

## MASKED INTENTIONS

### Part 1

Seth folded his arms, a gentle tug at the rim of his trousers as his tail caught the wind. Pursing his mouth and clenching his eyes tight, he tucked his chin to his chest as a flurry of fine dust kicked up and twisted past him, coating his clothes and faux fur. He coughed, releasing his folded arms to wipe his face, as he watched his three friends scramble up the rocky quarry incline. Joe reached the top first, clasping his hand on a jutting grassy tuft and hanging from it – shouting out his victory. Adam second by a hair, now hanging too and kicking the loose stones with his dangling feet to impede Rich, who'd lost momentum and now crawled toward the apex.

“Not coming, Seth?!” Joe shouted down, hands at his cheeks for effect having hoisted himself up onto the grassy plateau, “Bawk bawk-bawk-bawk baaaawk!”

Seth surveyed the steep rock face left and right – spotting a winding path up, under dense tree-cover. He was afraid of heights and not much of a daredevil when it came to this kind of stuff. He was mostly here to hang out with Rich and Adam anyway. He moved for the trees.

“Aww where you goin’ little doggy? You should take off that stupid tail and just glue feathers to yourself instead!” Adam joined in raining down abuse from above.

Okay, maybe he was mostly here for Rich – who quietly creased his lips and turned his head, flashing a sympathetic glance at Seth as he climbed.

The four boys had been friends since preschool and remained a tight unit, despite their growing differences. Now in their late teens, puberty had been the branching path that threw up certain difficulties. Joe and Adam were inseparable – both becoming muscular jock-types, who revelled in a good ruck and enjoyed getting physical whenever possible. They were a hit with the ladies and led the hormone-fuelled charge into adolescence. Rich was the relaxed guy, up for anything but with a fierce sense of right and wrong that had never left him – he was the glue. He was also a dog-person, a plus in Seth’s eyes.

Seth, himself, was a creative. He always championed the most elaborate games of pretend, leading the other boys through worlds of fantasy and danger. Until none of that was cool anymore. It was around that time, as he was discovering himself, that Seth became fascinated by the idea of transformation. He didn’t know if it was Disney films, books or his own imagination that led him to

such strange places – but he was enamoured with the idea of becoming an animal. He secretly wondered if it might also be a longing to escape – from reality; from his status as a bit of a geek; from the dawning responsibility and pressures of adulthood. He didn't dwell on that sort of stuff for too long though, and after a few years of fighting himself over his abnormal obsession, he decided to embrace it. He bought a Husky tail. Joe thought it was 'gay' and Adam followed suit.

He could hear Joe and Adam still hurling witless jabs at him as he disappeared under the green-leaf canopy. Seth began to methodically scale the gravelly path, using branches and trunks to steady himself as he did. He flitted his eyes back and forth from his hands to his feet as he carefully placed each one, testing the surfaces for stability. Hearing nothing from above now, he sped up a little, worrying that his friends might be going on without him. His wariness evaporated as the silence became deafening, just the rustle of the rubbery foliage and occasional trudge of his soles digging into loose gravel. Reaching a break in the trees, he propelled himself upward toward the next viable handhold, snagging the tip of his shoe on something firm. His fingernails grazed the solid trunk ahead of him as he clawed for it, falling short and collapsing to the ground. He coughed, face to the floor, a powdery mist filling the air as he did, and raised his chest off the ground – peering back to see what had tripped him. A small silvery-luminescent triangle protruded from the ground by his foot. Wafting the translucent cloud, he spun and knelt over the object, lowering his nose to it to get a better look. It looked valuable... and even if not, at least – interesting. Grabbing a large flat stone, he dug around it, bit by bit revealing more of its form. It was patterned in matt white and a silver that seemed to hum dimly with a faint light. His zeal waned as he began to imagine that it was probably just some battery-powered child's toy, lost on a family walk. But he was close enough to unearthing it and so, grabbing and hooking his thumb under a groove, he pulled with all his might. With a sound like stomping through pebbles on a shingle beach, it came loose and Seth flung backward, thwacking his forehead on a branch.

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Fluttering his eyes open unevenly, Seth saw Rich smirking down at him.

“Shouldn't be choosing the steep slope of a quarry-face for trying on your new animal costumes, Seth. Especially not ones that cover your eyes.”, Rich's smirk grew wider as his eyes narrowed. “But you're okay, right?”

