

An
Intimate
Entrée

By
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“You want me to do what, exactly?” Thomas asked the mare for the second time, still not believing his ears.

Adeline sighed at him from across the dining room table. “I’d need your help making something special for an old, family friend. It’s not a big deal, I don’t see why you’re making such a big deal out of it.”

His eyes pierced her for a moment as he speared a piece of food on his plate. “You need my *help*... I see how it is, you’re just pimping me out to your friends. That, or you forgot to get her something, so you think bringing me over there with you would suffice.”

She matched his glare with her own as her fork speared two whole potatoes. They were casually ferried to her mouth, where she chewed them with slow deliberation for a moment. She liked the little human, quite a bit, actually, but his attitude was in desperate need of correction.

She swallowed and replied, “I guess you have things all figured out then.”

He took a long gulp of water, as a smug expression clouded his face. “Am I wrong...?” He asked with a wry smile as he set the small, human-sized glass back onto the table.

Perhaps it was again time to spend a long, and rather intimate, evening discussing the matter in excruciating detail. Remind the little human what his role was in the house. The thought of it kindled an ember of heat between her legs that threatened to derail the rest of her day if allowed to grow. So, she put the matter aside for a when there was more time.

Adeline shrugged. “Doesn't matter either way,” she said with a wry little smile, “You're going over there and you're going to make sure she has a good time tonight. Don't worry, you won't have to do all that much, other than look appetizing, as usual.”

Thomas paused in the process of taking another bite of his lunch and stared at her with an exasperated look. “Wait... tonight?”

“Yes, tonight... it’s not as though you have anywhere else to be.”

He sighed and placed his fork back onto the plate with slow, exaggerated care. “I did have plans you know.”

“Like what?” She asked, her eyebrow inching upward with curious incredulity.

“Not being some... old Lythian’s fancy dinner, for one thing,” Thomas replied, his hands spread in futile argument. He shook his head and continued with a frown, “But if you must know, there’s a show I’m interested in watching tonight.”

She half-sighed, still not understanding his odd affinity for lythian entertainment. “Fine, I’ll record it, if it really means that much to you,” she dismissed with a wave.

“Gee thanks,” he responded in a flat, mocking tone before viciously stabbing and filling his mouth with several pieces of meat. Where he chewed and grumbled quietly for a moment before continuing, “Plus, I was hoping to just sit and relax for a bit. We’ve been pretty busy this week and there’s still a lot of work left this afternoon.”

“Not anymore,” she said and swallowed a large mouthful of food, “You can spend the rest of the day relaxing and doing whatever you want.” She stuffed another sizeable fork-load of food into her mouth and continued, which gave him an interesting demonstration of equine mastication. “Besides, I need you to spend some time and get ready for this evening.”

“Get ready...? Why do I have a bad feeling about what that means?” he said as he watched the quick, repetitive motions of her jaw work with steady, industrious effort.

She swallowed the partially chewed mass with a loud, strained gulp. “I just want you to be... *prepared* the way she likes, is all. Don’t worry, you may even like it.”

He raised an eyebrow at her and began to collect his dishes from the table. “Now I *really* have a bad feeling about this. And just because I’m a bit of a masochist at times doesn’t automatically mean I’m going to *enjoy* being subjected to the chopping-block. Even if it’s under your tender care.”

He walked into the adjoining kitchen and placed everything in the sink. Which he could now reach thanks to a small stepstool Adeline had been kind enough to get for him. That done, he went back to the dining room table and scrambled up onto the chair next to her.

He stood and watched her eat for a moment because sitting would leave his head barely above the table’s surface. She’d acquired an old child’s booster seat for his usual chair, which was a little demeaning. But a far better option than having to eat his food while standing or sitting on the floor, as though he were a pet.

She ate in silence as he watched, making a point not to acknowledge his presence. Partially because she didn’t want to discuss the matter anymore, but mostly because she knew it would annoy him. And she thought he deserved to be the one getting annoyed for once.

If he was going to keep insisting on making such a fuss about his place in the house or the farm in general, then he deserved to be ignored and irritated. Although, she still couldn’t help the little, impish smile that crept onto her face as she sensed him brooding next to her.

When she had just about finished, Thomas finally said something, “Alright, if it’s that important to you—”

“It is...” she interjected just soft enough for Thomas to hear and give him pause.

“...Then, I’ll... do whatever I can to help,” he finished with clear resignation.

He really didn’t have any other option. Despite his augmented strength and fighting ability, he couldn’t fight his way out of it. Since, according to the stipulations he’d agreed upon to stay there, he did technically *belong* to her. And while he hated certain parts of it, deep down he knew it was a pretty good arrangement for him, all things considered.

Adeline finally glanced over at him and smiled in a kind, reassuring way. “Thank you, it means a lot to me that you will, even though I had to twist your arm about it,” she said and leaned over to give him a soft kiss on the forehead.

He blushed in spite of his feeling as her broad, leathery-soft lips pressed onto his skin, leaving a little wet spot behind. As she pulled away, he said, "I guess it's not that big a deal... I'm sorry. You know how I feel about that kind of thing, having had Lythians take advantage of what I am before, makes me get really... defensive about even the perception of being used like that."

"I can imagine," she said in a matter-of-fact tone as the last of her food was cleared from her plate.

"And yet, here you are..." he alluded in a sarcastic voice as she began to clear the rest of the items from the table.

"Oh, be quiet, or I'll give you something substantial to complain about," she said with an amused grin. Her gaze drifted over to him again and she looked at him thoughtfully for a second before adding, "Come to think of it, Bernadette's been dropping some intriguing hints about you lately. Maybe I should send you out to *assist* her for the rest of the day... I think she might like that."

He considered her for a moment and saw that it could very well be a serious suggestion. Where, to his surprise, he found himself actually considering the idea himself. And was rather glad he'd been allowed to wear clothing that day, which saved him from some embarrassment.

She'd been forcing him to go without any clothing, other than his collar, recently. Perhaps the idea of a naked human running around the place, while covered in a tasty layer of sweat from the summer heat, made things more interesting. Which was probably why Bernadette had become so interested in him lately.

Adeline interrupted his musings, however, before he could respond. "Never mind, go do whatever for the rest of the day. Just be in the kitchen, ready to go, around four o'clock. OK?"

"Fine," he said and waved her off as he left the room.

* * *

The rest of the day was uneventful and passed by quickly. He spent most of the time relaxing on the spacious couch while watching a couple of vids about a developing situation along the border of Gervalonia. He was even able to fit in a small nap as the soft downy comforter on the bed was far too much of an invitation to pass up.

Which may have been a bad idea. He'd only just managed to make it downstairs as the large clock on the kitchen wall clicked over to four. Where he found Adeline already hard at work, the room filled with the sound and smells of food preparation.

"Nice of you to show up," she said with a look as he entered the room dressed in one of her over-large shirts that he'd tied into a kind of toga.

