For the second day in a row, I had a gut feeling bad news would come.

 Some called it feline intuition. Others, mainly the superstitious lots, claimed they were premonitions, either by our Lord’s angels or a fortuneteller’s word. The smart furs trying to teach a new theory in schools east of the Mississippi termed it, and I quote, ‘the instincts inherited to us from our feral ancestors’. It latched into the pit of my stomach like a nasty bug, making it nearly impossible for me to crawl out of my bunk and wait until the girls were finished using the brothel’s private bath.

 “All yers, Cherry!” Pearl hollered down the short corridor, hurrying into the backrooms as her bare breasts bounced for my unenjoyment. “Snap outta yer dreams, ocelot boy!”

“Sorry, Pearl!” I jumped past the older she-wolf and went straight the bath.

As I closed the door behind me, Pearl mentioned, “Madam Vale wants us ready before nine o’clock! Don’t take too long now!”

When Madam Vale promised to build us working girls (and boy) an improved bath, nobody expected her to use every cent. Three large porcelain bathtubs replaced the line of stalls out back, giving everyone privacy as well as newer shampoos and soaps to allure more clientele passing through from Kaspar or Frontier straight into Utah. After a few years working in the Soiled Dove Saloon, hot water baths were a welcomed luxury.

Scrubbing away the grime and sweat I’d missed washing away the previous night, I felt my tail curl. Two days. Two days, and I still couldn’t stop worrying if a rough client would be too rough, or the Madam finally decided to tear apart my contract. Whichever way the reasons went, it likely required a nice breakfast downstairs, allowing me to drown out the dread and prepare for the day. Yeah, a hot meal might do the trick. A hot meal followed by a hard man’s cock.

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 Valetown, Wyoming. My home since the Incident.

The dustbowl town existed in a shallow valley somewhere between Utah and Colorado, before a ‘clueless Yankee mapper’ labeled it as being under Wyoming’s borders. At least, that was what some bitter townsfolk claimed. Me? I’d been born and raised in Lakertown before a little misunderstanding led me to taking a train out West. Father likely didn’t know where I was or what I was doing, otherwise, he'd likely have a heart attack. Though not before furiously lecturing how much shame I’d given my family name.

 Then again, he was the one who gave me the train ticket to nowhere.

At eighteen years of age and with nothing but the clothes on my back, the Soiled Dove had been my anchor. The owner saw my effeminate features, then figured I could do more than just tend tables or sweep floors. I figured her decision had something to do with the scent of a perverted stagecoach driver’s musk glued to my spotted fur, poorly hidden under dirt and shame.

I stretched my arms above me, looking back into the mirror. Madam Vale suggested wearing the white-and-blue dress, but when I suggested it, she instead said, “Go for the blue skirt. The one with cherry red bows in it. Today’s theme is blue, Cherry dear.”

“Yes, ma’am!” I nodded, then rifled through the wardrobe as she exited into the hallway.

I easily passed as a female at first glance. The neck-length headfur helped plenty. Give me a dab of makeup and the pretty dress from a general store, and the average miner or gunslinger with an itch under the belt buckle would drop his trousers. All they saw was a pretty lady to wet their tool and lie back on a bed. Unfortunately, after a lesson was learned involving a drunken bear and his attempts to expose my gender to the town after trying to get under my tail, I stopped providing bareback pleasure.

Luckily for any gents who entered the Soiled Dove, my skilled lips happened to be legendary along the Rockies. Together with my lascivious ocelot tongue, they could blur the border between oral and anal expertise.

*Hopefully, I can earn enough this year to add to my get-away fund.* I thought to myself. *If I ever wanna keep going west, maybe get to San Francisco, I’ll need more than thirteen-thirty-five. Things cost more over there…*

It’d begun as a meandering shift that day. A few familiar gents lined up to have me suck their cocks in one of the rooms, then patted my head once they finished. The same indifference.

Whenever me or the other girls had nothing better to do, be it a Sunday or any other day of the week, we mostly cleaned up the place or catered to customers who came for the alcohol rather than the expensive women. Valetown might have not been San Francisco or even Crossroads City, but it had a sizable enough population of drunkards and losers and heathens to keep the saloon its most popular business.

