

Chapter 8: Changing Dynamics

So it came to this.

Silence fell. Snackers, Deko, and Rayne exchanged glances, then turned to the arctic wolf, who twiddled his fingers. The group had experienced a lot, but this was different—this was personal.

Despite his nervousness, Lupus opened the journal, having dreaded and desired this moment in equal measures since booking the flight. The wolf always kept his checklist hidden, not out of shame or fear, but because of a reluctance to enact on his own convictions. If others knew the contents of those pages, they might prioritise them over their own personal desires. He figured it'd be a source of embarrassment, so he left it bottled up.

That's what he always told himself. But right here, right now, with the support of his closest friends, he'd finally break that wall down.

He opened the journal to a dog-eared page, scanning the words he'd written the day before the flight and on the first night at the lake house.

For what seemed like an eternity, Lupus stood his ground, staring at the raccoon's expansive emerald irises above. He took a deep breath, not wanting to proceed with a racing heartbeat. Then the wolf opened his maw.

"First..." One word was all he could manage before that all familiar lump in his throat form.

Rayne raised a hand to rest on Lupus's shoulder, whispering, "Take your time, dude." He always knew what to say to ease the wolf's mind. That was conjoined by the raccoon's pinky finger flexing to relax against his elbow.

"You can do it." Snackers said softly.

Lupus extended a hand, which collapsed onto the wolf-shepherd's purple-furred palm, exchanging glances briefly. The arctic wolf tried to speak again, this time with more conviction.

"First...I want to puppeteer a giant while I'm in their fist," he read aloud, his voice barely above a whisper. A memory flashed in his mind: Snackers, holding onto him in his pocket, letting him feel the raccoon's powerful steps. Lupus' cheeks flushed as he remembered the thrill of that sensation. He continued reading, his confidence growing slightly with each word.

"I want to be secured behind his collar, commanding his strides, and feeling the wind in my fur as he runs. I want to..." He paused, his gaze lingering on the final line of that entry. "I've always wondered what it would be like...to have control over something so much bigger than me."

However, it wasn't just about the size, the strength, or the *rush* of power—though those were intoxicating in their own right. It was something deeper, something rooted in the dark corners of his mind where fear and desire entwined like thorny vines, wounding any wandering soul that dared tread there. He could still hear the echoes of his past. A toy in the hands of fate, tossed around by forces he couldn't understand, much less control. Always the puppet, never the puppet master.

To tap into such power, it was more than just a fantasy—it was a statement. It was a way to rewrite the narrative that came with his height. But even as he envisioned himself commanding a giant, another image took shape in his mind—being protected.

He wanted to have a guardian.

Rayne tilted his head to peer at Lupus over Deko's head. "That's different," he mused in a light tone. "But it makes sense, it's a common desire, Lupy."

"That sounds fun! It must feel empowering...and maybe humbling too," Deko interjected.

The blue-furred folf glanced at his boyfriend, muttering. "Didn't we try that after we watched that movie? What was it, Ratatouille?" Deko gestured with a wink to the raccoon's emerald eyes.

"Uh, you wanted to try, but traded it for a night under my paws while I streamed," Snackers remarked with a playful smile angled to Lupus.

"Wait, what?" Lupus asked. "Why is he always under your paws?"

Deko caressed the back of his neck, a faint crimson hue rising under his fur as he tried to brush his embarrassment off. "It wasn't like that," he muttered, trying to avoid Lupus' entertained stare. "I was just... tired."

Snackers let out a suppressed snicker while he stroked his boyfriend's back with a fingertip. **"Tired, sure. But you didn't complain when I wrapped you up in a paw sandwich, either."** His grin widened as he glanced back down at Lupus. **"At the end of the stream, he was completely knocked out."**

Deko huffed, but there was no real protest in his voice. "It was one time!"

"One of many," Snackers concluded with a lighthearted nudge of his nose, while his eyes glanced over to the arctic wolf. **"But for you, Lupus, I'll try it once."**

Encouraged by their reactions, Lupus took a deep breath and dragged a claw tip down the page to the next item. "I want to dance on your palm. To feel the rhythm of your pulse and footsteps guiding my movements."

Deko's smile exploded outwards at the thought. "A dance on Snaccy's paw? I'd love to see you twirl and move like that, Lupy. Rayne and I might join in, too."

Lupus smirked to Deko and then looked up at Snackers, his heart in his throat. "I know it's silly, but..."

Snackers' gentle laughter interrupted him. **"Silly? Not at all, Lupy. It sounds fun."**

The wolf's heart fluttered as he read the words, his claw tip tracing the letters as if they could somehow bring back the past, back to the theatre lights, to reconnect with a part of himself he thought he'd lost forever. He could almost feel the wooden boards beneath his feet and the warmth of the stage lights. However, his friend's large hand, warm and steady beneath his feet, made a stage unlike any other. The rhythm of the giant's pulse would guide him, a steady beat that would sync with his movements. Every step he took would be in harmony with the giant's breathing, every spin and leap a response to the subtle shifts in the raccoon's grip.