"Sorry," he said with a small yawn and a stretch, "I guess that nap was needed a lot more than I thought."

"I bet it was, and now, hopefully, you're all refreshed and ready for the festivities?" she said while tending to a large saucepan of something as it simmered evenly on the stovetop.

“Yep,” he said with a shrug.

“Good,” she replied, then motioned towards him with a dripping spoon, “So, off with that and into the pot.”

“What?”

“You heard me,” she said with a hint of agitation as she gestured at a large cooking-pot on the floor. “Hurry up, strip and hop in. I had meant to get this started earlier but you just had to have your *relaxing time*...so, get in!”

“Oh, alright then,” he said a little guilty at having to make her rush as he stripped.

It was more than big enough to serve as a small bathtub for him and reminded himself to ask her to use it later as it would be easier than the sink. Although, sharing the tub or shower with her had been working out pretty well so far.

He went to climb into the cold, metal pot, but she stopped him. “Wait, did you bathe?”

“Oh,” he said, sagging a bit, “No, I didn’t think it was necessary.”

She sighed with palpable exasperation. “I thought that was implied when I said, ‘be ready to go’, I need you clean for this. Otherwise, you won’t taste right, and it could ruin the whole thing.”

Adeline walked over, picked him up, and roughly dropped him into the large sink. She opened the tap and dowsed him in water, which soon became almost painfully hot. Where she grabbed him and began to run a large brush over every inch of his body while muttering angrily.

“All you had to do was take a quick shower or something,” she grumbled in low, dangerous tones. “Now I have to waste all this time scrubbing you like a fucking potato when you’re more than capable of cleaning yourself. Maybe I *should* just treat you like a mindless pet or something, make even have you sleep in the barn from now on.”

She scrubbed him for at least ten minutes before another deluge of scalding water rinsed him off. He stood as best he could in the slippery sink as her gaze swept over him, searching his scoured flesh for any flaw, like a steak at the market. Satisfied that he was indeed clean, and rather pleased at his discomfort, she picked him up and placed him into the large pot that still rested on the floor.

He’d hardly gotten himself settled among the layer of cut vegetables that already coated the bottom when she reached down and grabbed it. Where his stomach threatened to escape through his ass. Then jump out his mouth as she lifted the pot and set it down onto the counter.

She pushed him into a laying position on his back within the pot, where he had to bend his knees a bit to accomplish properly. He began to worry about what she had planned as his vision of the world was slowly limited by stainless steel walls.

“So, um... this is cozy,” he said in a casual tone, more to break the tension and try to calm Adeline down than anything else.

“I’m glad, because you’re going to be in there for a while,” her curt, unseen voice replied in a rush, which echoed off the walls around him. Then added as her upper body drifted past his view several times, “I was able to get the sauce done, so that will save some time, you just have to marinate in it for a bit while I preheat the oven.”

“The what!?” he exclaimed with growing alarm.

He sat up to express further dismay, however, her hand met him before he got very far and shoved him onto his back again. Almost as though she had been prepared for it.

“You stay put,” she said, annoyed at having to expend the effort, “Try that again and I’ll break out the bindings. The last thing I want to worry about is whether or not the main dish has escaped.”

Thomas let out a growling sigh. “This is something that I should have been informed about earlier!” he shouted at the ceiling in frustration.

Her head appeared and she frowned down at him. “Calm down, it’s not going to be that bad. You just need to be warmed up a bit so that your skin absorbs all the flavors from the sauce. It’s an old family technique that my mother used all the time. I promise it won’t hurt a bit... so I’m told.”

“I appreciate the lesson in culinary technique and family history, but you’re not the one going into an oven to be partially cooked!” he half-shouted at her visible upper half. “Speaking as someone who’s had to endure that on more than one occasion in the past, it’s not an exciting prospect.”

She rolled her eyes at him, as though the prospect of being broiled alive wasn’t as horrifying as it sounded. “Again, it’s not as though you really have a choice in the matter,” she hissed down to him. “At least you’re not being spit-roasted.”

“Lucky me,” he spat back.

“I have another really good recipe for that we can always try, that is if you don’t stop complaining... Now, hold your breath, I need to cover as much of you in this as I can,” She said and held the massive saucepan over him, then added with a genuinely regretful look, “And it may still be a little, um... hot... so try not to squirm around too much. I don’t want this to splash out over the counter.”

He looked up at her in stunned disbelief for a heartbeat and said, “Really? You don’t—”

He was cut short as a cascade of blistering liquid was poured over him. She started at his head, mostly to shut him, then moved down his body. All with the same cold, emotionless efficiency were she simply basting a roast, which he technically was at that point.

When he was completely covered in the reddish-yellow, oily solution, both her and the pan disappeared from view. He lay there, in mild shock, as he tried to come to terms that some he liked, very much in fact, just poured a rather spicy sauce over him. All because she wanted him to taste good... for someone else.

However, there was really only one response he could think of at the time. And a strained, high-pitch, whisper drifted up from the depths of the pot, “Ouch...”

She reappeared and brushed a viscous, sweet-smelling substance. Before spooning more of the sauce over him, which, now that he had regained some of his senses, smelled strongly of butter, alcohol, and gnarl-berry extract. A somewhat caustic substance that accounted for both the burning tingles and spicy taste in his mouth.

Adeline gave him a close inspection to ensure that he was ready for whatever torture she had in store for him next. After several more applications from the course brush, she found him to be satisfactory. Then, with a nod, she produced a lid and went to cover him.

“Try not to have too much fun in there,” she said with a sadistically mirthful wink.

Thomas was then cast into shadowy gloom as the lid slammed over him, before being jostled and sloshed as his dark prison was lifted from the counter and carried a short distance. It was hard to tell what she was doing, but a safe bet would say that he was being placed into the oven. With one final jolt and a muffled bang, the theory was confirmed as the heat began to increase around him at an alarming pace.

Despite what he’d been expecting, and had experienced before, his time in the oven wasn’t all that bad. The heat did grow to an uncomfortable level in short order, soon followed by the humidity as the *marinade* he was in began to boil off around him. But it was more like being in a delicious smelling sauna than anything else.

In fact, were it not for his legs being at such an odd angle, he could’ve easily fallen asleep. Which he’d been about to do, until he shifted, and his arm touched the side of the pot. And was awakened by the sudden, white-hot pain of his flesh cooking. After that, he found it somewhat difficult to relax and spent the rest of the time trying to remain still while fighting his mounting anxiety about it.

His muscles soon started to get sore, while his mind wandered, and he lost track of time. To where it was difficult to tell how long he’d been stewing within the dark confines of his steamy, metal prison. Seconds drug on into minutes, which seemed to then drag on for hours, as each moment of cramped discomfort led to yet another.