Most of the time, I preferred sweeping the floors over serving drinks. Whatever kept me from continuously having to smell the horrid scent of unwashed fangs and belching on their breaths. Don’t forget the lecherous grins directed my way, too.

I’d just gotten to the second-floor balcony overlooking the lobby and ground floor, which also led to the V.I.P. room. Creeping through the paper-thin walls were the unmistakable sound of a squeaking bedframe and male grunting mixed with exaggerated moans. The male customer’s oxen voice, huffing and wheezing akin to a locomotive, had to be none other than Sheriff Barnaby hard at work.

“Huh?” Pausing at the window staring down at Main Street, my eyes fell on a stranger as I gripped the broom handle. “Well, lookie here…a newcomer?”

Nobody arrived in Valetown on horseback without getting the townsfolks’ attention.

The stranger wolf’s dark fur matched his clothes. His hat, his shirt, his trousers, his boots, his duster coat, and bushy tail. His mustang was a real, black-furred beauty too. From the window, I could almost spot an empty holster on his belt, one paw gripping the reigns as the other lowered to his hip. It was wise for the dark-furred stranger to not wield a pistol in public, lest the, uh…occupied Sheriff sniffed him out.

A few nosey townspeople made quick notice of his presence before returning to their business. Mr. Galahad went back inside his tailor shop, Ms. Pauley carried on her way to begin her shift at the haberdashery, and a cub playing hooky stared wide-eyed from behind a parked wagon. They all acted like this stranger was the President himself, from how stoic and majestic he and his mustang were, to the fact he clearly stood out like a sore thumb.

“Don’t forget the runway when ya get to it, Cherry!” Madam Vale’s voice carried upstairs, and I got to work sweeping to the catwalk directly above the Soiled Dove’s entrance.

I went straight to work. I did not get to see the stranger tie his mustang to a post outside, or see him trudge indoors, but it did enter my mind when I spotted the tall, dark-furred wolf stand in front of the lobby desk. The secretary, a plainly dressed doe named Maria, asked him what he wanted.

His black tail twitched against the floorboards.

“A companion, and a room for the entire night.” The wolf spoke, unaware his baritone voice echoed upwards to the narrow walkway I stood on. My ears easily caught any whisper. “I trust you employ felines such as tigers, lions, and ocelots?”

“We sure do, sir!” Maria chirped. “Which would you prefer, specifically?”

“Hm…ocelot.” He replied after a moment.

My heart fluttered. Was it me, or did I hear that the handsome stranger was desiring my species?

“We do have a queen in employment,” Maria smiled behind the desk, “but I’m afraid that due to an injury, she cannot bed with men, but she can still provide other forms of—”

The canine stranger cleared his throat, interrupting her. He learned forward, reaching into a pocket within his duster coat and murmuring, “I never said anything about wanting a queen.”

I blinked, as did Maria, when he produced a large pouch and carefully placed it on the desk. A short jangling noise reached all the way from down there, up to my ears. It even somehow caught the ears of the old vixen herself, who curiously asked what the fuss was about.

More likely, she’d been about to go on another one of her numerous breaks.

“Confirmed bachelors like myself prefer king-sized beds over queens.” The dark-furred wolf explained to both her and Maria, his voice low enough for only them to hear while I caught wind of everything he said. Unbeknownst to them, their conversation echoed up to where I stood in the runway above. “It’s been a long journey, and I need to gather my strength for the long trek back to Frontier. As the madam of this fine establishment, I trust you wouldn’t mind providing such a request?”

Staring at the stranger, then mindfully glancing up at me as I stood petrified, Madam Vale’s thoughts were more elusive than snow in summertime. Finally, she whispered something directly into Maria’s twitching ear.

I could not hear it but didn’t need to.

“Madam Vale will be more than happy to accommodate such a request, kind sir!” Maria beamed happily, taking the pouch to count each coin inside. Her free paw offered a pen and familiar paper. “Just sign your name onto this document here, and the time you wish for hi—her—to arrive at your room.”

I sensed the wolf smirking, despite only being able to see his back and sharp ears.