"I... think so... yeah – sorry... Umm – new animal... what?" Seth put his hand to his sore head, pressing on a swollen bump and wincing a little as he saw Rich point to the side of him. There laid an austere and angular mask, painted with simple white and silver patterns, in the shape of a canine head, albeit with a squat muzzle. Seth blinked and focused; there was no faint glow as there had been before. He grasped the timber-textured mask and inspected it on all sides. No place for batteries either. He rapped it with his knuckles, listening to the dull thud of bone on wood.

"So, the tail isn't enough for you then?" Rich watched as Seth fiddled with the dirty object.

"Huh? Oh, would... you believe me if I said I *just* found this thing?"

"Don't need to be embarrassed Seth. I won't tell the others if that's what you're worried about. Doesn't bother me anyway – the whole dog thing. Long as you don't hump my leg – yeah? Ha ha!" Rich did what he does and diffused the tension with a crass joke. Seth appreciated it as he still felt a bit woozy while struggling to his feet and couldn't comprehend the light he'd definitely seen emanating from the mask. "Here bro, chuck it in my bag – no point hiding it under your shirt anymore, right?"

"I wasn't hiding – ... Ha ha hhuh-okay. Cheers Rich." Seth gave up and played along as he slipped the mask into his friend's backpack. Rich smiled, turned and began to walk up the path. "Where are the others anyway?"

"Oh, Joe wanted to prove he was the better wrestler or something... so they're over in the long grass, rolling around together. Very romantic." Seth sniggered and followed after Rich.

Grassy-kneed and puffed out, the four boys arrived outside Seth's house, the first at the foot of the quarry hill. The sun hung low in the sky, a purple-orange haze smearing across the distant horizon. Joe and Adam stood impatiently punching one another and trading headlocks – the better wrestler having not yet been decided.

"Uhhm Rich – the... the thing you were going to... give back...?"

"Oh! Yeah – err, Joe, Adam – you guys go on ahead, I need to sort some school stuff with Seth."

"Oooooo! Rich has some treats for his puppy?" Joe teased.

"Gonna get him to roll over and give him some belly rubs, Rich?" Adam followed up, with Joe turning to him – one eyebrow raised.

"Too far man. That's fucking weird."

“I don’t know – *you* guys were the ones taking a tumble in the long grass”, Rich retorted with a slight wink. Joe and Adam looked at each other, less than lovingly, then pushed past Rich, bashing his shoulders with theirs aggressively. Just as Seth thought they were in the clear, he jerked backward and heard a loud twang as Joe pulled his tail – snapping the loops that fastened it to his belt.

“What the fuck Joe?!” Seth bent down and cupped his detached tail in his palms.

“Whoa! No need to bark at me, Seth. See you tomorrow!” Joe shrugged and sauntered away down the road with Adam.

“Not cool. I don’t have any elastic to fix this... fuck sake!”

“Sorry Seth. I shouldn’t have wound them up I guess – but... at least you’ve got your... mask?” Rich reached into his bag and passed the wooden dog-mask to a glum-faced Seth. “See you tomorrow?”

“...Yeah. See you then...”

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Slamming the door behind him, Seth flung the broken tail at his bedroom wall, missing as it flew through the half-open window. Huffing with anger, he raised the wooden mask up to do the same. As he cocked his arm back to get a satisfying amount of power into the throw, he noticed a faint glow reflecting off one of the glossy furry-art posters that adorned his room. Lowering the mask and rotating it to face him, the silver sections – above the brows, encroaching onto the cheeks and framing the triangular ears, emitted an eerie glimmer.

“...the fuck *is* this thing?”

Seth rotated it again, checking for a power source. It was wooden, relatively thin and contoured on the plain inside to allow it to be worn – there was nowhere to store batteries. He twiggled and flicked the light-switch, noticing it had gotten completely dark while he was making his way to his room. The light flickered on, yet the mask still glowed – the colour of moonlight. So, it wasn’t receiving power and it wasn’t glow-in-the-dark. It didn’t make any sense. Seth stared closer, noting its enticing shimmer. It was so much more... ethereal... or mystical... or one of those words, than when it was just, well, ‘turned off’. He couldn’t resist any longer – it was a cool, enchanted-looking dog mask. He *had* to try it on! He swivelled it round, looking at the dark brown wood-grain contours as the mask met his face. Darkness.

“Great. No eye holes. Obviously. Urgh.”

The mask was a snug fit, comfortably staying in position without any string somehow – but Seth couldn’t see a thing.

“Stupid piece of...”

Just as he began to curse the pointless object, he saw a thin slit of light – then two of them, accompanied by a wooden creaking sound. He heard his breathing deepen as he marvelled at the widening view of his room, bathed in moonlight. Stunned and still, he waited until the creaking stopped.