All of which was made worse when his head started to swim as the noxious concoction she’d soaked him in began to evaporate around him. As the surrounding liquids boiled away, the heavy scent of gnarl-berry in the air grew ever stronger, which made it almost impossible to breathe. It burned his lungs, eyes, and almost everything else, the experience made him long for the relative comfort of a stomach

Soon, he even began to struggle just to stay conscious, where his body wanted to shut down from the lack of oxygen and heat. Normally, he’d gladly give in to it and escape the hellish situation, however, the last thing he wanted to do was expire in the oven. Because Adeline would most likely be rather pissed at him and what was worse, she’d just put him through it all over again.

Thankfully, just as he thought he couldn't last much longer, the bed of vegetables jolted under him as the oven door opened. Shortly followed by everything sloshing around as the pot was removed and set back onto the counter. Light flooded in shortly afterward and blinded him for a moment when the lid was lifted away.

The relatively cold air of the kitchen rushed in and bit against his now golden-brown, yet mostly undamaged, skin. He gazed heavenward as his eyes readjusted to the bright, kitchen lights, and when they finally did, saw Adeline's long, brown, equine face hovering not far above him. Her own gaze studied him with some concern and more than a little expectation at how he turned out.

She'd used the time to change and apply some make-up, apparently, as her lips now had a deep, reddish tint to them. Her head drifted down until it was so close that he could smell her perfume over that of the sauce he'd cooked in. For a moment, he thought she was going to lick him to judge his flavor but only flared her nostrils, inhaling a long, deep lungful of his scent while her lips twisted in thought.

When she'd gotten her fill of his new fresh-from-the-oven smell, she straitened up and gave an approving nod. Where he noticed she'd tied her hair back into a long ponytail, which he couldn't help but find amusingly ironic. The overall effect was quite alluring, and it made him a little less upset with her just then.

"Not too bad," she said with an edge of pride in her voice. Her face was soon eclipsed by a large phone as she continued, "I have to send a picture of this to my mother. Otherwise, she'll never believe I'd managed such a good looking Glazed-Sapien on my own."

Thomas glared up at her while trying not to move too much as he was sure his skin might fall off if he did. "I hate you so very, very much right now."

"Quiet," she sniped at him, "I'm trying to take a good picture. Actually... could you roll to the left just a hair, and perhaps look a little less pathetic? Good enough." The phone clicked several times as it snapped a few pictures before she lowered with a small sigh. "Too bad the lighting in here isn't all that great. Just hold still for a bit while I set up a few lights," she said and turned to leave.

"Adeline!"

A chorus of girlish giggles erupted just out of eyesight before her upper half reappeared above him, a wide impish grin on her face. "Calm down, I'm only kidding, you dumb, delicious-looking, bastard." She looked at her phone again and frowned. "I'd let you out for a bit to stretch and put you on a proper serving dish... but we really need to get going. Since you took longer than I expected to, um... cook, not surprising as you're much plumper than most humans. Maybe you should think about losing some weight."

He let the remark about him being too fat slide, for the moment. "Let me out? That sounds like a fun experience right now, I guess you haven't tortured me enough yet today," he quipped. "Did I do something to piss you off lately that I should know about?"

She looked down at him confused for a moment before stepping up to the pot, suddenly serious and rather concerned. “Why, what’s wrong?”

Her abrupt concern made him hesitate for a moment and his own expression shifted to confusion. He knew she enjoyed messing with him, even to the point of what could be considered ‘torture’ at times. But she’d never been mean spirited or cruel about it, it was just one of her odd kinks that Thomas was particularly well suited to put up with.

Despite all the suffering she often put him through, she’d genuinely cared about his wellbeing and even tried to ensure he had a little fun as well. An out of place, yet pleasant, trait for a lythian to have, concerning a human.

“You just baked me in an oven,” he probed tentatively, “Parts of me might be a bit... fragile right now.”

“Yeah, you were in the oven, for what... thirty minutes,” she said with a scoff. “And at a really low heat, all it did was work some flavor into your skin... honestly, I thought you'd know more about these things than I would. Hells, I almost asked you for advice at one point.”

He gazed up at her with a blank look for a moment as he ran through what he knew about Lythian culinary practices and how they often applied to humans. In the end, he had to admit that his overall experience was rather limited. Since, as a rule, he’d managed to avoid being part of such *activities*.

While still alive anyway... As whatever happened to his old body after he reformed had never been much of a concern for him. Why would it? It’s not as though he’d ever needed to wait around to fish his car keys out of the toilet or anything.

“This is a bit embarrassing... but, I have to concede that I may be quite ignorant when it comes to this.”

A smug look crept over her face, and she made a note to never forget that moment. “Well, well, good to see there are some areas that you aren't an expert on.” She leaned in close and added in a sensual hush, “Maybe I can help you with that later, wouldn't that be fun? There are a few more recipes I'd like to try, and with the fall festival approaching I'm going to need *something* to bring up when I visit the family.”

“I'm sure that will be fun,” he said in a tone that dripped with cynicism.

“Oh... it will be,” she said as she straightened back up, the pot lid in her hand. “Now, I know you're a little cramped in there, but I’ve got to put you in the trunk, so, I’m going to stick the lid back on. However, when I get everything loaded up, I'll take it off and you can stretch your legs out a bit. OK?”

“You're kindness itself,” he quipped up at her as the lid came down and again enveloped him in darkness.

His dark container was picked up and carried out of the kitchen. Its contents sloshed and splattered over him as it was tilted and shifted while she moved. The lid was soon removed again after the pot had been placed in the trunk of her car and he extended his legs out the top a little to stretch them out.

“Alright, it’s a long drive to her place. So, try not to touch anything, it’ll go rather badly for you if I had to spend a half-hour picking lint off your skin before we head inside. Do not embarrass me... understand?”

He caught the malicious glint in her eye and nodded his understanding. She would indeed do very bad things to him if he misbehaved in some way. Things that made even him, an immortal being of reasonable power, worry... if not tremble in fear at times.

The trip to, wherever there were going, had indeed been a long, yet uneventful one. More so since he nodded off once or twice as it was surprisingly comfortable inside the pot. Although, he took extra care to keep his limbs secured inside the pot whenever he did.

A sudden light roused him from one of the small naps he’d carefully slipped into and he opened his eyes to see Adeline reaching down for him. She pushed his legs back into the pot with a gentle shove and gave him one last, careful look over.

“Ok,” she said as she picked up the lid, “I know how you feel about this and I understand that you’re upset about the whole ‘cooked in an oven’ thing.” Her expression became apologetic for a moment before continuing, “But, please just play along... I really want this to go well, for her sake, and mine... but mostly yours, if you know what I mean.”

He regarded her for a second, despite what he’d said earlier, he didn’t really have any major objections and hadn’t planned on being anything but compliant. However, he found her shifting mood somewhat annoying, she should know him better than that by now. She could go from outright threats of violence, to pleading and apologizing, then back to subtle menace in a single sentence.