Taking another deep breath, Lupus's posture relaxed and his eyes met Snackers' gaze. The raccoon's emerald eyes, filled with warmth and affection, met his own. "Snackers," he added. "There's...there's one more thing on my list."

He reached for his journal, his fingers tracing across the worn page. "I want to climb up you."

The wolf's words hung in the air, heavy with unspoken meaning, and with his newfound resolve at the helm, he continued. "I want to do more than just climb up your thigh. I want to scale up your body from paw to shoulder." He withdrew his eyes from the page to study the big, fluffy creature's reaction. Lupus trusted Snackers. In scaling his friend's body, he relied on the raccoon's awareness and reaction time to support him. And not once, not even once, did the wolf doubt that.

Snackers raised a brow. **"Climbing up my fem-bod, huh? Now that, I'd like to see,"** he giggled, swishing his tail faster behind him. **"You know, Lupy, you're welcome to climb anytime. It's even better now that I'm starting to grow my winter coat, so I'm just a big, fluffy mountain waiting for you."**

Rayne's eyes gleamed with excitement at the idea. He always enjoyed a challenge, especially when it came to besting Lupus. "I might even join you. Can't let you have all the fun, right?" he added, his competitive spirit flaring.

The arctic wolf took a moment to absorb their reactions, letting it sink in for a moment. Feeling a bit more at ease, Lupus' eyes finally met the eyes of his friends to whisper, "thank you."

But as he turned the page, something unexpected caught his eye. The handwriting wasn't his own. There, nestled among his own notes, were new entries—each one penned in two different styles.

At the top, a message inscribed in bold, confident strokes read: 'Let's have a race. Let's hike up to the summit of the tallest mountain we can find.'

In the next entry, the letters were extravagant and expressive, befitting to the folf beside him. *'I'll buy a telescope and we can stargaze on the rooftop.'*

Finally, Snackers' contribution, translated in Deko's handwriting, rested at the bottom of the page. *'How about a movie night with lots of popcorn and cuddles at my place? We can watch your favourite films, Lupy, and I'll make sure to give you my tail. You can even stay in the house I made for Deko owo'*

Lupus looked up. "You guys...wrote that?" These weren't just notes; they were promises. Vows.

His eyes returned to those heartfelt notes again, his fingers squeezed the leather cover and he sighed deeply, allowing his imagination to give brief glimpses. He could picture the wind rushing through his fur as he raced Rayne to the vista in the Garden of the Gods, or maybe a different mountain range. He imagined himself stargazing on the roof of the Lake House with Deko, being able to study that glittering carpet that spread across the night sky. And although he'd never been there, he could already see himself nestled in the comforting, sprawling space of Snackers' apartment. Everything tailored to the raccoons scale—large, plush furniture, oversized blankets, and an enormous bed half the size of a football pitch.

As the daydream unfolded, he felt a pang of longing mixed with excitement. Staying in such a fantastical, thrilling place, and the prospect of spending more time with his friends made him beam warmly. And, as if a heavy burden was being lifted from his shoulders, these were no longer dreams he felt too embarrassed to share, but limitless possibilities he allowed himself to explore.

Returning to the present, Lupus closed the journal and looked to the group. “You really want to do all that, even letting me stay with you all?”

“Lupy, if I had my way, I’d swim across the Atlantic and kidnap you to keep you here forever,” he said with a trace of sincerity and a playful glint in his eye.

“Um...you do know that actually might count as stealing, right?” Lupus said with caution.

“Yeah, I know. Deko and Rayne told me that’s against the law. Silly international laws, always getting in the way of a good friendship-napping,” the racoon quipped and flashed a grin to Lupus. **“I can’t even steal one of my best friends without some people making a fuss.”**

Snackers, Deko, and Rayne all leaned in to encircle around Lupus. “Seriously though, we just wanted to make sure you knew how much we care,” Deko whispered to the arctic wolf, his usual composure giving way to a warm smile.

“Yeah,” Rayne added, nudging Lupus playfully. “Even if you are across the pond, we want to do all these things with you...eventually.” The overwhelming warmth of their presence served as a tangible reminder of the bond they shared despite the miles that divided them.

“But, I’m in the UK,” he murmured, while the raccoon leaned his nose into his chest. The comforting warmth of Snackers’ breath grounded him, yet his mind still wandered.

“How can it be the same? Typing out words in a chat, seeing faces on a screen...it’s not the same.” His paw absentmindedly stroked Snackers’ nose as the wolf sighed. The soft rise and fall of Snackers’ breathing comforted him, but it couldn’t dispel the lingering fear in Lupus’ heart—that the physical distance would offer something more than a discord call. “And you’re all in the US...How can we still do all these things together?”