Returning to my duties left me in a daze. It also left me feeling utterly suspicious towards the wolf stranger. Why in the world did he specifically request a queen ocelot? Why did he know there would be a crossdresser employed at the Soiled Dove of all places? It wasn’t like

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By the time evening rolled around, I found myself in the V.I.P. room waiting for the stranger to arrive, and still dressed in the blue dress Madam Vale requested I wore.

Each room was identical, no matter what. No windows, a single twin-sized bed (alongside a knife hidden behind the headboard) in the corner, a lantern lit atop a dingy nightstand, a mirror hanging across the room, and a dozen or so visible dents and holes on the abused wall. Rumor had it that Madam Vale only bothered purchasing new wallpaper if there were ever any bloodstains, though such a thing had never happened during my time working for the Soiled Dove. The only difference between them and the V.I.P. room were pristine floral wallpaper, and the furniture being more…ornate.

At last, a knock on the door led to the stranger entering.

“Hello there, sir.” I said with my effeminate voice in full swing.

He grunted out a greeting, closing the door behind him. With his hat and duster coat discarded on the nearby coat rack, I got a good look at the wolf.

Eyes as green as emeralds. A strong, older jawline drenched in tan fur, while the upper portion of his head was covered in rich, dark fur matching his tailored vest. Beneath that, he wore a white tuxedo shirt with the sleeves rolled up and splotches of dirt on the hem, with the black trousers held up by a silvery belt buckle and fine leather belt. It didn’t require a fancy-schmancy teaching from east of the Mississippi River to figure out how handsome the stranger was, nor how muscular he appeared to be beneath those clothes of his.

“You are Cherry.” He said instead of questioned, stepping towards the bed as he unbuttoned his shirt.

“So, what brings you around these parts?” I asked, unintentionally making my attempt at small conversation sound suspicious. “Not many ask for ocelots, y’know…”

The stranger gave me a steely gaze.

“I heard you are quite the talented one in this place.” Beneath his baritone voice, I heard traces of an unknown accent. European, at best. “A rumor in Kaspar claims an ocelot prostitute in this here township could make the sorest of cocks hard again.”

I nodded and gave him the room. He placed his back against the headboard, kicking off his boots and stretching those powerful legs, and bushy wolf tail.

We didn’t start off with kissing, surprisingly. The other men preferred a needing kiss or minutes spent of me pretending to be their wives. Instead, the stranger skipped to fondling the inside of my bra. Immediately, he didn’t care I wore women’s clothing. He leaned forward to inhale my neck, his cold nose lightly touching my Adam’s apple and licking both sides of my jawline, eliciting a purr resonating up my chest. Then he licked my lips, and I felt his hot breath snake its way past my lips, along with his meaty tongue. He tasted surprisingly clean for an older male, then again, the wolf fangs weren’t rotten from constant tobacco use or half-missing from decay like the others.

“Mm, that’s right. You’re a real beautiful lad.”

I blinked at the compliment. In the years I’d worked, Madam Vale had been kind to me while the other girls tolerated me at best, but as far as Valetown’s male population was concerned, I was just another girly hole to please ‘em. Even the ones who secretly knew didn’t care so long as I continued wearing a corset or lacey skirt. My newest client though…he wanted a boy. He’d asked for not a woman in the lobby, but a man.

“What would you like to do next, sir?” I giggled as his calloused paws tickled their way up my flat chest, feeling my perky nipples while at the same time, I ground my hips against his trousers’ sturdy tent. “Oh, goodness me!”

“Wet my whistle first, boy.” He wished, guiding me off his lap and onto my knees between his legs. “Mmmm, wet that whistle good.”

His half-hardened member easily emerged from that heavy sheath the moment I inhaled his musky tip, which began leaking into my nose when I went about kissing it. The noises escaping the back of his throat were welcoming. I especially got a response from the stranger when my lips finally enveloped down his shaft, nearly to the hilt. The wolf was that enormous, and I’d taken plenty of johnsons before.

He didn’t care though. He was lost in the bliss.

“Ha! Ngh, fuck!” He groaned with a grin on his muzzle. “Good God, boy, that’s the—nnnngh!”

Licking and lapping at the man’s pole, the little feline spines along my tongue were driving him wild enough to harden at full mast.