“Eye... holes...? But...”

**“I see you.”**

“Wha-?!” Seth snapped left, then right, searching for the deep growling voice. Nothing – it didn’t help that the slim eye holes obscured a portion of his peripheral vision. His hands shot to his face, thumbs hooking under the chin of the mask.

**“Not while I am speaking, boy.”**

Seth prised with his hands, tearing the mask from his face as he gasped for air in panic. It was much more difficult to remove than it should have been. More importantly – what was that voice?! Seth stared at the mask in his hands, seeing the outline of his chest rise and fall with his gargantuan breaths.

**“Fine. Look in the mirror.”**

The voice – but how? The mask was off... Seth shook his head, why would wearing the mask make a difference – it’s a mask, there shouldn’t be voices! The mirror? Why the mirror? Oh fuck. Given his fascination with transformation, he was no stranger to a bit of body horror in the many stories he’d read. He couldn’t take the chance – what would he see in the mirror?

He dashed to the bathroom. Staring at himself, he sighed with relief as he looked entirely normal. He looked down to the mask once more – anxiety crumpling his brow as he began to concentrate on slowing his breath. Once he had calmed himself, he locked eyes with himself in the mirror again, pulling his eyelid down as if to be thorough.

**“Nothing in there, boy.”**

His hand slipped down his cheek as he stared at himself, listening intently to the growling voice.

**“Now put it back on before you ruin the game.”**

Seth listened and watched, as his mouth moved involuntarily in time with the words he was hearing. But he couldn't be... “Ruin the game? What do you mean?” He watched himself speak, with his normal voice to his relief, before...

**“You should at least give yourself a chance. Look, it's starting.”**

His lips had moved again – but he was *not* saying these things. He stared at his face as he noticed small specks of faded light – barely an atom thick he thought, rippling across his cheeks. The same faint moonlight. Then, where the light had shone, small silvered hairs began to push up from his quivering pores.

“Fur?”

**“Fur.”**

Seth's mind imploded. It was like a dream come true – but in nightmare fashion. He could not compute it. His pure panic gave way to obedience in the face of whatever was causing this. He raised the mask to his face once more.

**“Good boy. Now the game is fair.”**

“What game?” It had been bizarre watching two different voices escape his own mouth and so, if anything, the mask covering it up was a small mercy.

**“The game to decide what we should do with this body.”**

“...” Seth couldn't think of any reply, as a thousand questions soared through his synapses.

**“You have seen through my eyes, now I shall see through yours. You will wear the mask when I tell you to and the challenges will commence. If you refuse to wear the mask, I win. We will play for pieces of your body, one at a time. Let us see who remains.”**

“Fuck that!” Seth took the mask off again, ripping it from his face with too much force as it easily came loose this time.

**“Fine.”**

Seth saw himself mouth the deep grumbling word ‘fine’ and then continued to stare as the faint glow returned, and was soon followed by thicker tufts of silvery-grey fur where it had shone. It took until the fur covered both of his cheeks for him to notice his ears developing a subtle point on each tip. Faint light glinted and fur gently wisped into existence atop each ear. Seth forced shut his mouth which had fallen agape and, with slight hesitation in defeat, donned the mask.

**“So, you agree. The game will decide it.”**

“I don’t have a choice, do I?”

**“You may choose to forfeit.”**

“Not much of a choice, then.”

**“It will begin soon. You will not tell anyone about the mask’s properties. That is all.”**

“That’s all? Wait! So, can I take the mask off or...”

Seth waited. No response came. He tentatively pulled the mask free from his skin and gazed nervously into the mirror, waiting for his lips to move, or some faint glow – or fur to sprout. He stood watch for two minutes. Nothing. And silence. Assessing the fur that had spread across his cheeks already and his subtly pointed ears, he inhaled deeply.

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Lying on his bed, staring sideways across at the dull mask as it lay flat on the desk, Seth rubbed his cheeks with the back of his fingers. He had painstakingly shaved the fur off, taking special care over the tufts atop his slightly angular ears. He looked almost entirely normal again, but this was no joke. A sentient glowing mask, that spoke, using *his* mouth, and could make him grow fur! And it wants to play a game? What is this, some furry version of ‘Saw’ or something? Christ. Seth clutched the sides of his head. He couldn’t begin to process the day’s events, and feeling the pointed cartilage at the tips of his ears made it all the more real. If that wasn’t bad enough, just as he began to drift, his eyelids drooping, the room filled with a clear light. Stretching his tired eyes, he reluctantly crept from his bed to the desk and fanned his hand through the hazy shaft of moonlight – grabbing the gleaming mask. He dared not risk ignoring it for fear that he might just wake up as a dog come the morning. Seth pressed the mask to his face.