“Lupy, these days, distance is just a number. We’ve got discord, and—” he paused, breathing into the wolf’s chest to ruffle his clothes. **“You can always come fly back here and stay with us for a few weeks.”**

The wolf’s ears twitched. “But when? I mean...I don’t know when I’ll be able to come back. It’s not cheap,” He insisted, brushing his fingers through the raccoon’s soft maw fur. “It’s not easy.”

Snackers nudged him playfully, nearly knocking Lupus off balance. **“Hey, we’ll find a way. We always do, right? You don’t have to figure it all out right now.”**

“But what if I can’t? What if I don’t see you guys for years?”

“You’re overthinking it.”

“Am I?”

“Yes. And if it’s about money...” He paused for a moment to weigh his next words. **“I’ll pay for your next flight. Whatever it takes, I’ll do it to bring you here.”**

Lupus moved away from the raccoon’s nose to lock eyes with Snackers. “It’s sweet, but unnecessary.”

“I want to. Imagine staying with Deko in the little house on my bedside table,” Snackers suggested, bringing his jaws closer to the small canine. **“If you wish, you can sleep in my hand.”**

The wolf stared and hung onto every word.

“And when you’re tired, I will carry you around the apartment,” Snackers continued while he manoeuvred his hand closer to his cheek. **“For breakfast, you can walk on my plate and have some of my pancakes.”**

Lupus touched Snackers’ snout, feeling the vibrations of the raccoon’s voice. “That sounds...nice.”

“We can still have those movie nights. We’ll sync up our screens, hit play at the same time, and watch together,” Deko comforted with a reassuring smile and continued, “It won’t be the same as being in each other’s embrace, but we’ll still be able to hear that awesome accent of yours.”

“And we can plan trips,” Rayne chimed in. “Just because we’ll be apart later it doesn’t mean we always will be. We can start saving and planning visits. One day, we may visit the UK and you can be our tour guide, agreed?”

Lupus could almost picture it—riding in the raccoon’s welcoming hand as he stared at the city of London stretching out beneath him like a detailed model. In his mind’s eye, he saw them all together.

Back in the present, Lupus blinked, the vivid daydream fading as he returned to the raccoon’s cosy hand with his friends. He grinned like a cheshire cat, exposing his pearly fangs. “I would love that, so much.”

Snackers and Deko desired to savour the moment, yet a realisation emerged. They shared a look, perfectly timed. The wolf fished out his phone to look at the clock and he nodded up to Snackers. Time, as always, was slipping away faster than they wished it would.

Just as the raccoon’s eyes glimmered at the thought, Snackers’ grin faltered as he turned to Rayne. **“Uh, Rayne...when do you need to drive home?”**

Surprised, Rayne’s earlier excitement faded into practicality. “Oh...right,” he muttered, checking his watch. The hands on his wristwatch mocked them, ticking away the minutes they had left together. “We’ve got a few hours, maybe two or three hours, max.”

Deko let out a sigh and his ears drooped. “We still have time, but we need to pack and head home for work tomorrow.” He had been so caught up in meticulously planning Lupus’ ‘To Do’ list that it only hit him—there simply wasn’t enough time left to give each of the wolf’s ideas the attention they deserved. Disappointment sank in as they realised the constraints of their tight schedule.

“We can still do something, though,” Snackers asserted in a gentle but determined voice. “Even if we can’t get to everything on your list this afternoon, we can start.” What’s the one thing you want to do most, Lupus? Let’s make sure we get that.

Lupus’ body sank under the weight of indecision. He had many options and ideas. Faced with mortality, he had to choose.

He closed his journal. “If I had to pick one thing...I think it would be to orchestrate Snackers’ actions, if that’s alright?”

Snackers nodded, already planning the logistics in his head. “We can do that. But, would you like racc-zilla, or—”

Lupus cut in with a grin, his hesitation melting away. “Snackers, your usual clothes are perfect. The pink shorts, the converse shoes, and the scarf with the collar—it’s you. I wouldn’t change a thing.”

Snackers beamed. “Well then, who am I to argue? Racc-zilla can take a backseat today. You’ll get me, the giant femboy treatment, ready to follow your lead. For now, lunch?”

“Lunch,” Lupus nodded back in response, signalling Snackers to lower his palm down to the ground with the utmost care.

The three walked off the raccoon’s hand and towards the porch. However, as they approached the doorway, Rayne noticed a faint flickering light coming from inside along with a static buzz.

“Did you turn the TV on, Lupy?” Rayned asked the arctic wolf directly behind him.

Lupus stopped and looked at Snackers’ sheepishly. “Accidentally, but when Snaccy was hunting me.”

“Don’t worry about it Lupy, I got it,” Deko said, slipping past the pair and into the living room. As the television hummed its distorted tune, the folf crouched down to glide his fuzzy fingers across the dials to turn it off—when suddenly, the news broadcast flickered to life.