One mighty paw rested between my heated ears, ruffling the long headfur. The other paw occupied itself by trailing down my side, until it finally reached the raised hem of my dress. His thick fingers kneaded past my girdle’s straps until they felt what they’d been searching for: my ass. He especially wanted to caress his way into the crack between my toned cheeks, beneath the tail shuddering at his touch.

His ripe meat tasted of perspiration and delicious wolf musk. My vision blurred as I inhaled it like cigar smoke, making my fur prickle on edge and moaning around the tapered tip when it teased against the roof of my maw, leaking out its sweet substance. The wolf’s johnson hadn’t been the longest one I ever swallowed, but it certainly compared to the Sheriff and even a teacher of mine back in Lakertown, whose sheer length almost raised the question if I even had internal organs beneath my skin and spotted fur.

Men also loved having their balls lathered in spit with their own pre, letting my lips simply feel the delicate, full, wrinkled skin and fur cozily protecting their scrotum. One regular client of mine (a widowed veteran fox named Dan) liked it when I used my tongue and teeth to be a little rough down there. He didn’t mind if my fangs nipped the tuft pubic fur, or lick and nibble at his taint. The stranger was no different with the same treatment but told me to stop when my loose tongue started trailing underneath his hefty sack.

“Sincerest apologies, sir!” I chirped, then returned to worshipping his cock again.

“Not a fan of attention down that far, lad. Mm, yeah…like that…” He murmured, returning to fondling my side, and eventually my ass again. A thrill went down to my own erection when he brushed against my hole. “Huh?”

The exploration suddenly stilled. A finger froze the instant it touched the winking entrance, likely thanks to feeling the slick wetness beneath my tail. He pressed against it, then pulled back to sniff it.

“Olive oil?” He pondered aloud.

I pulled my lips away, and quipped, “The madam insisted. Spit is not the best lubricant, and she considers me expensive.”

The wolf stranger gave a dark chuckle.

“Expensive, you say?” He lifted my chin and glared lustful daggers at my heaving, chest, then over my shoulder and at my tail. “If that’s the case, then I want you to make every penny I spent count.”

“Yessir!” I affirmed without bothering to hide my male voice. “Ah, uh, I mean—”

“And quit it with the girly pitch, Cherry.” He said offhandedly, then grinned a lecherous grin. “The only girly sounds I want you to make are after I’m finished knotting ya.”

And knot me, he did.

My nameless, canine client required further undressing. I helped tug off his belt and trousers hanging from one outstretched leg, letting him neatly place them and his shirt on the table before focusing all his attention on me. Without a shred of clothing, his muscles rippled beneath that thick pelt of fur, the black patterns matching a starless midnight whilst the brown fur reminded me of unground coffee beans. The expensive kind. Had he wanted to, there was no doubt the stranger’s biceps and strength could be used for harm.

Thankfully I only needed to marvel at them. And let him marvel at me.

I partly expected him to push me on my stomach and have me face the headboard while mounting me from behind, not lie on my back and raise my legs as I faced him. But he did, and after slowly pushing his manhood past my walls with little resistance, the stranger cupped my cheek and pull me up into yet another kiss. It distracted me from being fully hilted in one go. The pain mixed with pleasure for what it felt like minutes, then it all but vanished into an ethereal heaven. Lost as a kite and drooling madly between guttural moans each time he hit my pleasure spot, all else I could feel were his furry balls smacking my wet ass, as well as his fangs midway through marking my shoulder.

There we were: two homosexual furs fornicating away from judgmental eyes. And neither of us cared a damn lick if it condemned us to Hell or the Devil’s wrath.

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An hour passed before the stranger woke me up, and he asked me a question.

“How long’s that mark been there?”

I blinked awake while sitting up, watching him casually rebutton his shirt and trousers.

“My mark?” I murmured in confusion, stretching an arm and hiding said confusion with a loving smile. “What mark—”

He pointed his thumb to his perfect behind.

I sighed, “…oh, that…that mark.”

After so long spent not bending over for gentlemen to mount me, I’d almost forgotten all about it. Near the base of my tail rested a noticeable birthmark that could be seen through the spotted pelt. Some said it resembled a heart, while others claimed it had to be in the shape of a perfect circle, no larger than a fifty-cent coin.

“Been there since birth, honey.” I shrugged. “Why’re you so curious about it?”