**“Your first challenge. We will play for the rump.”**

“The... rump? My butt? Are you some kind of pervert? What the fuck... mask? Come to think of it, what do I even call you?”

**“Irrelevant. It is now midnight. You have until sunrise to chase your tail. That is all.”**

“Wait! Chase my – my tail? Well, that doesn’t sound too difficult. Do I have to wear... you, or?”

Seth waited for confirmation, but nothing came. He guessed that the phrase ‘that is all’ was sentient-mask-speak for ‘over and out’. He would have to work it out himself, he couldn’t risk any more changes. He ran to the bathroom and stared in the mirror, minus the mask, as before. Nothing. Good. He made a mental note that he must only need to wear the mask when it wants to speak to him.

Returning to his bedroom, he approached the window. He’d thrown his tail outside earlier – should be pretty easy to get it back. Finishing that thought and poking his head through the window, he saw it – lying tattered and tangled in the side of the hedge. No sooner had Seth let a smug grin infiltrate his expression than a small wiry red fox weaved out from the vegetation and snatched the tail in its teeth, running off down the road.

“You’re joking... why would... argh fuck!”

Seth quickly grappled his backpack over his shoulder, chucking the mask into it. He raced downstairs and out into his front yard, scanning the night for his prey. He began a jog in the direction it had slunk off to, breaking out into a sprint as he spied the crimson-furred thief spryly cantering in line with the white lane markings. The creature stopped, peering over its shoulder at its bipedal pursuer, before pointing its muzzle forward and darting ahead into the dark. For the couple of hours that followed, the hunt continued in predictable fashion – Seth would catch up and then be lost in a blitz of speed once more. Feet aching and legs beginning to seize, he wondered how the hell this was fair. The mask had clearly enlisted the help of this devious fox to taunt him all night.

Could it do that? Probably. A thumping rhythmic sound suddenly filled the night air like a thick gauze and beckoned Seth onward. He followed the sound, tracking the endless white lines down the tarmac, until – in the distance, a rainbow array of strobe lights; colours dancing out and painting the cloud cover. It looked incredible and it was clearly the source of the thumping music which had grown ever louder as he struggled on. Drawing closer, a resplendent mansion emerged from the pointed tree-line surrounding it. The thick beams of all-colour light painted mesmerizingly across the alpine guards as they stood watch. Seth couldn’t help but amble toward this architectural



embodiment of synaesthesia. Passing the imposing black gates and struggling to stand, he was surrounded by myriad drunkards and colourfully dressed revellers who'd spilled out into the turfed courtyard. None seemed perturbed by his presence, some even offering fluorescent drinks and similarly exotic things to smoke. He continued toward the epicentre of noise and light, gratefully declining as he went, and entered.

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A tingling rush of excitement flew through his body as he stood in the grand front room. Florid curving stairways to his left and right, huge marble-carved sculptures of mythical beasts dotted about, pendulous chandeliers beset with legion kite-shaped crystals, each refracting and splitting the rainbow beams as they swept by. A medieval banquet's worth of bizarre people, bouncing and milling about in it all – drinks and drugs in hand. He had stepped into the frenzied acid trip of the wealthy upper class and could feel himself getting swept up in it all.

As he stood, being jostled about in the crowd and transfixed by the overwhelming collection of stimuli – one in particular caught his attention. He felt a hand grab his upper arm from behind and turned, meeting eyes with a slender purple-haired girl as she swayed with the melody of the room. He felt his body tense up as he subconsciously began worrying about how she perceived him. Still holding his arm, she motioned 'come here' and smiled with warmth. Seth leant in. The girl moved toward his lips with hers, veering left at the last moment and whispering next to his ear.

"Hey, backpack boy."

Seth's worries melted as her breath tickled past the tiny hairs on his ears. She pulled back and stared into his eyes again as he grinned. Her grip on his arm loosened and her hand slid down to meet with his as she turned and began walking. He followed as she led, through the harlequin maelstrom of twisting figures, his mind awash with the possibilities.

Having dodged pyramids of champagne-filled flutes, elaborate bongos that could pass for water-park slides and gyrating peacock-feather clad people playing sitars, to list a few of the sights, they arrived outside a tall mahogany door. Seth gulped, imagining what might be behind it and, of course, what they might do behind it. This wing of the mansion was decidedly quieter than the main entrance. The purple-haired girl let go of his hand and twisted the handle, opening the door a crack. He

watched apprehensively as she sidled through the doorway and out of sight – he had never been with a girl before so...