The sound of a news reporter’s voice filled the room. She calmly addressed viewers with an almost clinical tone. “If you’re just joining us, we have breaking news that London is taking the centre stage of a public demonstration organised by the Big Hearts Foundation—” the news anchor began, but Deko, already hovered a thumb over the power button.

“Sorry, let me turn it off,” he said, ready to switch off the TV and restore the cosy ambience.

Lupus in a courteous tone, requested, “Could you keep it on, please?”

Deko paused, his finger hanging over the red button as he turned to look at Lupus. There was a seriousness in Lupus’ eyes, a rare intensity that made the folf hesitate. “You sure, Lupy?” he asked gently, reading the wolf’s facial expressions for clues.

“Yeah. I just...I need to know what’s going on with Big Hearts,” Lupus slowly responded while he walked across the creaky floorboards to stand behind a couch beside Deko. “Please.”

The folf who usually radiated playfulness, had a furrowed brow, and placed the remote on the coffee table.

The anchor woman continued, her tone lowering as the camera cut to images of London, specifically Trafalgar Square. “The BHF group is advocating against segregation, demonisation, and unfair taxation on the giant population. Our British correspondent, James Turner, is on the ground to witness this unprecedented event.”

The footage cut to a rooftop ledge to peer at the familiar surroundings, with various giants stomping around and generally engaging in harmless jubilation. The majority of them were either wearing t-shirts or carrying billboard-sized signs plastered with the ‘The Big Heart Foundation’ slogan: **‘BIG HEARTS, BIG RIGHTS!’**

Rayne, walking up to stand next to Lupus, listening to the wolf idly drum his fingers against the couch, a habit he couldn’t shake when anxious. His sharp eyes darted from Lupus to the screen, then back again.

For Lupus, the footage of Vastelerians celebrating in Trafalgar Square—a place limited to the smaller population—was unrecognisable. The slogans, the signs, the sheer number of them all...It was a city in a changing nation.

Soon the background noise drowned out the wolf's shock and awe, replaced with the British news reporter. "Thank you. Morning commuters experienced some truly extraordinary disruption as fifty Vastelerians of varying sizes descended on the capital and marched through the streets, drawing both awe and support from the public. But instead of laying siege to the city, they are instead protesting against the segregation policies and Enlargement Taxes imposed by the government. Their message was loud and clear: equality for all, regardless of size. They argue that the Magna Carta stood for fairness and equality, and that even an ancient document written 800 years ago didn't discriminate against the size of the individual."

The reporter continued. "How these giant people managed to make it into the heart of the capital without the police or even the military or intelligence services knowing first is anybody's guess. But one thing for certain is now they're here, they're impossible to ignore. They are even getting favour from the public by giving them free rides to ease the pressure they're placing on local traffic." As the reporter said this, a particularly huge pine marten bent down to pick up a red routemaster bus in a single hand, with commuters still inside and gently hauled them across the roofs of buildings before placing it back down at their scheduled bus stop.

The news anchor in the studio chuckled at the sight. "And I suppose if you're used to how bad London traffic can be, you have to appreciate the help getting to work on time, right?"

"I guess you could say that, yeah." The reporter continued. "We have yet to hear a statement from the Chief of Police or the Minister of Scale Affairs. However, a representative for the Big Hearts Foundation is just about to make their first address to the public since the demonstration this morning."

Deko finally broke the silence, but his voice was tinged with concern. "Do you think...this could escalate things? I mean, if the BHF keeps pushing like this?"

Lupus took a deep breath, his drumming fingers stilled, finally tearing his eyes away from the screen to look at the wolf. "It could," he responded in a measured tone. "This kind of protest...it's bound to provoke a response. Maybe the good kind, maybe the not so good."

The unease in his stomach tightened, but knew he was right. Things were changing, and for better or worse, he had to be prepared when he returned to British soil. Even though he was thousands of miles away from home, his country was changing and he could feel it—an undercurrent of unease fueled by uncertainty. But before he could voice these thoughts, Deko leaned forward, rushing to point at the screen.

"Wait, what? What are they doing now?"

Both Lupus and Deko returned attention to the television. There, towering above the rooftops and the throng, was a humongous fox of incredible stature, dressed in a black coat that nearly consumed the grey shorts around his waist. The fox's hood was pulled over his ears, and he exuded a casual yet mysterious aura. His black and grey fur gleamed in the sunlight, and his normally intense ruby eyes held a surprising warmth as they surveyed the scene around him.

Beside him stood another giant, an equally tall anthropomorphic deer with broad shoulders in a snow-white hoodie. Two large, expressive crimson eyes glanced at the camera and conveyed the depth of his soul that

transcended his formidable size. His delicate ears stood tall atop his head, twitching slightly as they picked up the ambient sounds around him.