“Because I needed to be sure you were Charles Rochford.”

Either my heart skipped too many beats, a pin dropped, or that was his boots.

“Ha?” I stammered in shock. “H-H-How the fuck do ya—”

“You’re Charles Rochford, third son of the owner of Rochford Railways.” The stranger told me without shedding an uncertain sweat. He’d finished fastening his trousers. “Been lookin’ for you for some time now. Your father hired me to find you and give a message.” He reached into his coat hanging on the corner rack, then produced a letter.

A part of me figured the gut feeling came to this.

Hesitantly, I grabbed the envelope and opened it.

Twisting my snout into a snarl as I read each word, I hissed, “He wants me back?!”

Father sent me a letter telling me he’d had a ‘change of heart’, mentioned my brothers getting into serious trouble forcing him to question their loyalty to the company, and spent an entire page of paper begging me to return home, wherever I’d wandered off to. His handwriting went on and on about the importance of family, yet it all held this all-too-familiar sense he still blamed me for my sinful lifestyle.

“That bastard…” I growled. “Disowns me, takes all I got, gives me a ticket to go anywhere but back there, and now I’m suddenly the good son to him?”

I stared up at the wolfish stranger, then down at the letter. A small laugh bubbled up my throat like warm molasses.

“Did he tell ya to look for an ocelot with a notable birthmark on his butt?”

“He did mention it as a way to identify you.” The still-nameless stranger finished buttoning his shirt, stepping forward to rest a paw on the bed’s railing. “If Mr. Rochford published an advert asking you to return to Lakertown, half the ocelot population in America would’ve traveled claiming to be you. He needed me to find the real you.”

A small grin crawled up his dark-furred muzzle.

“As the Yankees say, hiring you was ‘icing atop the cake’.” He licked his lower jowl, “And boy, you were worth every penny.”

A blush formed under my cheeks, and I felt both hated ears flare at the compliment from the stranger. Speaking of which, I said, “Thank you, mister…um, what do you go by?”

The dark-furred wolf smiled. “The name is Markus,” he nodded curtly, “spelled with a ‘k’ instead of a ‘c’.”

“Markus, but with as ‘k’ instead of a ‘c’?” I echoed it on my lips. “That is a strange name to go by.”

“Stranger than a name such as ‘Cherry’?” He quipped, making another giggle escape the back of my throat. He stepped forward again, this time to scratch the back of my ear. “Your daddy didn’t pay me to be a deliveryman. I’m simply a messenger.”

“A messenger, huh?” I pondered. “Does he know you’re a…y’know…?”

“A degenerate?” He finished for me, then shook his muzzle, laughing. “I doubt it. I have quite the feeling your father would not send a sodomite to find his own sodomite son.”

The comment left me snickering, which in turn infected the wolf.

“You’re not dragging me back there?” I next asked him, bluntly.

“No, I am not.” Markus scoffed amusedly. “I am a mercenary-for-hire, but your daddy only wanted me to give you the message. Now that you have it, what are you going to do?”

Once again, I glanced down at the letter and at the named stranger. Me and him, we had one significant thing in common. Our kind had no place in the natural world, according to esteemed professors. Our kind was an abomination of the Lord’s creation, according to preachers. Our kind needed to either be killed or driven from town, according to leaders unbound by a madam’s influence. Our kind didn’t deserve to exist, according to the ignorant followers. Whatever the case or the ‘respectable’ fur’s occupation, I’d slept with all of them.

Well, Father made it clear as day how I had no place in my family. Nothing would change it, not after exiling me past the Mississippi River, or ever.

Without any other thought, I crumpled up the letter and threw it to the other end of the room.

“My work is done then.” Markus concluded once I told him my answer. “Thanks again for the excellent service, lad. It really…invigorated me.”

His paw lingered on the bed’s railing, as if the fingers yearned to touch my body one more time. Like an unwinding, excited rattlesnake, my tail slithered at his knuckles.

“It’s a long way back to Lakertown, sir.” I slyly looked at him on the bed, then lied back and spread my legs, purring. “If you want to be really invigorated, you might need another dosage."

He smirked. “Duly noted, Cherry. The night is still young.”

The one regret I had was not convincing him to provide me a tip. Rather, he gave another tip.