It was rather tiresome. Of course, lythians usually had to threaten humans most of the time to get anything done, so, it was a habit she would probably never break. As knowing that a far worse fate awaited one if they didn’t cooperate, even if that meant being consumed with a compliment and a smile on their face, tended to be a very effective strategy.

“I understand,” he replied with a nod, accepting her quasi-apology and just wanting to get the night over with. “I’ll be the perfect meal and do everything in my power to ensure that she enjoys the evening, whatever that may involve.”

“Thank you,” she said, her voice far more sincere than he’d expected as the lid closed over him and, yet again, sealed the metal chamber in darkness.

With another round of movement that threatened to induce motion sickness, his dark dungeon was removed from the trunk and carried off somewhere. After a time, a muffled knock

signaled that they must have arrived at the door. Where only a short wait confirmed it, as a jovial, gruffly feminine voice greeted Adeline.

“Addy, it’s so good to see you,” it said just over him as though she were hugging Adeline, “I see you brought something of your own to add.”

“Yes,” she replied in a surprisingly modest and respectful tone, “Just an old family dish I thought you might like.”

“Oh, you know how I used to love your mother’s cooking,” the voice said. Then faded a bit as its owner moved away while continuing, “Well, come on in and get settled then, just go ahead and put that in the kitchen.”

“Thanks, Dellanara, I’m glad we could find the time to get together again, I know how busy you’ve been,” Adeline uttered as the pot began to move again.

“Oh, it’s always a joy to see one of Arabella’s young ones,” Dellanara said wistfully, “How is your mother doing, by the way?”

“She’s fine, I suppose, you know how things are between us. Well, between me and most of the family,” Adeline said as the pot was set down.

Thomas sat in the warm darkness and listened to the pair continue their conversation for a minute or two before their voices trailed away as they left the room. It offered him a brief moment to think about something that had just occurred to him. This was the first time Adeline had ever mentioned her mother’s or any of her family’s names.

He’d never really paid it any mind before, as it hadn’t come up in a way that concerned him. But there had surely been some discussion about her family at least once or twice before. Maybe he should start paying closer attention when the topic came up.

But as the gloomy silence continued and his thoughts worked down to their final conclusions, he gave a dismissive, mental shrug. Whatever was going on with the mare was her business and it was probably in his best interest to stay out of it. The last thing he needed was to involve himself, again, in someone’s personal affairs.

The voices of the two female lythians soon drifted back to him as they drew near again. While the metal beneath him shook with their heavy footsteps as it became apparent that they were headed back to the kitchen. The muffled conversation soon erupted when they entered and grew ever louder as they moved over to where his cooking-pot prison had been set.

“You’re sure this is big enough?” Dellanara’s voice boomed from his right. “Because I have a larger serving dish if it would work better.”

“I’m sure that will be more than big enough,” Adeline said her voice just above him. “Plus, you may not need it for very long anyway, I almost ate it myself after pulling it from the oven.”

Great, Thomas thought bitterly, I'm an 'it' now. Let's see how she feels about me being off the menu for a couple of weeks, he thought about how that might work out for a moment then frowned, *Of course, I may have to hide in the barn to do that... or even the woods.*

"Well then, let's see it," Dellanara said as her voice edged even closer, "You've already got my mouth watering and I don't even know what's in there."

The lid was removed, and Adeline said with a bit of a flourish, "Tada!"

He looked up into the sudden light to see the face of a massive Lythian Lioness loom over him for a moment before swinging in to give him a closer inspection. As she did, her mouth spread into a pleased smile at what must have been the agreeable look of his browned and sauce covered body. After a couple more seconds of awkward silence, he couldn't help himself and offered a little wave up at her in greeting. Which seemed to amuse her to no end and the smile widened until her mouth split open in a laugh that thundered around the room.

She was larger than Adeline. Not quite as tall or well built as Bernadette, but, as the Lioness stood back up, she still almost dwarfed the young mare next to her. She was lean and muscular, as where all felines of that kind, something which her clothing couldn't hide. Nor did it try.

"My, what a friendly little fellow you've managed to find there," she said when her laughter settled down into low, mirthful chuckles, "And cooked just right, I might add. She shook her head and continued with a frown, "You know, I haven't had a decent Glazed-Sapient in years. The so-called *chef* they have at this little place in town I like to frequent always manages to overcook them. The poor things are usually already half-dead by the time they arrive at the table, hardly any fight left in them at all."

Thomas fought the urge to offer a witty comment of some kind. Not so much at the casual way this female seemed to enjoy cooking humans, but rather, he'd gotten just into the habit of doing it with Adeline. So, he managed to keep his mouth shut and simply looked up with patient expectation at the two ladies, while waiting for whatever lay in store for him.

Dellanara ran a large finger down his chest, then probed his skin here and there on several parts of his body. "He's perfect," she said with an appreciative nod. She licked the sauce from her finger and added, "I dare say you might even be better at this than your mother."

Adeline blushed at the remark, turning the flesh in her ears a light shade of pink. "I wouldn't say that," she said, placing the serving dish next to the pot. "I just inherited her knack for it, I guess, it's not that hard of a recipe after all."

The lioness scoffed. "Say that to the rubes at Reynard's, I swear if it's not boiled, fried, or poured from a bottle they have absolutely no idea what they're doing. You know... It took me a year of suggestions and heavy gratuities just for them to have it as an off-menu item. And how it always turns out... makes me think their head chef is illiterate."

Adeline dismissed the argument with a shrug and small wave of her hand. "Your tastes are just too refined, Dell, plus you have a personal preference for this particular technique."

Dellanara shrugged, conceding the point, as it wasn't worth the effort to continue. "Maybe you're right, just don't make me have to wait too long until you make another one." She sidled up next to Adeline and took hold of Thomas' feet. "If you grab his arms then we can get him out of the pot and onto the plate. I've also got some of those edible straps in the cupboard somewhere if he decides to get too adventurous."

Adeline gave her a wry look, "Why not have him get out himself? Besides, I don't want to get my hands all messy with that butter-rum sauce he's been soaking in."

Dellanara released his legs and arched an eyebrow at Adeline then gave Thomas an equally skeptical look. "This I have to see." She cleared her throat and spoke to Thomas in a slow, clear voice, as though he were too simple to understand otherwise, "Hello, could you please get out of there and onto the plate." She then made an exaggerated gesture towards the dish, "This one... right here?"

Several responses to that ran through his head just then. Some of which might've even gotten a chuckle or two out of her. However, he wasn't as bothered about the situation all that much anymore, that, and what Adeline might do to him kept all of it firmly hypothetical.

So, with a warm, cheerful smile, he replied, "Alright, if that's where you want me."

He shifted around as best he could within the large pot until he was able to stand. It took quite a bit more effort than he'd expected with both his skin and the inside of the pot covered in a layer of sauce. But he soon managed to scramble up to, and over, the edge and down onto the adjacent dish.