In his hand, held with remarkable gentleness, was a little anthropomorphic rabbit clad in a sleeveless navy-blue shirt, brown leather jacket, and cargo shorts. He was no bigger than a regular-sized citizen to the gigantic deer. The rabbit's grey and white fur was stark against the deer's hand. Throughout the interview, the deer was beaming down at the rabbit, who looked up at him with a mix of awe and trust.

Together, his robust shoulders, empathetic eyes, and majestic golden antlers breathed out both strength and compassion. The way he held the ankle-sized rabbit in his hand—gentle and protective—further highlighted the harmonious balance between the deer's imposing physical presence and his tender, empathic nature.

As the camera panned to capture more of the deer and fox's humongous anatomies, text appeared at the bottom of the screen, identifying the giant anthros:

'Nuki - Oceanographer. Big Heart Foundation Member.'

'Arcii -Big Heart Foundation Member'

What the cameras couldn't pick up was the details of the conversation between the deer and the rabbit in his palm. "Right Nuki, would you like to start?"

Nuki whispered back to the rabbit in a hushed tone. **"Yes Warren, I would love to."**

Warren nodded.

"I'm ready. But isn't this against the law?"

He shrugged. "Sure, it's against the law, but sometimes, to get the changes in law that you want, you have to break some- that's just the way it is with many civil rights movements." The smaller anthro took off his jacket, sat cross-legged in Nuki's palm and slung the coat over his lap. "I've got friends that want to speak up, but they can't, they're too afraid. Maybe today, things will be different."

"Aren't you worried the MoD will show up?" Nuki inquired.

"And do what, exactly? They wouldn't dare."

"They might have a whole task force. What if they...?" Nuki's voice trailed off.

Arcii placed a handpaw on the deer's shoulder. **"They won't, Nuki. Just relax."** The fox's voice softened as he gestured to the gathering Vasterlerian and Petritan protestors milling about in Trafalgar Square. **"Look, the whole city is behind us. The MoD isn't going to storm in here and start something they can't control."**

Nuki shifted his weight from one foot to the other, his massive frame buckling the concrete to leave behind a hoof-shaped pothole. **"I'm just...I don't want to see anyone get hurt. Especially not because of me."**

"Nuki, you're one of the kindest souls I know," Arcii assured, voice calm. **"We're here to prove that to them. Show them, the nation, you're wonderful self."**

The deer sighed, a slow, heavy exhale. **"Alright,"** he insisted

“Okay, the floor is all yours bud.”

The deer paused to take a deep breath, adjust his composure and addressed the gathered crowds below. **“We are here today to call for justice and equality!”** His words were firm, filled with an undeniable passion that reverberated through the air. **“For too long, those of us with larger frames have faced segregation and demonisation. We are not monsters; we are friends, neighbours, and contributors to society!”**

The crowd, big and small, murmured in agreement. Nuki continued, his antlers narrowly missing a glass structure.

“Dude! Watch where you’re swinging your coat rack”

Nuki acknowledged the guidance and continued, gesturing broadly with one hand. **“There are already many successful government sponsored naturalisation trials for Vastelerian citizens in the United States and Canada, it’s high time we had them here too.”**

An eruption of applause travelled across Trafalgar square, the sound a blend of tiny and deep, resonant cheers from the citizens around them.

The tiny reporter, visibly beaming from Nuki’s impassioned speech, nodded solemnly before asking his final question. “And what do you say to those who fear that integrating Vastelerians across the United Kingdom could be dangerous?”

Nuki’s expression softened. **“Fear comes from misunderstanding. We are no different to those that are ankle-sized . To us, we are capable of kindness, respect, and love. By sitting down and having an honest conversation side by side, we can overcome that fear and progress this country forward... Big Hearts, Big Rights!”**

Across the Atlantic ocean, Deko, Rayne, and Lupus stood sentinel, the gravity of the unfolding situation pressing down on them. TV flickered, showing crowd images, the reporter narrating an overlay.

“They’re saying all the right things,” Deko said calmly, “but is it enough? Can this truly unite the UK?”

Lupus sighed. “Fear is not only about size or strength. It’s about power dynamics, control. Giants like Nuki may have good intentions, but there’s always a lingering tension and worry about potential issues with mixed size societies.”

Rayne nodded, reaching down to snatch the remote, turning the television set off. “Change is hard, Lupy.”

“That’s true. This change might not be bad,” Deko interrupted, stroking the arctic wolf’s shoulder.

Just as the mood shifted towards a tentative optimism, a rumbling noise rattled the lake house.

“Bool!”

Deko jumped, but Lupus and Rayne quickly looked to the source to see a lone emerald eye peeking through the window.

“Snaccy!” Deko exclaimed with exasperation in his voice. “You nearly gave us a heart attack!”

“Sorry, I couldn’t resist. You three looked so serious, I thought you could do with a lil’ scare.”
Snackers asserted with a growing grin, the rim of his large teeth visible through the glass.

Rayne shook his head, trying to stifle a laugh. “Well, you definitely succeeded with Deko.”

