped. His body falling into the bat’s side, eyes open but unseeing all but the bat. The bat sat him up and turned the badger’s head toward him again.

“Tell me your name.”

“D-Daniel...” His voice was soft, quiet, full of sleep. He felt as though he were floating and every single individual strand of fur seemed extra sensitive to the lightest touch, as the bat traced his jawline down to his throat.

“Well then, Daniel—You are a good boy, Daniel—I see you *do* happen to have a chessboard on the coffee table here. I *can* teach you some. You *would* like that, wouldn’t you? You don’t have to speak. You can nod if you like.”

Daniel did. Shudders and pleasure were coming through his body in waves.

“Then I will. But first, I need you to do something for me.”

“What’s that?” Daniel yawned at this.

“Oooh, so sleepy.” The bat laughed. “I haven’t had the chance to eat yet. You wouldn’t mind if I had a bite, would you? You know it will make you feel so good to say yes.”

The bat was right. He had to be. All Daniel had felt with this bat was happiness and pleasure. “Y-y—” He struggled to speak, but all that would come out was another yawn. In the end, he nodded. The bat gave him another dazzling smile.

“Good. Good boy. I’m going to hold you to me.” The bat did. “Feel free to snuggle me a little.” Daniel did, smiling sleepily. “But I am going to have you watch something as I eat. I promise that you won’t be able to look away.”

A claw came into Daniel’s line of sight. It was the bat’s thumb, moving back and forth, from one eye to the other. Daniel’s mouth dropped open slightly as he followed its luxurious movements, slow arcs back and forth, back and forth.

“That’s it, Daniel. Keep watching and sink deeper. I’m about ready to eat. Are you ready? Because I promise it is going to feel so good for you to have let me eat. So, so good. Yes, good boy. Yes. Here we go... Get ready...”

Daniel suddenly felt two sharp stabs of pain in the side of his throat. But not bad. Good. Very, very good. His body began to quiver and he breathed in sharply. The bat wrapped his wings tightly around him, pressing their bodies close together. The claw was back in Daniel's vision, moving slowly once more from left to right. It seemed to leave a trail behind it as it moved. Then the suction began. Slow, deep, strong. Daniel moaned. The bat was eating, and he felt good, just as the bat promised.

The bat pulled away, letting out a loud gasp before sinking his fangs into the badger's throat again. He gulped loudly, taking every hot mouthful of blood with pleasure. A few minutes later, he pulled away and ran his tongue over the wounds until the blood clotted and scabbed over the punctures. He looked at the badger, whose eyes were lidded heavily.

"It seems someone couldn't stay awake for a lesson, even if they wanted to," he said with a laugh. "Don't worry. I can come back at another time and teach you. Perhaps this Friday. I'll be sure to eat ahead of time. Can't drain you yet. Unless you want that."

The bat fixed his gaze on the badger's again, who opened his eyes wide in reaction. Their pulsating glow had returned. "Would you like that, Daniel?"

Daniel was about to nod when the bat grinned and said, "No, I don't think so. I think I want to keep you around for a while. You seem like fun after all. We can share a meal every so often, but not at every meeting. No. Instead, I think you can sleep. Sleep. Good boy."

Another snap in his mind and Daniel fell back on the couch, eyes closing. As he drifted off, he could feel a warm kiss on his forehead. A calm, shiver-inducing voice could be heard to say, "A new friend... checkmate."