“The Fox!”

He rubbed his eyes and craned his neck forward. There, at the end of the hallway, the wiry fox sat on its haunches – Seth’s grey and white tail between its teeth.

“That sly little...”

Seth stopped, a twitch in his groin reminding him of where he was, of what he had been about to do. He placed a hand on the heavy door, pushing it open wider and looked down at his feet. He flashed a look at the fox, still sat static. He looked up at a skylight embedded in the roof about half way down the hallway, dim twilight leaking through. The night was slipping away.

“Shit... Shit! I’m so sorry!”

He shouted at the door, balling his hand into a fist and running for the fox. It slunk away and led him back through the mansion, darting through people’s legs, out into the courtyard. His chance to catch the beast dwindling, the looming sun diluting the inky sky, he screamed.

“Stop that fox!”

“Huh?!” A dreadlocked reveller, hearing the call, thrust his poncho over his head and onto the elusive fox with pinpoint accuracy. Seth caught up to the scene and catapulted himself through the air, falling onto the lump in the poncho. He fought as it squirmed, wrestling with it for a moment before wrapping it in the fabric. It became still. “Dude! You are the fox-man, man!”

“Yeah, thanks for...”

“Toke it, fox-man!” The poncho-less guy offered out a thick, long ‘cigarette’. Seth smiled acquiescently and took a few puffs, coughing immediately.

“Achk... uhh, thanks... dude.” He handed it back, the grey ribbon twisting into the night air.

“No worries, fox-man. That poncho is yours now. May it serve you well in your search for the foxes of this world.” The reveller inhaled from the drooping lit stick as he placed his hands together and bowed. Seth, holding the fox in the bunched-up poncho like Santa with his sack, smiled at the corner of his mouth and about-faced.

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Seth set down the poncho bundle on a grass verge separating the road from the nearby stream, about a mile on from the mansion. He'd have preferred to get indoors again before dealing with the fox – it could escape if not contained, but the light of morning could be seen radiating over the hills in the distance and time was short. He carefully positioned himself so as to block any obvious escape route and pulled the makeshift sack apart. The poncho fell flat to the muddy ground. Seth did a double-take as he saw only his faux-fur tail – no fox. Did it escape somehow? No – he rolled his eyes. The damned mask. The fox was never even real. Could the mask do that? An illusory fox running off with his tail? Probably. He clasped the tail in his hand, just as the tip of the sun peaked over the horizon. Feeling a vibration in his bag, he retrieved the mask and wore it, ready to announce his victory.

**“I win.”**

“What?!” This was not what Seth had expected to hear. “I got the tail – it’s in my hand! I caught it! That stupid fox... And before the sunrise too! No bending the rules!”

**“Before the sunrise, yes. You were very close. But I win. The rump is mine.”**

Seth opened his mouth to protest further and left it agape as he saw a bright clear glow glistening in the dew drops of the grass beneath him. A ray of light was shining from his butt! As the glow faded, he felt a strange seething in his backside, followed by a prickly sensation and a growing pressure. He was still wearing his slim fit jeans from the previous day and began to feel a warm fullness in the seat of his pants. He hunched forward slightly as his tight boxers stretched – the uncomfortable feeling growing more intense and beginning to feel like he'd fallen hard on his coccyx. This was soon punctuated by an utterly alien realisation that there was now... more of him back there. He felt the same feeling as he'd felt on his cheeks the previous evening when the fur had sprouted, this time on his butt.

His curiosity overriding his shock, Seth reached a hand back to his buttocks. Shock overtook him again as he felt a huge bulge straddling his butt cheeks. It was growing ever-larger and bunching up, causing him more discomfort. He couldn't identify exactly what part of his body was hurting, but he felt the pressure growing along with a sense of being trapped. He knew what he needed to do – remove his trousers and boxers. But it was daylight now. But the pressure was still building!

He listened to the stitching of his pants beginning to rip. Seems they were coming off, one way or another. He waddled with his huge backseat bulge over toward the stream, further from the road, and unbuckled his belt. With difficulty, he pushed his lower garments down, over his obscenely large behind, before kicking them free from round his ankles.

