

Chapter Two: Spork's Tail is Gross

"So, what's on your mind?"

It hadn't taken long to regroup with Spork outside of the house. We had ventured into the backyard. A slight chill was starting to set in as the distant sun was fading on the horizon. It'd be getting dark soon.

"Probably everything *not* on yours." Spork growled. "What have you even done since you got here?"

For a moment I reflected on all I had done. By my standards it was impressive, but by Spork's? Ehh, I doubted it. Spork had unrealistic standards which it insisted on condemning all others with. Chances were you were never gonna please Spork, not unless the plan had been its to begin with and you executed it perfectly.

But, just to back up my claim about me having done stuff for any of you whose memory might be failing, I had set up my command post in Cedric's house. This was after warring with the 'sprinkler' in the front yard. I had battled Cactus fearlessly and plenty of other stuff that was beginning to get a bit foggy in my memory. All good things.

"I thought you guys were dead."

"So nothing." Spork flicked its tail. "Did you even go search for the others?"

"Of course not! Leave the safety of my home?! I mean, this is my safe haven in a sea of violent aliens. Do *you* like violent aliens?"

Spork rubbed at its forehead a bit. "Remind me why you're a lieutenant..."

"I earned it!"

"No."

My ears pinned down as I glared. Me and Spork had never worked well together. It went something like, I commanded and Spork didn't listen. Spork was the problem in our business relationship. Spork was the problem in many 'deviv's business relationship.

"Oh yeah, by the way, Cedric doesn't know about the whole invasion thing. Sooo...I think it'd be best if we kept it that way."

"It's a Human slave!"

My ears folded down yet again as I felt a frown tug at the corners of my mouth, Spork didn't know Cedric. He was more than a Human slave. He was a Human slave who willingly cooked food for me, bought me cute kitty toys and let me tear up the magazines. Well, actually he had gotten angry about

that, but he hadn't done anything about it—which is practically the same as letting me, right? He just let me with a less happy sounding tone.

“Look, I just think its better that we don't advertise what we're doing.”

“Within reason, I'm willing to admit that is understandable.” Spork concluded.

It looked off to the side. It was my guess that despite appearing to be looking at grass, this was likely not what was actually taking place. Spork was not interested in the beauty of life and the living things in nature.

I let it do whatever it was that it was doing for a bit. A good commander knows when to let its units have a moment to gather their thoughts and sanity. A good commander especially knew that Spork was exempt from the normal standards put in place for units and allowed said type of alien kitty to ponder as much as they liked.

It appeared to be talking to itself—not in a “you're going crazy” fashion but more of a solo planning. Planning what, I couldn't really figure out since it was mumbling and looking down. Occasionally it would sigh and look up. None of this gave much indication of what it was thinking though.

Not unless I was supposed to gather that it was oddly disappointed that the sky was not like the grass. I've never personally been upset with the sky's appearance. It has caused me no grief to sigh over. Well, aside from when we had entered the atmosphere in our drop pod cardboard boxes and had plummeted to Earth. That had been a little unpleasant. Come to think of it, perhaps that was what Spork was worked up over. Perhaps it was upset at the sky for having dropped us so quickly as well.

Regardless, I decided to try something risky and interrupted its sky disappointment. Change of subject might improve its mood anyhow.

“Alrighty, so then!” I clasped my paws in front of myself with a clap and held my tail high—a gesture of friendliness and optimism. “You got a place to stay or...”

“I do...” Its gaze left the sky and angled at what I assumed to be me—when it uses its eye disguise it's hard to tell for sure as I've discussed before. “But then there isn't anyone to keep *you* on track.”

“Oh come on, Spork! It's not like I'm a kitten!”

“Really? Couldn't tell.” It paused for a moment. “Speaking of kittens, does the name Shkie Qe'Xonn sound familiar?”

I thought about that one for awhile. It was an odd question to ask. How many people do you know named Shkie Qe'xonn? Now how many do you actually remember? Yeah, probably none. Neither did I, but I got the hint that Spork thought I should for some reason. There were a lot of Qwuedeviv, and each had a name, sort of like how each or most Humans had names. Now how I was supposed recall every little 'deviv name of every little 'deviv I'd ever heard of, I wasn't sure. I mean I was doing good to remember my own crew's name so...

“Love 'n Hearts?” Spork clarified questioningly.

“Uh...nope. Not ringing any jingle bells.”

Jingle Bells was an Earthian Christmas song. They sang of these bells jingling. They also spoke of bells being rung when they remembered something. I'm not sure if Humans actually hear bells in their heads when something is familiar to them, but I like to think if they did they would be jingle bells because jingle bells sound pretty. I must've looked a little dazed, because Spork growled and rolled its eyes.