As he did so, he twisted himself just enough to allow a quick, surreptitious glance at Dellanara. Whose expression was such that he had to immediately shift back the other way. Otherwise, she might have seen the dangerously smug look that flashed across his own face.

With a bit of effort to avoid slipping on the plate, he was able to position himself in the center of it. Where he sat down cross-legged and gazed up at the two females with a look of idle curiosity and mild expectation.

"Well now," Dellanara said as her brow knitted in surprise, "You'll have to tell me where you found this little guy. He's certainly far too well mannered to be one of the locally caught wildlings you usually see in the markets around here." She turned a slow, piercing gaze on the mare and asked with slow deliberation, "Adeline, did you get him from a plantation... did you? Don't tell me you went to such an expense, just for me."

Adeline didn't know quite how to respond at that, the truth certainly wasn't an option, but she hated to outright lie to Dell. "Oh, well... I, um... just happened upon him one day, showed up out of the blue. He seemed to have taken a liking to me, for some reason, and wanted to hang around the place... You know how funny humans can be sometimes."

She made a dismissive gesture and turned away to busy herself with something on the counter. Mostly to give her a plausible reason to stop talking before her rambling became incoherent.

Dellanara nodded slowly before giving a small, knowing wink down at Thomas. “Ah yes, I know how they can be. One way or another, they all tend to get that way after a while; the gifts of Cylos are many, and yet all have but one fate.” She pondered the idea for a moment before adding, “Although, I’m surprised you didn’t do the honors yourself, as you’re the one he came to and all.”

Adeline gestured again while still facing away from her friend, mostly to allow her a moment to think. She’d gotten so caught up with ensuring that everything was prepared just right, that a convincing explanation for Thomas had been somewhat neglected. While he may not exactly be a secret to everyone around her home, it was still best not to spread it around.

“Yes, well... you know how useful they can be when properly motivated,” she said as she returned to Dellanara’s side with a bowl. Then, as she began to collect the remaining contents of the pot, continued, “I’ll admit that I was rather tempted to let nature take its course, right then and there. But, as it turned out, he has a few handy talents that made keeping him around longer more worthwhile than not.”

Dellanara frowned and gave the mare a somewhat pitying look as she considered everything. “I see... you really didn’t have to waste such a good specimen on me, Adeline. I’m sure he’ll clean up just fine if you’d rather keep him for a bit longer, although... he may not last the night with him smelling that good.”

Adeline leaned in closer to the old lioness and said, in a stage whisper, “To be honest, I think the little fella would prefer it this way. He’s been getting far too clingy and, to be honest, a bit annoying lately, almost as though looking to give me an excuse to have him jump down my throat. In fact, he even offered to brush my teeth the other day, with his bare hands ... while covered in honey.”

She hoped that it hadn’t been too over the top. Although, she thought the last part had been a nice touch.

If she suspected anything, Dellanara didn’t show it and only returned a shrewd little smile. “I can imagine,” she said and turned to look down at Thomas with a warm smile. She reached down to push him onto his back with a gentle, yet irresistibly firm, shove of her finger and added, “If that’s what you want, my little morsel, then I’ll be more than happy to oblige.”

Once on his back, he shifted to position himself at the center of the dish and get as comfortable as he could on its cold, smooth surface. Where he watched with interest as preparations for dinner resumed as the new position offered him a good view of the proceedings. Which improved quite a bit as Adeline picked up the serving dish and carried him over to where she’d been working, holding it just below her chest.

He took in the mare's features while she moved him to where his final arrangement as an entrée was to be done. Which evolved into a thin, sardonic expression as she began to rub him with a rough mixture of spices that added a fresh wave of tingles to his skin. As her spur-of-the-moment invention had been rather amusing, and he felt the need to chide her about it, because he really couldn't help himself.

He chuckled quietly and said up to her, "Brush your teeth with honey? I'll have to remember that one, it actually gave me some fun ideas for later..."

"Quiet," Adeline replied with a light slap against his chest, "Food doesn't talk... unless it's told to do so, that is." She glanced over her shoulder to where Dellanara was busy chopping something on the other side of the kitchen, to ensure she hadn't heard Thomas and was too busy to overhear anything else. Then shrugged and continued in a low whisper, "It seemed like something one of you might try. I've read some pretty interesting stories about the things humans can get up to when they have their little minds set on something."

She, like most lythians, had a fairly general knowledge about humans and their activities before he'd arrived on her doorstep. But, as one had come to live in her house some time ago, she'd done some *research* on the topic. Which had all been quite enlightening.

She placed his arms on his chest and inserted a carrot into his hands as though it were a sword. "Now, be quiet and lay there while looking delicious, or I'll find someplace uncomfortable to stick that carrot."

He rolled his eyes at her but did as she asked and relaxed into what he thought was an alluring pose. She admired him for a moment, then nodded in approval at the arrangement and, with his body now lathered and posed just right, picked up the dish to be taken over to the table. Where he was placed among an already wide assortment of food.

They finished setting out the last of the meal as he lay, still and quiet, surrounded by the various foodstuffs that would soon accompany him within the belly of the Lioness. It took some time, longer than he'd of guessed, as they chatted and opened a bottle of wine. To where the warmth of the oven soon left him and had had a hard time keeping still.

Most lythian dwellings were kept cool, having a thick coat of fur tending to make it necessary. It wasn't freezing or anything like that, but he still began to shiver lightly from the relative cold within the room. It usually wasn't a problem for him, however, the combination of the cold plate under him and the rapidly cooling liquid drained what little heat away at a rapid rate.

The two sizeable females soon joined him at the table, sitting on opposite sides and ready to partake in the meal. As they sat, their eyes scanned over the table with ravenous looks. Where Thomas couldn't help but notice that each of their gazes fixed on him noticeably longer than anything else.

"Well," Adeline sighed with a smile across the table at her host, "I think we're all set; shall we begin then?"

“I don’t see why not,” Dellanara replied with a similar smile as she licked her lips, “But first, let us offer a prayer to Cylos. This is indeed a mighty feast gathered before us, and such a blessing deserves our gratitude.”

Adeline paused mid-reach for something and nodded, she’d forgotten about Dellanara’s adherence to one of Cindar’s oldest beliefs. While she didn’t think much about it herself, she laid her hands on the table, palms up, in the typical manner used for such things, out of respect.

Thomas watched, as the lioness offered her short prayer to the lythian deity, with quiet indifference. Which is something that tends to happen when one’s been around long enough to have watched all of them evolve into what they became. Many of them had simply been a rather easy excuse to justify doing something *unpleasant* to humans, or even other lythians, during the dark times. While almost all of them were adapted from even older human beliefs.

However, despite his own beliefs or objections, he remained quiet and respectful while her whispered words danced around the room. He even found her humble plea for Cylos to receive his meager soul into the loving cradle of his eternal belly a rather nice touch. It certainly made him like the old lioness a little, as she seemed to care about his soul at the very least. The fact that she was about to eat and digest him alive, which would, no doubt, be a rather extremely painful experience notwithstanding.