Pure relief flowed around his rump area as the pressure abated. Seth cocked his head back, almost with pleasure at the feeling of freedom. He felt something tickle his left thigh, then his right, then left. He pivoted to see what had brushed past him. Nothing there. He slowly rotated his torso alone. Hanging from his lower back, swishing left and right, was a bristly, silvery-grey and white furred tail. His eyes snapped to the discarded poncho a few metres away – his faux-fur tail lying next to it. His heart sank. He forgot to breathe for a moment. The furry appendage nuzzled its way between his butt cheeks and curled forward, trembling between his thighs. He felt it grow longer, as his knees were tickled by his own tail fur. He just stood there in the morning mist, pulling his jumper down over his privates and experiencing his new tail as it demonstrated his fear.

**“Better.”** Seth swallowed with a dry throat. He was still wearing the mask.

“Ok – so now I’ve got a tail. Fucking unbelievable. But, that’s that, I guess... I won though! You said I had until sunrise to chase my tail, and I caught it...”

**“I said you had until sunrise to chase your tail. I did not say you should catch it.”**

“You... what? So, it was a trick?”

**“There was no trick, boy. A dog chases its tail for fun. It never catches it. If it did, the game would end. You were having fun until you caught your tail, no?”**

“Well, I was... but...”

**“Then the point is proven. You needed only to continue the game until sunrise to win. You did not. You caught your tail before the sun rose. That is all.”**

“But...” Seth knew that the mask would no longer respond. He removed it from his face and turned sideways to the stream. Edging closer, squatting and awkwardly flexing brand-new muscles around his rear to raise his tail out over the water. He studied his reflection. His rounded buttocks were covered in a light dusting of grey fur, fading to white on their inner sides and meeting the base of his tail. The fur stopped in line with his coccyx and before it reached his thighs. The tail itself was

densely-furred, thick and grey, with a white streak travelling along the length of the underside and enveloping the tip. Seth noticed it beginning to jitter as he admired its form. Soon it was wagging about of its own volition – making him feel lightheaded and brightening his mood. Regaining perspective, Seth decided against his restrictive boxers and went commando – feeding his tail down one leg of his trouser legs. He began the long stroll home, leaving his old fake tail in the mud.

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It was almost 10am as Seth arrived, exhausted back at his home. He'd missed the start of school and sleep-deprivation had him floating on his feet. He flashed back over the memories of his 3-hour return journey. It had been a strange one. Nothing from the mask at all. But, something felt different. *He* felt different. Not to mention he had no luck with learning the ropes of his new tail whatsoever. Every time a car drove by as he trekked, he felt a tingle at the base of his spine – followed by the furry extension thwacking around wildly in his trouser leg. He didn't have any control over it. It whipped about, brushing his knee and making quite a scene. He dreaded to think of what any onlookers might have thought he was hiding in his pants as the long lump squirmed around. The discomfort of keeping his tail confined couldn't be overstated either. It felt unnatural and made his lower back ache with the exertion of straining against the fabric. Eventually, he gave in and released the beast – allowing his tail to hang over the hem of his trousers. The freedom felt astonishing as it swished around, bouncing and reacting to his thoughts with its own restless interpretation. As for onlookers... There were those fake tails that wag when your heart rate rises now anyway, right? It's just like one of those.

He rooted in his pockets, then through his bag – grazing the mask with his hand. Fuck. Sake. He didn't have his keys. Unbelievable. The car wasn't on the drive either – mum was clearly out at work. His shoulders slumped forward and the backpack fell to the ground. He allowed his tired frame to follow.

“Ee-owch!!” He wriggled onto his flank, pushing an open palm against his butt to quell the pain. He'd sat onto his tail at the wrong angle. “Stupid... stupid! Arrrgh!”

Lambasting himself, he massaged his tail at the base – allowing the texture of the dense soft fur to calm him. Okay, he rationalised, he should probably get to school anyway, it wasn't like him to miss

classes and he could still get there in time for lunch. He heard a growl rumble through his stomach. It was settled. But the tail would have to get back in the trousers. He didn't even wear his fake tail to school – he wasn't going to let his new feather-duster go feral in a classroom! He arduously rose to his sore feet once more and stuffed the tail down one leg – noting his own dismay as he did.

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“Sethilis!”

Great. Barely 10 metres past the school gate and there stood Joe, complete with Adam of course. Both sported their burgundy-and-blue striped rugby jerseys, with white shorts. A matching pair of burly boys – Seth couldn't believe he called these guys friends.

“Sethilis?” His lips thinned with incredulity.

“Yeah! Ha ha! Like syphilis – ‘cos your name is Seth... so...” Joe began with a dumb grin.