Snackers winked. **“Good. Go make your food and come outside, or I will scoop you out myself.”**

The folf rolled his eyes, but couldn;t suppress a smile as he turned towards the kitchen. “Alright, alright, we’re going. But no lifting the roof again, got it?”

“No promises,” Snackers snickered before stepping back from the window to give them some space.

Rayne followed Deko into the kitchen, their earlier concern easing into a more relaxed state. The familiar clatter of dishes and hum of appliances provided a comforting background noise as they prepared their lunch. Lupus, however, lingered for a moment behind the couch, his thoughts still heavy with the events he’d witnessed.

“You guys start on lunch,” Lupus said, finally breaking away from his thoughts. “I’m going to brew some coffee. I really need a cup now.”

Deko glanced over his shoulder to meet the arctic canine. “Sure thing. We’ll handle the food.”

Meanwhile, Rayne was already pulling ingredients out of the fridge. “What are we thinking? Tacos?”

“Sounds good to me,” Deko agreed, while he turned to peer out the window to see the wall of grey fur and the rim of his boyfriend’s pink shorts. “Hey, we should make an extra taco for Snaccy! He’d love it.”

Rayne paused mid-chop and exchanged a sceptical glance with Lupus, who was now walking to the kitchen. “You’re aware that Snackers is massive, right?” The wolf-shepherd asked, raising an eyebrow.

Lupus snickered, “Yeah, Deko. Even if we made him a taco with all our ingredients, it’d be a single bite to him. Maybe two, if he’s being polite.”

Deko laughed, realising the absurdity of his suggestion. “Okay, fair point. I guess a regular taco isn’t exactly ‘giant’ sized.”

Rayne grinned, returning to his task to prepare the topping. “Unless we somehow grow the food, but no technology like that exists for food.”

“Yeah, if only.” Deko leaned against the counter, still smiling as his eyes redirected to Lupus. “Would you like Tacos too, Lupy?”

As Rayne prepared the food, Lupus moved to the corner of the kitchen where the coffee machine was sitting. Inhaling the smell of freshly ground coffee beans, he let out a contented sigh.

With a small smile, the wolf turned away from the coffee station. “I’ve never had one, but I’d like to.”

“What?!” Deko blurted out in shock. “We’re changing that right now.”

Rayne flashed a smile at Deko’s enthusiastic response. “Well, you’re in for a treat, Lupus. Tacos are a classic.”

Lupus chuckled, taking another sip of his coffee. “I trust you guys,” he muttered in response, watching the wolf-shepherd lay out the tortillas, seasoned meat, crisp lettuce and diced tomatoes.

Meanwhile, Deko even added a little extra hot sauce to him, glancing at Lupus to sway the bottle in front of the wolf. “Do you like spicy food?”

Lupus hesitated, then shook his head. “Sadly, no. I’m not a fan of spicy food.”

Rayne already took a bite of his taco and handed another on a plate to Lupus. “Here you go, dude. Your first taco—enjoy!”

The arctic wolf took the taco, inspecting it briefly before eating. His eyes widened slightly, the flavours bursting on his tongue. “Wow, this is great,” he said, sounding pleasantly surprised after swallowing.

“Told ya,” Deko barked back, taking a bite of his own, swallowed, and continued. “Tacos are un...beat...a...ble,” he sang as he walked towards the porch with Rayne behind him.

With their plates in hand, the trio vacated outside, where Snackers were resting against the two-storey structure. The giant raccoon’s massive form loomed over the building, but he was perfectly at ease, his tail curled around him in a lazy arc. In one of his hands, held a breakfast bar, nibbling on it delicately.

The door creaked as Rayne left, causing Snackers to perk up. He looked down, his eyes lighting up at the sight of them. **“There you are! You took your time.”**

“Sorry, Snaccy. We just got caught up in introducing Lupus to the wonder of tacos,” Rayne spoke with a smile, patted the raccoons’ fluffy thigh, and sat down on the grass near his right quadriceps.

“Tacos? Has he not had one before?” Snackers raised an eyebrow, his eyes moving away from Rayne to Lupus. **“Where is he?”**

Shortly after they departed, Lupus was about to rejoin them in the sunlight, but the television captivated his gaze for a moment. Images of crowds, journalists and towering citizens flashed through his mind. He stood there, lost in thought, the sounds of his friends outside fading into the background.

London was an ocean away, yet so close to his heart.

“I should be there,” Lupus muttered with a tinge of regret. “I promise, when I land, I’ll join the giants.”

Just as he felt himself slipping further into his labyrinth of thoughts, a light tap on the window to his left jolted him back to reality. The sound was soft yet measured, like he had practised many times before. Lupus blinked, his eyes shifting from the screen to the window, where he saw the tip of a black claw withdrawing from the glass.

“Hey, everything alright in there, Lupy?” came Snackers’ deep-throated voice from outside, filled with concern despite its booming nature.