Besides, it was, after all, the thought that counted... wasn’t it?

The short, pre-meal ritual having been completed, they both filled their plates and began to eat. He’d expected for his part to end right there, that she’d consume him right away, especially the way her eyes kept probing over every inch of his body. However, she filled her plate with a mix of food from around the table, then ate and chatted for a while.

He took advantage of the short reprieve he’d been given by taking the time to regard the lythian who was about to eat him. Where he wondered what parts would absorb his flesh and whether he’d add anything notable to them. It had become somewhat of a hobby for him over the years, as he’d found himself in this situation more often than not.

Her patience in waiting to eat him, when she clearly wanted to, was most helpful in this respect, and he quietly thanked her for allowing him the opportunity to admire his consumer. Something that was, at least for him, an enjoyable experience while it lasted. She was quite a bit larger than Adeline, which he already knew, but now gained a fresh appreciation for as he watched her shovel massive bites of food into her mouth as though they were dainty morsels.

Her lean, feline body towered above his and, as she was now so much closer, he realized just how small he was compared to her. A revelation that indicated why she’d not started with him. He amounted to nothing more than a small part of the larger meal, a special little treat to finish it all off with. However, such a thing did, of course, serve to stimulate the latent enjoyment he tended to get out of the process.

For, the longer he watched and admired the massive form looming above him, the more excited he got about it. Which all happened rather fast and without him quite noticing it at first.

The strange, underlying urge within him to be dominated by this enormous, powerful female before him, reared its head to whisper seductively at the prospect. Where its soft musings teased him with a future filled with soft, warm, welcoming flesh, and how it was about to use him. He'd been quietly mulling over these delightful thoughts in his head for a while when a sudden bark of laughter roused him from his increasingly erotic reverie.

Dellanara wiped her mouth with her cloth napkin, partially to mask her continued chuckles. "Looks like someone's starting to enjoy themselves," she uttered through the serviette as her eyes danced with mirth.

Adeline glanced over to see what she was referring to and had to stifle her own amused snicker. "I told you," she said in an almost adorably smug tone as she continued eating.

Thomas shifted a look between them for a moment, a bit confused at what they were referring to. Then, with a low exclamation of embarrassment, he realized that his train of thought had elicited a happy *reaction* from his nethers. Although it was difficult to see after having been in the oven, his cheeks reddened at the pleasurable tingle his hardening cock gave as it twitched happily against his thigh.

His hands released the carrot on his chest and moved down to hide the smaller one between his legs out of reflex. However, Dellanara shooed them away while trying to stifle her obvious entertainment at his unnecessary modesty.

"Oh, don't bother with that, my dear," she said with a mirthful smirk. "It's nothing we all haven't seen before, besides, I've always taken your little salutes as a compliment. After all, it's always nice to know that my food is enjoying itself as much as I am."

The lioness reached over to run one of her long, slender fingers down his chest as her eyes drifted over him with a soft, almost affectionate, look. After which, she brought it to her mouth and licked away the dark, thick flavoring that clung to it with a delicate sweep of her long, feline tongue.

While doing so, her eyes locked onto his with an alluring and expectant stare, which remained unbroken until the probing muscle had gleaned all it could from her finger. Once done, she placed it into her mouth to gently suck the last few remnants away. As her eyes narrowed, then slowly close, with delight and her throat began to rumble with a satisfied purr.

As he watched, part of Thomas, the part that was really starting to enjoy the proceedings, immediately forgave Adeline for his earlier treatment. While also hoping that she might feel the need to treat her friend again sometime soon.

He peered up at the towering lioness with a somewhat impassioned expression as his now seriously rigid member continued to dance. "I hope that I, um... meet with your, erm... expectations," he said in a soft, slightly strained voice.

It was getting harder by the second to tamp down the urging tingle that continued to pulse from his dick. He kept his gaze on Dellanara or the ceiling as best he could, not wanting to look down and draw any attention to how much it had to be dripping by then. Not that he thought she'd mind, in fact, she might even appreciate him being eager to plunge down her throat. However, he didn't want her to think he was enjoying things too much.

She opened her eyes and smiled down at him and slowly licked her lips. "All that and more, little one," she replied in a tone that managed to convey a palpable hunger.

Adeline sat back in her chair with a wide, beaming smile. More than pleased that Dellanara was clearly enjoying the special entrée she'd made especially for her. And, of course, quite delighted at how well her little human friend had comported himself so far.

As the feeling trickled through her, she glanced down at Thomas for a moment to consider the lightly basted human. Where she realized, with increasing gratitude, that he'd been quite willing to give up his evening for this. As, despite his small size, he could've easily refused to participate and run off if he'd wanted to.

She had, kind of, dropped the whole thing on him at the last minute. And he probably should have been told about the cooking part beforehand, as it was a rather major part of the process. But most of all, he'd always been so accommodating to whatever she wanted of him, and although he was clearly annoyed by it at times, he never complained too much.

As she thought about it, a small tingle of appreciative heat kindled between her legs. The ember of which soon sent a similar sensation up her spine as she watched her little human friend lay on the cold serving dish with quiet patience. In which she was quite relieved to see that Dellanara was currently distracted by considering how best to consume him.

The happy feeling gave her several fun ideas about how she could reward the little primate for both his cooperation and having been such a good boy that night. Besides, it'd been a long week for her as well. Perhaps, she should spend some time and think of a way they might both *unwind* together.

She broke from her enticing reverie and let her eyes refocus on the scene before her before it drew a questioning look. She raised her glass in a small toast and said, "I'm glad you like em." Then, after a long sip of wine, continued, "I'll be sure to keep an eye out then, I'm sure another one might pop up soon enough. You know how word gets around among their kind sometimes."

Adeline gave a quick, surreptitious wink at Thomas. Whom, she noted with a smirk, had an oddly hopeful expression on his face that only she could see. She planned on teasing him to no end about that later, but it was good to know that he'd be up for this again. In fact, she already had a recipe in mind that he'd be perfect for.

"So you've said," Dellanara said, "And don't go teasing an old girl like that... I doubt you want me dropping by all the time, just to shake the bushes."

Although her tone was of mild scorn and rebuke, her eyes still twinkled at the very real prospect of such good quality meals in the future. So much so, that she could no longer resist the urge to enjoy the one in front of her.

“However,” she continued, “I think it’s about time to finally get a good taste of this one.”

Adeline smiled and let out a little chuckle as she rose from the chair. “Sounds good,” she replied, “I’ll get us both another glass of wine. Let you both have some much-needed privacy, so that you can get better... *acquainted*.”

She walked towards the kitchen to retrieve a fresh bottle as the current one had just been emptied into her own glass. Just before she slipped through the doorway, she paused for an instant to glance back. Then disappeared into the next room with a wide, pleased smile dancing on her lips.