“Okay, I get it. Amazing – fuck you too.”

Adam chimed in, “Whoa there! Attitude. I guess you're sad ‘cos your tail broke huh?” Seth looked confused for a moment before recalling the previous day's events, pre-mask.

“It was an accident, bro. Seriously. Sorry. Okay? We good?” Joe extended a brittle olive branch. “You look like shit! Have you even slept?”

Seth rolled his eyes as the abuse immediately resumed.

“No – actually. I went to a party in a huge mansion and... and... met some girl.” Seth's voice trailed off as he wondered why he was mentioning his midnight antics – he usually would have kept that sort of stuff to himself.

Joe and Adam turned to each other, eyebrows raised and mouths puckered wide like two apes. They shared an idiotic laugh and turned back to Seth, inching forward.

“Guys. What? ...Guys?!” Seth raised his hands in defence but it was too late.

The two stocky lads pounced on him, wrestling and grappling his head under their armpits – which smelled awful. They chanted unharmoniously about how Seth was no longer a virgin, how he was a player and about all the techniques they could teach him. Seth didn't enjoy their leaps in logic, assuming that because he'd met a girl, he had also definitely had sex with her. He didn't think he

enjoyed their wrestling either, but his tail began to tell a different story. Amongst the ruckus, it took him a moment to notice the familiar tension above his butt. He immediately tried to diffuse the situation as he felt his tail start to get more excited.

“Guys-pfft! Guys – fucking STOP!”

“The fuck, Seth?” Joe questioned as he and Adam backed down. “We’re just messing around. Glad you got yourself a girl, you know?” Seth felt a pang of guilt – as he knew Joe was trying to be sincere. “What the fuck is wrong with your leg anyway?” Joe pointed to Seth’s left trouser leg, which was clearly being jostled about by his insistent tail wagging.

“Nothing!” Seth rotated and looked down. His tail created a prominent raised outline along the inner side of his left leg. The outline twitched as the tail struggled against the tight jeans to wag freely.

Joe’s eyes grew wide. “Is that your cock, Seth?!”

Adam glared down at the tail bulge, stretching across Seth’s inside thigh and down to his knee.

“Man, you’re a beast, Seth!”

“Does wrestling get you all hot and bothered, Sethilis? Ha ha!”

Joe’s dumb grin returned in place of his awe as he advanced yet again. Adam took one look at his fellow rugby lad’s body language and adopted a similar stance. Seth didn’t have time to run before becoming the centre of a second jumble of limbs and pungent bodily odours. The rugby lads naturally took the upper hand and began to tickle Seth. Of all things, they tickled him. He kicked himself inside as he succumbed to the humiliating tactic, giggling and falling limp to the floor as his tail got even more worked up. He curled into foetal position, to cut off all angles of attack and prevent further tickling. After a couple seconds, a suspicious silence fell over the two larger lads and their offensive abruptly halted.

“Seth, bro, you’re such a freak.”

Seth uncovered his head from behind his forearms and stared up at the two boys looming over him, studying their stunned expressions. Then he felt it – his tail slapped against the ground and wound up for another. It had gotten free. Seth thrust his arms to his backside, pushing his tail flat to his butt cheeks. The furry tip still wisped back and forth beyond his reach.

“You fixed it already – and you’re wearing it down your trousers... to school?” Joe chastised the mortified boy.

“Nah bro. He got an upgrade. Look – it’s wagging!”

Seth panicked, jumping to his feet and turning to face them as he frantically stuffed the tail back down his trouser leg. His cheeks were red with chagrin as he surveyed the scene. All the commotion had drawn a crowd – dozens of his peers stood watching every awkward second. His tail stopped wagging at least, settling for a nervous tremble instead. Overwhelmed and surrounded, Seth bolted.

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Sniffing sharply between exhalations, Seth could smell the salty air as tears tracked down his cheeks. He’d retreated to a toilet cubicle – a fittingly pitiful place to go and have a pathetic cry, he lamented. He was sat slightly awkwardly on the toilet lid, so as not to crush or bend the tail in his trouser leg. Though, after what had just happened – he wanted to rip the damned thing off. Utter humiliation coursed through him, making him feel weak and distant.

“Seth?” He cut his sobbing short with one final sniff as he heard his name being called. It was Rich. “Seth? You in here? Joe and Adam said you were upset?”

“Yeah. I’m here... But I’m not upset!”

Rich followed the meek sound and jumped against the stall door, peeking his head over the top. “Hey man. You look... kind of upset to be honest.”

“Fine.”