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 My wolf client disappeared sometime in the middle of the night, and not long after Pearl kicked me out of the room to clean it up (per Madam Vale’s orders), the same gut feeling in my stomach suddenly grew tenfold. The gnawing instinct beneath by spotted fur seemed to intensify, but no matter how much I winced it wouldn’t go away. Or even reveal why. Half-naked and in need of a shower, I ignored it for the most part and trailed into the bathhouse. It wouldn’t be until I stepped out of the bath that the realization hit me faster than a runaway wagon.

 The letter! I forgot that I left my bastard father’s letter in the V.I.P. room!

 “Shit, shit, shit!” I hissed under my frozen breath.

 I didn’t bother fully drying off my fur, instead hurriedly placing on a plain grey dress and ran upstairs, hoping Pearl hadn’t found the discarded letter already. The older canine could be a harsh gossiper, and the last thing I needed was Madam Vale discovering—

 “Cherry!” Called the last voice I wanted to hear. “Miss Vale wants you in her office!”

 I stopped midway to the room, already closed to indicate it’d been cleaned. Turning behind me to see Pearl, arms crossed and staring at me as if I’d been replaced by a pretender.

 “Wha-What does she n-need, P-Pearl?” I stammered out. “I got chores to do, and—”

 “Now.” She firmly replied. “Best not make her wait.”

 “Okay.” I said after a close moment, walking past her downstairs, sensing her following me close behind.

 Madam Vale’s office had to be the most expensive room in the entire brothel. Hell, maybe the entire township. Intricate wallpaper made of golden ivy designs wrapped around the four walls, while a furnished velvet lounge chair stood in the corner, adjacent to a mahogany desk surrounded by paperwork and a few file cabinets. All seemingly as expensive as the vixen entrepreneur’s tastes. And behind that desk, her paws held together in stern contemplation, the madam silently glared at me across the room.

 “Please sit down,” she motioned to the lone chair facing her. “We have much to discuss.”

 The fur on my tail stood high on end. Hesitantly complying with her order, I nodded my head and sat down to face my employer. Unfortunately for me, whatever steeled resolve I held flew out the nearest window. Besides a crumpled-up letter, neatly unfolded on the desk, there also happened to be an emptied sack beneath some wads of dollar bills and coins.

 “I do not often care what souls enter my establishment, but what Pearl just discovered is…intriguing, to say the least. However, there’s also a pressing matter.” She explained in a cool manner, laced in a tranquil aggression I’d rarely seen from the vixen. Without providing a moment for me to defend myself, she then said, “One of the other girls also found these tips underneath your bed last night, while you were with that gentlewolf.”

I gulped.

“Where did you plan to go with all of this money?” Madam Vale asked me.

 The tension lingering in the air felt thicker than fog.

 “Well?” She asked again, “I just offered you a simple question. Answer it, boy.”

 “To San Francisco…” I finally confessed after gathering the appropriate words. “I wanted…I wanted to keep going West, ma’am.”

 The madam clicked her tongue. An unnerving smile shone from her fangs.

 “And you seriously thought you were going to do it by hiding the tips you earned from me?” She coyly questioned me, not even giving me another chance to speak. “I was originally going to give you a stern warning that bordered on threatening to send you out of here, Mr. Charles Rochford, but now that I know who your father is, I can’t even do that.”

 Two and two came together of what she planned to do to me.

 “Pearl, bring Mr. Rochford here to the basement downstairs.” The madam ordered her as if they had struck oil by happenstance. “Tell Landon to guard the door, and then get the postman to deliver a telegram for me. Tell him it is brothel’s business only!”

Pearl started leading me from the main office when a foolish idea struck me. It struck me hard, like a train piloted by my own confidence it could work. Luckily, the local shoemaker who manufactured our high heels never did think to have them cover the top of our footpaws.

I heard a crunch. My right heel dug like a knife into Pearl’s foot, and she screamed bloody murder.

“Fucking bastard, my foot!” She shrilled, hunching over in pain while holding my shoulder in a tight vice. “Wait until I—”

My elbow hit her in the chest, and she let go. Hearing her groan, I felt her grip slip away, and I bolted right down the short hallway. I felt sure one of the discarded heels was still lodged in poor Pearl’s bloody foot.