Thomas watched her as a shadow fell over him. He glanced up to see Dellanara leaning over him as she licked her lips with an eager and ravenous expression. Despite her size, it almost surprised him a little at how hungry she seemed to be, even after eating as much as she already had. Then again, a creature capable of eating a whole human, or two, and completely processing them in only a day, would be capable of easily fitting him in.

Her immense hands grasped him around the waist in a firm, but measured, a grip that was careful to not cause him any undue discomfort. He was lifted from the dish with relative ease and carried upward until she held him in front of her, as a thoughtful expression drifted across her face.

As her gaze held him, and he failed to plunge down her throat, he began to wonder what she was so concerned about. “Is, um... is something wrong?” he asked tentatively.

Her only response was a soft smile as she continued to ponder over him quietly. Where he was again taken aback by how gentle her care of him was, even at that point. While she clearly regarded him as nothing more than food right then, as most lythians usually did, she seemed to not want to cause him any undue harm. And not for the first time that night, he felt that he might eventually come to like this old lythian feline.

An unusual trait to have, but not completely unheard of. After all, a calm meal is an easy meal, so why not be gentle and ease its concerns... before easing it into your belly. Whatever her motives, he’d always found that those with this particular disposition towards their prey somewhat endearing and often easier to be around in the long term.

She tilted him from side to side with slow regard for as his question finally registered. “Oh, nothing’s wrong... only that it’s always so hard to decide which end to start with, is all.” She continued shifting him for another moment, then met his gaze with an inquisitive expression. “What do you think, have a preference on how you’re eaten?” she asked, “I suppose that, as the meal, you might as well have some input about it.”

He stared back at her for a second with a quizzical look, not really sure what to say. “Well, um... not really, I guess,” he replied with a small, indifferent shrug.

The question had caught him off guard, again, both because he hadn't really been paying attention and few, if any, often ask their food for advice. He found himself considered her once more, but from a different perspective, as she again shifted him in her grasp for a short time. And he began to understand why Adeline held such a high opinion of the old lioness, other than their apparent family ties, that is.

Thomas smiled at her and shrugged again, his demeanor now jovial attentive. "It's really all the same to me in the end, literally," he said in a pleasant and encouraging tone, "I'm just the entrée, after all. Whatever's easiest or most comfortable for you is fine, however, I do appreciate your concern for me in my last moments."

Her thumb made several, gentle swipes over his belly, giving it a small, affectionate rub as she brought him closer to her face. "Awe, that's very nice of you to say," she said, then looked him over one last time before continuing, "It really is a shame that Adeline couldn't keep you around a bit longer." She let out a resigned sigh that sent warm, food-scented breath washing over him. Then, as a hopeful gleam sparkled in the corner of her eye, she added, "Well, I just hope that more of you decide to stop by her place... rather soon."

"I'm sure they will," he replied with an oddly confident nod, "Adeline has quite the reputation amongst... my kind, as you've put it. So, it's only a matter of time before someone else happens by her place to offer their *assistance*."

She couldn't stop herself from licking her lips at the thought. "I'll look forward to it." Her lips twitched with a brief hint of amusement as he wiped away a bit of the spittle that had rained onto him. "Thanks for the meal, little one."

Her long tongue snaked out an alarmingly cavernous mouth that opened before him, which then raked up over his chest and face before he could respond. It retreated back into her dripping maw as her eyes closed to at last savor his taste. Where a low, dull rumble elicited from her throat as it gave a pleasant purr of approval.

She held him there for a moment, quietly relishing the subtle tingle his flavor sent dancing over her taste buds. Then, and without any warning or preamble, her mouth gaped back opened before him again and, in a quick, smooth motion, she plunged him headfirst into it. Which happened so fast that a small, alarmed noise escaped his lips as the light faded and his upper half was bathed in the muggy heat of her mouth.

The lower jaw hinged up to snap her great maw closed around his midsection as her grip shifted to his upper thighs. Which pressed her sharp teeth lightly into his skin and caused him to twist from a small, involuntary squirm of apprehension, dreaded the thought of her biting him in half. But the pressure never increased beyond that and his nervous tension soon passed. Replaced by a scratching tickle as the rough surface of her broad tongue slid eagerly over his chest and face.

A loud, thunderous noise rumbled in the sultry darkness as another pleased sound roared up from the dark, unseen throat that lay just ahead of him. He was relieved that her mouth was so

cavernous, as he was able to move his hands easily enough to cover his ears. Which were starting to hurt from the sheer noise and pressure of the continued blasts from her throat.

The pressure around his waist eased a little and the great, textured muscle shifted under him. It writhed and pulsed so as to pull him in further with a subtle, yet powerful flex. The action further aided by her hands, as they began to push him ever deeper into her ravenous maw as well. Which soon had his midsection sliding between her lips, his still-erect member pricked by her teeth for only a moment, before pressing into the soft, coarse surface of her tongue.

Just as the last of his waist passed into her mouth, the tongue slithered out to squeezed itself between his legs and slap wetly against his rump. Where, aside from eliciting a small gasp of pleasant surprise as it dragged itself against his sensitive manhood, it allowed her the leverage, and room, needed to draw him the rest of the way into her mouth. While the sudden increase in pace shifted his arms back to rest at his sides.

She continued to consume him with the voracious efficiency expected of the apex predator she truly was. Where his progress towards her gullet only slowed just enough for her to get some enjoyment and savor him. So, it wasn't too long until the rough surface of her tongue gave way to the soft, slick flesh at the back of her mouth as his head crested the precipice to her throat.

Several gusts of hot breath blasted against his face and forced their way into his lungs as she held him there for several seconds. Each held both the strong smell of the food and wine that had preceded him, as well as the subtle hint of the caustic hell that awaited him below. However, while he may have stopped, her mouth was still busy around him, as the building sound of fluids squelched ominously around him.

All while the spongy muscle under him continued its ceaseless task of extracting his essence as it quivered and twisted against his body. Soon, however, the pressure from her hands left him as they released the small portion of his legs that remained outside her mouth. He could feel her mouth start to shift around him as the final moment drew near, as she took several deep breaths to prepare herself to swallow him.

It was an oddly serene moment, one that allowed small flashes of trepidation and uncertainty through him. He felt that way sometimes when faced with certain death with the probability of prolonged, horrific suffering. Perhaps they were something left over from when he was mortal, a base instinct that neither training nor time could fully expel from his subconscious.

For the idea of what lay at the end of her esophagus, and the excruciating time he'd have to spend there, always filled him with a mix of both terror and excitement. But there was also the lingering thought that, perhaps, he may not come back this time. That this could be his final plunge, that death might finally claim him and where this lioness would be the repository of mortal remains. That is, until she saw fit to unceremoniously *dispose* of them someplace.