“You told it that it could come with us. *Despite* it not being in our crew. *Despite* not having clearance *and* in disregard to the fact it is still a *kitten in training!*”

“Ohh that Love 'n Hearts.” I nodded happily.

I did vaguely recall telling some little kit that they could tag along. They had been under my paws the entire time while we were preparing to leave. Seemed like a nice enough kitten but too many questions and too “cute.” We were a military, not a fluffy kitty petting zoo after all.

“It's against code, ya fur-brain.” It hissed and coiled its flat tail up.

I've always hated that. Its tail that is. It looks like some kind of aquatic snake and—eeee. I shivered and stuck my tongue out.

"What?"

"Your tail is gross."

"You're so useless!"

There was more growling, followed by some pacing, it walked over to where it had left its weird helmet earlier back when it had revealed its true identity to me—see the first report if you need a reminder about all that. It brushed some of the grass off, growled again then took off in a sprint. Odd individual. Needed some anger management. I followed after it at a much slower rate. There was no reason to subject myself to the risk of possible danger if I were to get too close to it. Observation. That was what this was all about. Follow and observe.

That is exactly why I returned to the house rather than follow its trail around outside. It's also why I went to the kitchen window to look out at the one above the sink after crawling up on the counter. I couldn't see it around anywhere, but chances were it was probably headed back towards where ever its home was.

With what intent was an entirely different story. One I couldn't even speculate on. What I did know for the time being, were the facts. Spork was gone and both Cedric and I had survived to tell the tale. Neither of us would miss Spork too much if it chose to stay gone and not show up again. I was certain I could speak for myself as well as headquarters.

The vroom of a vacuum made its way to my built in radar system, or EARS. Essential, Angular Radar System. Cedric was probably vacuuming upstairs. It may have seemed like a strange thing to be obsessed with at the time, but Cedric was very concerned about the wellbeing of the house, and there was a good chance that Spork had rearranged some dust, paint, wall portions, etc. I wasn't sure how much a vacuum was gonna fix it, but ya couldn't blame the guy for trying.

Anyway eventually me and Cedric were going to have to speak again. I had decided to give him a good chunk of time to uh, come to terms with the existence of my good friend Spork. I knew its existence took a little getting used to. Especially for other species. My primary concern here was my sensitive radar system. Neither of them wanted to listen to any form of scolding or interrogation for well, obvious reasons. That aside if I accidentally told Cedric more things that I shouldn't, Spork would be all over my case about it.

With all these factors taken into consideration I decided to go curl up in my cardboard box rather than hunt down Cedric. If you will recall, not too much earlier I had just put forth a valiant effort to preserve Cedric's life. This may or may not come as a surprise to you, but the injuries sustained from that were still sore and tender.

My legs were a little tender and several muscles whose names I had probably both learned and forgotten back in the Academy were putting forth quite the protest. Being jerked around like I had and tossed like a toy mouse are not good things to put your body through for the record. Or well, if you're a Qwuedeviv they aren't. I'm going to assume the same applies to Humans. They look less flexible than us.

Anyway, a little rest and relaxation would be good for me, I was sure. My bed may sound less than pleasant to the casual Human observer, but let me assure you, there is no comparison. Within this common cardboard box was a treasure of a bed. Layer upon layer of fluffed pillows and blankets. An encasing of warmth and comfort from all around. It made me feel like nothing in the world could hurt me. Nothing could find me. It was my place of peace and solitude.

"Where have you been? Where is that *thing*? What's going on?"

Huh. So much for peace, solitude etc. Cedric had tracked me down...and so quickly. Hadn't he just been vacuuming like moments ago? Apparently our injuries were not equal.

"How did you know I was here?"

"You always go to your bed when sulking."

Lies. I didn't sulk. Ever.

"Can we discuss whatever it is you want to another time? I really need to get some rest."

"No." Cedric reached into my warm, plush home and lifted me up by the scruff of my neck.

I hissed and gave a halfhearted swat in his general direction. I missed by a lot, but it was enough to make Cedric let me go. Unfortunately he had moved slightly so instead of being dropped into my lovely box, Hindquarters made connection with the floor which, might I add, needed more padding. The floor needed more padding that is, not Hindquarters.

"You're so ungrateful!" Cedric declared, fists clenched at his sides.

He turned and hurried away, reminiscent of my years back in the Academy. Kitten style argument. Ungrateful! He was ungrateful, not me! I crawled back up into my warm bed, promptly stuck my tongue out in the general direction he had headed and flopped down with an indignant huff.