Running on a mid-summer desert floor with bare footpaws did not sound ideal at first but wearing high-heel shoes while making a break for it seemed less preferable. So, I did it. I ran like the Devil himself possessed my furious former employer.

“Stop him!” She ordered the confused girls. “Thief! He’s a thief!”

Maria the Secretary tried tripping me on the way out, only for my jump to happen the same time I burst through the doors. Sunlight glared into my eyes. I winced, nearly hitting a large bear trying to get inside. My feet staggered until I snatched the hem of my dress and held it up, still springing across Main Street for the hotel opposite the Soiled Dove. A dozen eyes trained themselves on my haphazard appearance, then to the sound of the brothel’s door repeatedly opening and closing.

A sharp pebble on the ground sent pain up my legs. I didn’t care, not when I spotted a feral black beauty down the street, riding with my getaway man on its saddle.

“Markus!” I shouted at the top of my lungs, wheezing his name. “Hey Markus!”

The handsome wolf jerked his head left to see me, in a dress, likely being chased by one or two of the brothel’s aloof bouncers.

“Cherry, what in the world—?”

**BANG!**

My suspicions were confirmed when a random gunshot rang out. Frightened screams and shouts echoed throughout the street, but I didn’t stop my desperate jogs. I dared not to glance back.

“Don’t shoot him, Landon!” I heard Madam Vale call out near the brothel’s entrance, “I want that brat alive! Get him!”

Markus’ mustang neighed, slowing down from the booming gunfire. He stood only a stone’s throw away. His eyes were wide as saucer plates and the stern glare in his eyes disappeared at the sight of me.

“Take me with you, take me!” I pleaded to the wolf. “Markus, help! Help me!”

As I stumbled to the side of the horse, a powerful paw lifted me up and easily placed me behind him. I clenched my arms around his torso. A snarl from one of the bouncers behind us came closer. Before I could feel another rough pair of fingers pull me off the feral horse and knock my teeth in, I suddenly felt the wind in my face.

The creature’s speed and gallops were almost enough to have me fly off the backside. As I felt my dress nearly fly up like an umbrella, my dangling legs closed around the horse’s stomach. I held onto Markus for dear life.

“Hyah! Hyah!” He commanded the horse to go faster.

Valetown quickly disappeared around us, transforming from a settlement into the outskirts. Chirping birds rang forth, drowning out the earlier chaos. The angry shouts and wayward screams drowned out into the wind flowing over my ears, then by that baritone voice.

“You doing okay there?” He spoke up, to which I hesitantly nodded. I felt his chest heave a deep sigh. “Good, now mind asking me what the fuck that was about?!”

I flinched at the level of his voice, curling my tail up.

“M-Madam Vale discovered I’d been hiding tips from her!” I told him as the horse continued speeding off into the horizon. “She also found that letter you gave me! Tried to lock me in the basement and planned ransoming me to my father!”

“And you suddenly decided to have me be your getaway out of town?”

“Correct!” I half-laughed, half-suppressing a sob, still feeling as if this were a dream. “I can’t go back there now. Everything I’ve been saving is just gone now…”

With a flick of the dark-furred wolf’s wrists, he slowed the mustang down to linger by a babbling brook. The creature neighed, kicking at the ground. I gradually let go of his jacket and relaxed on the saddle behind him.

“You still planning to not go back to your old man?”

“Fuck no.” I snarled at the audacity of him even asking. “Not even if he actually meant all those lovey-dovey things he said in the damned letter!”

Markus chuckled, then sighed.

“Well, if you’re interested,” he spoke up whilst turning to me with those emerald eyes of his, “I can bring us to the next township over. Get you a change of men’s clothes, while we’re at it. I’ll send him the telegram as soon as we get to Frontier.”

My tail slowly uncurled, and I bore a small grin on my snout. Wherever we went, it’d be refreshing to at least wear men’s clothes again.

“You got yourself a deal, sir!”

“Please, call me ‘Markus’.” He said, then motioned for the horse to start moving again.

I unknowingly held close to his sides. Yeah, it sounded like a divine plan.

“Then call me ‘Charlie’, or ‘Cherry’. Whichever suits you best, Markus.”