The world twitched with a sudden movement, which broke him from his thoughts while sending a wave of anxious excitement through him. He'd been expecting her to gulp him down quite soon and was quite ready for it. However, the speed and power at which she threw her head back

and forced him down into her throat still managed to, yet again, catch him off guard. Which was starting to get rather embarrassing as the hot, dark, sloshing world shifted violently and turned him upside down.

Where he uttered another small yelp of surprise that reverberated down her throat as his head dove into it. Then, as a loud, wet, organic noise echoed around him, he was forced forward into her throat as it opened wide to greedily accept him. Which was more than able to gulp him down with only a single mighty swallow, but it pulsed several times as the last of him slipped into it. Each well-practiced and done with careful timing to ensure his passage to her stomach was smooth and unhindered.

Thomas was squeezed and nearly crushed by her throat, to the point where he almost passed out. But the decent was mercifully short and he quickly found himself dumped into her already busily churning stomach. The transition from confining esophagus to spacious stomach was quite abrupt, which thrust him face-first into a frothing mass of chewed and partially digested food.

He thrashed around and clawed at the bubbling soup for a moment, after his feet slipped in behind him, as he tried to work his way to the surface. Although, the urge to just end it quickly grew as his lungs started to burn and he failed to find the pocket of air within the dark, convulsing space. But he thought Dellanara might appreciate him lasting longer than a few seconds in her stomach. So, he managed to tamp it down and push through the mounting pain long enough to finally break the surface.

Which was just in time to be doused by a small torrent of liquid that poured into her stomach. After a moment of sputtered coughing, he was able to clear his mouth of the bitter wine that'd nearly drowned him. He settled back into the shifting pool of muck and began to give his host the impression of him putting up a good struggle, while also finally tending to the now rather pressing matter between his legs.

* * *

Adeline reentered the dining room just as the bulge the little human made in Dellanara's throat passed down into her chest and out of sight. She walked up to the table and offered to refill the old lioness' glass as her throat cleared enough for her to let out a long, contented sigh.

"You're a dear, Adeline," she said with a gesture toward the chalice, "And right on time too. I need a good swallow of something to wash him down with, and this Dresden Red happens to pair rather nicely with a properly prepared Glazed Sapient."

Adeline refilled her glass and sat back down in her seat on the other side of the table. She took a small sip of wine herself as an expectant expression drifted over her face. Dellanara brought her own glass of wine to her lips and took a large gulp that drained over half of it. As she did, Adeline's gaze flicked down and she couldn't help but smirk at the subtle shift of flesh as Thomas reacted to it.

“That,” the lioness said with a quick lick of her lips. “Was simply amazing. The best I’ve had in a very long time, I do hope you get the chance to make it again sometime soon.”

Adeline managed to mask the expression that drifted across her face by taking another drink. “I’ll see what I can do,” she said with a very pleased smile as the glass was returned to the table.

Dellanara gave the mare a knowing look, then relaxed back in the chair, eyes half-closed, as she enjoyed the sporadic motions of her meal. “Before he left, your entree mentioned that there may be others around who might be willing to have dinner *with me*.”

Adeline nodded, amused at how Thomas seemed so eager to go through this all over again. “Yes... I think there could very well be, and if one turns up, I’ll be sure to keep you in mind, Dell.”

“I appreciate it,” the lioness replied with an impish smile.

Her stomach gave a large groan and, an instant later, the room rattled from a thunderous belch. They both looked down to see it give a couple small, frantic twitches. As though its occupant had been rather distressed by the sudden loss of air and associated churning.

She looked back up at Adeline with an embarrassed, yet satisfied, smile. “Excuse me,” she said as a napkin dabbed some spittle from the corners of her mouth.

Adeline shrugged. “I’ll take it as a compliment. After all, isn’t that the universal expression of a well-appreciated meal?”

Dellanara rested a hand on the small bulge in her belly for a moment, before giving it several affectionate strokes, quite pleased with her meal’s performance. “It seems as though he’s settled in nicely,” she said, still rubbing her belly. “Although, I fear it may have just gotten rather uncomfortable in there for him.” Then added in a soft voice that managed to carry a hint of regret, “At least it will be quick, but I do like it when they last... sometimes.”

“Then you’ll have to eat him first, next time,” Adeline said with a slightly intoxicated wave. “Don’t drop him into the pot when it’s already boiling, let him sit there and writhe a bit as things get going. Trust me, he’ll wiggle and thrash all the way through to dessert.”

“Well, as much as I enjoy saving the best part for last, that’s a rather good idea,” Dellanara replied. “One that I have a strong suspicion that you got through first-hand experience.”

Adeline responded with a somewhat noncommittal expression and gesture, while certain events from the previous week played through her head. She’d felt a little guilty afterward, but Thomas had deserved some kind of punishment for his attitude that day. And while he may have enjoyed the first part, she doubted that it could’ve been a pleasant experience overall.

* * *

It was long after dark when Adeline stumbled out the front door and made her way to the car. They’d finished the meal and continued with their conversation as they’d moved to the living room. By the time she poured herself into the front seat, she was thoroughly sloshed and quite glad for the vehicle’s self-driving feature.

As she buckled herself in and gave it the instructions to take her home, a soft noise from the back had her ears twitch in that direction. She turned to look over her shoulder as the car started down the road to see Thomas sprawled out on the seat. Her presence having apparently awoken him, as he'd fallen asleep while patiently waiting for her in the car.

Her lips spread in a wide, intoxicated smile as she looked over his dimly-illuminated, naked form. "Well, well... hey th—there... mister me—meal," she said with a notable slur. "Yoo were a big hit too-night..." she let out a long, drunken guffaw as a joke came to her, "Really hit the spot... that is!"

Thomas rubbed his eyes and stretched with a low grunt. "I'm glad things worked out." His eye's finally focused and he looked her over for a moment, "And, I see that you managed to enjoy yourself as well."

She glanced back and waved a dismissive hand at him. "De... deel... Dell, knows how to have a goo—d time," she said, then belched loudly and suffered a short fit of the giggles. "Bee-sides, it would be—be rood if I didn't ack... accshep... take, her hospitality."

"I see," he said as another yawn was unsuccessful suppressed, "Let's just get home and get to bed. I'm pretty wore-out after all that, and I'm sure you're ready to sleep that off yourself."

She leered back at him for a couple of seconds, a hungry gleam in her eye. "Oh, we're going to bed alright." Her tongue slithered out to glide slowly across her lips in a rather alarmingly seductive way. "You were a good boy tonight and that deserves a little reward, especially for playing along so nicely."

He smiled at her and let out a short, resigned sigh, knowing there was no use in arguing. "Fine, just as long as you're not too hungry afterward, I know how you get, and twice in one night is a bit much... even for me."

She picked one of the wavering forms before her out and wagged her finger at him. "Tsk, tsk... little human, don't forget your place here, if I want my own *special entrée*, then so be it."

Thomas groaned and lay back down onto the seat. It was going to be a long night, so, he might as well get what rest he could. Although, with any luck, she'll pass out before things got too... complicated.