It snapped the wolf out of his reverie, shaking his head as if to clear the fog from his mind. Taking a deep breath, he moved away from the television and approached the door. When he opened it, Snackers’ humongous snout and beaming eyes greeted him.

“Sorry if I startled you,” the raccoon whispered, blowing a gust of hot air to ruffle the wolf’s clothes and fur. **“Are you doing okay?”**

Lupus offered a small, appreciative smile. “No, it’s alright, Snaccy. I was just...thinking—”

“About stuff back home, right?” Rayne interjected, shifting his body on the grass to meet Lupus’ eyes above. “It’s understandable. Come sit with us.”

As the arctic wolf nodded in agreement, Snackers moved, his giant fingers wrapping but around the canine’s torso. Lupus didn’t resist, holding onto his plate, knowing that he had done this procedure multiple times throughout the weekend.

“Come here, sweetie,” Snackers cooed as he placed Lupus on his broad thigh. The raccoon’s shorts were smooth and warm beneath him, while the flesh of the raccoon’s thigh sank beneath his weight. He was sitting on a living waterbed.

Rayne chuckled from his spot on the grass. “Guess you’re getting the VIP treatment, Lupus. Can’t say I’m jealous, though—looks cosy.”

“It’s cosy, Rayne,” Lupus’ lips exploded into a grin, that same old smile that knew how to fill a room. As the wolf settled onto the femboy’s thigh, one particular idea came to mind—a whimsical notion about ‘puppeteering’ a giant, and now he had the opportunity.

Lupus’s gaze fell upon Rayne, who lay on the grass, looking up at him with a mischievous smile. “Hey, Snaccy,” he began, a mischievous glint flickering in his eyes, “would you mind if you pick up Rayne and Deko too so they can join us?”

The raccoon blinked, surprised by the request. But then he recalled Lupus’ journal, including an idea about pulling the strings of the larger beings. With a slow, spreading grin that exposed his fangs, Snackers nodded. **“Sure thing, Lupy!”**

As he finished chewing another bite of his bar, he noticed Deko’s eyes were on him with a curious expression. Snackers lowered his breakfast down toward him, settling it just beside the small folf. Even partially eaten, still dwarfed his boyfriend, its scent of oats and honey filling the surrounding air. Snackers wiped a few lingering crumbs from his lips with the back of his paw, a soft chuckle escaping him.

“Okay!” Deko swung his arms up, plate in hand, bracing for the raccoon’s fingers as they swallowed him in a meaty fist.

For Rayne, his eyes widened in mock horror as he realised what was about to happen. “Wait, what? Lupus, Snaccy, what are you—”

A hand filled Rayne’s vision. Four fluffy fingers extended and curled around Rayne with the same care they had shown Lupus. The wolf-shepherd froze, but his posture thawed when he came to rest on the raccoon’s other thigh next to Deko.

“There we go,” Snackers said with a delicate snicker. **“Now you’re all getting the VIP treatment.”**

Snackers then gently glided a finger across his leg to meet Lupus, stroking him with one of his enormous fingers. The touch was light, more than a soft brush, but it carried a warmth and care that Lupus recognised.

“Is this what you meant by ‘puppeteering’ me, Lupy?” Snackers asked as he continued the tender stroking. Snackers eagerly waited to hear that three-letter word.

Lupus’ smile stretched further, inflating his cheek bones. “Yes,” he replied softly. “It is,” he added, lowering a hand to brush across the soft fabric of Snackers’ pink shorts. He traced the outline of the fabric and folds, a small but significant gesture of appreciation for the raccoon’s kindness.

With a slow, delicate motion, Snackers’ withdrew his hand away from the wolf, carefully not to disturb the canine’s comfortable position. His other hand reached down beside his lap, where his breakfast bar lay nestled on the grass. The bar was huge, even by his standards, packed with enough energy to satisfy a raccoon’s appetite.

As Snackers raised the half-eaten bar, he glanced down to the three on his legs, noting how they quickly returned to enjoying their tacos. Rayne and Deko were happily munching away, exchanging a bit of banter between bites, while Lupus took his time to savour these new flavours.

“Mmmm, those tacos look delicious,” Snackers remarked, dragging a tongue across his upper lips. **“I think I might steal a piece, if that’s okay?”**

“Go for it, mate,” Lupus insisted, holding up his plate of his half-eaten taco to meet him. The morsel was smaller than the breakfast bar, but the raccoon appreciated the gesture.

“Whenever my blueberry and I go for a walk, we stop for tacos on the way home. Although we have to buy about a buffer so I can have a snack.”

Snackers’ eyes sparkled as he noticed Lupus’ offering. He manoeuvred two claws towards the wolf’s taco, pinching the small piece between the claw tips.

Not once did the sight phase him. The raccoon’s claws, though large, tore through the taco with finesse. The small piece, which was soon separated from Lupus’ lunch, appeared almost miniscule compared to Snackers’ fingertip.

Snackers raised the piece to his mouth, his tongue darting out to lick it with a soft, appreciative hum. It disappeared almost instantly, and the raccoon didn’t even make a noticeable gulp. Instead, he let out a satisfied sigh, the sound more like a gentle breeze than a full-fledged exhalation. The bite was so tiny compared to the raccoon’s usual fare that it caused a ripple in his vast appetite.

After devouring the last pieces of their tacos, the trio settled back to meet the raccoon’s exposed, squishy stomach. Above, Snackers polished off the rest of his breakfast bar and wiped his paws clean off any crumbs. He held the wrapper, which was now crumpled and greasy, and squeezed into a compact ball.

With a thoughtful expression, Snackers looked down at his friends while tossing the ball up and down in his palm. **“Now that we’ve eaten, sweeties, how about we get ready for our climbing session?”**

Lupus ears’ perked, his curiosity piqued. “Climbing?”

Rayne, who rolled his eyes, leaned across the gap between the raccoon’s thighs towards the wolf. “Don’t you remember, Lupy? Climbing Snackers’ was on that list of yours, wasn’t it?”

The arctic wolf's eyes widened as the realisation dawned on him. "Oh, right! I forgot about it." He chuckled, turning to the side to conceal his embarrassment. "I guess we can try it, if you are happy with it?"

Snackers, overhearing the wolf's voice, moved a finger to brush across Lupus' cheek. **"Well, if it's on your list, we are going to check...it...off."**

Lupus' tail swished, his eyes shining with gratitude. "I can't thank you all enough. It means a lot. It does."

"No problem, sweetie. Let me know what you need from me."

Lupus scratched his chin. "I don't suppose you have a strand of rope large enough to run from your feet to your shoulders," he queried, until the sight of Deko shaking his head caught his attention.

"Lupy, I don't think we have a rope that big," Deko responded, offering a smile, hoping to ease the message.

"What if instead of climbing my entire body, you climbed me while I'm sitting down?" Snackers insisted.

Lupus looked intrigued. "That can work," he replied, his tail flapping against the raccoon's shorts.

Snackers nodded enthusiastically. **"Yes! You can climb up my arms, stomach, or even my back. It won't be the original idea, but it's the closest we can do for now."**

"That sounds fun, Snackers. I'd be more than happy to give that a try," Lupus agreed.

"Great! Then let's cross 'climbing me' off your list!" he rumbled. Without waiting for another word, he reached out, his enormous hand closing around the wolf. In one smooth motion, Snackers lowered Lupus in front of his massive paws.

Once the wolf's feet made contact with the ground and the raccoon removed its fingers, he encountered the sight of Snackers towering in front of him.

"Here you go, Lupy," Snackers cooed towards him, releasing the wolf with a gentle pat on the head. Then his hands reached out again, this time gathering up Deko and Rayne between two paws. The two let out a little yelp of surprise but quickly relaxed as Snackers lifted them off the ground.

"Don't worry, you two, I've got an epic spot for you to watch from," Snackers assured them. With the utmost care, he raised Deko and Rayne higher and placed them on the rooftop of the lake house, just below his shoulder blade. From there, shuffled along the roof to peek past Snackers' back to view the entire scene, ready to cheer Lupus on while staying safely out of the way.

Lupus briefly watched the two on the rooftop, giving them a wave, and turned back to face Snackers. The raccoon nestled on the ground, creating a series of natural slopes and valleys with his large, fluffy form. This wasn't the original plan, but as he stood before the towering figure of his friend, he welcomed the challenge nonetheless.

And he was ready. He trusted them.

Watching the little arctic wolf try to scale the raccoon's fur and clothes was quite amusing. Watching Lupus struggle to cling to both fur strands and fabric strands while Snackers relaxed against the sturdy wooden wall

of the lake house was almost comical. The uplifting cheers from his friends encouraged him to continue. The canine's tiny paws sank into Snackers' thick fur as they climbed up the fluffy belly.

As Lupus gained more confidence, his ascent sped up. Every fur patch under his hands and feet, a triumph, reaffirming his faith in Snackers' to stay still. The raccoon's soft laughter resonated within Lupus, providing a comforting sense of protection. He felt no fear of falling, not because of his physical strength, but because he trusted the raccoon to keep him safe.

For what seemed like an eternity Lupus, Deko, and Rayne sat on the rooftop, while Snackers used the house itself as a backrest. They had all settled into a comfortable silence, each lost in their thoughts as they gazed up at the crystal blue lake and sky.

Lupus, Deko, and Rayne, still buzzing from the day's events, now sat on the rooftop of the lake house. Their small forms were perched comfortably, nestled against the wooden shingles, paws inches away from the gutter, while Snackers used the house itself as a backrest. They sat in a companionable silence for a few moments, each lost in their thoughts.