“So, what’s up?” Rich lowered himself back to the ground and listened through the door.

“Don’t fucking... don’t act like they didn’t already tell you everything!” Seth spat back in a barbed tone.

“Ahh you’re good, you got me!” Rich joked light-heartedly. “They said you were wearing a new tail to school... And you got upset cos everyone noticed while you were wrestling with them?”

“Something like that.”

“Bro, I’d be upset if I had to wrestle with those guys!” Rich paused, listening for a laugh. Seth sniggered, sniffed and wiped his nose with his wrist. “Ok – so what’s really up? You don’t usually wear your tail to school, do you? And where were you this morning?”



Rich heard the latch opening and stood back. The door swung slowly open to reveal Seth, dried tear-trails on his face, holding up his limp grey tail.

“Okay, so you’re wearing it to school now then…”

Seth beckoned Rich closer, holding his tail up as high as it could reach. “Look at it, closely.”

Stepping forward, Rich narrowed his eyes and examined the silvery-grey fur. “Looks pretty real, man. I don’t see the problem. Is it new?”

“Could say that – watch…” Seth flexed and his tail twitched, curling up slightly from his upturned palms. “See?”

“Cool – it’s got a motor in it or something?”

“Nope.”

“What’re you saying Seth? Lemme see – pass it here.” Seth allowed Rich to grab his tail, flinching reflexively as he did. Rich tried to tug it toward him. And again – harder. Seth faintly yelped. “Bro – you want me to look at it or not? Detach it from your belt.”

“I can’t.”

Rich crumpled his brow with confusion. He propped the tail up with one hand and stroked along it with the other. One of Seth’s eyes quivered as the motion felt quite good. His tail suddenly curved and came to life, beginning to wag. Rich let loose his grip and watched as the tail fell behind his friend and began peeking out from behind him, rhythmically left then right. Seth searched Rich’s expression.

“Pretty fucking realistic Seth, what the hell is going on?!” Rich now looked worried.

“That’s because it *is* real.”

Rich turned around in disbelief, placing his hands on his head. Spinning back to lock eyes with Seth, he breathed out for seven seconds or more. He had a soft spot for Seth and his furry antics – his loyalty had always reminded him of his old Retriever that had passed away.

“Okay. Seth, you’re my friend. My oldest friend. So, this is benefit of the doubt time. Yeah? I’m going to hear you out – what *exactly* is going on?”

Seth looked at his friend, the concern clear in his eyes, and knew he would have to tell the truth. He could almost smell the doubt on him. Seth inhaled deeply as his tail fell still. He readied himself to

reveal the whole series of events that had led to this: the mask glowing and talking to him; his pointed ears; the challenge – the mad mansion and the fox. Rich held his hands wide apart and mouth ajar with anticipation.

“Right. Rich... now, bear with me – this is going to seem strange, but... WROOF!”

Seth slammed his hands to his throat, his startled eyes tracking sideways with panic. Did he just bark? He looked at Rich for confirmation. That face said it all. Disappointment. Rich’s hands fell to his sides.

“Okay Seth. Good one. I can see I’m wasting my time here.” Rich moved to leave.

“Wait! Rich... I didn’t mean to!”

Seth’s memory flashed back to the first time he’d worn the mask. What did it say? ‘You will not tell anyone about the mask’s properties’. That must be it. Shit. He tried to explain. He shouted.

“That wasn’t me. I mean, I didn’t... It said that – WOOF! RUFF!”

“So funny, Seth. Catch you later.”

“It’s the mask! It – ARF! WRUFF!”

Seth collapsed back onto the toilet seat as Rich had deserted him. He couldn’t blame him. He would have thought it was a piss-take too. This was impossible. Seth placed his hand on his throat again and rubbed up and down. He couldn’t believe that sound had come from him. It sounded like a huge dog barking at the top of its lungs. He knew he would have to hide his tail again and just try to lay low.

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The remainder of the school-day had progressed normally enough. Obviously, the war with his tail continued as it did completely its own thing in his trouser leg. He accidentally tried to eat his cooked lunch without cutlery, just using his mouth to wolf down the first bite before noticing his mistake. He hadn’t felt *too* self-conscious about it, as he was already being pierced on all sides by judging eyes that’d seen his ‘wrestling match’ earlier. He hadn’t seen much more of Joe, Adam or Rich and assumed they were probably avoiding him until the controversy died down a little. Fair enough.

He was relieved to be walking home and didn't even mind his tail jerking about every time he saw a car go by. In fact, he kind of felt like chasing them – but obviously didn't. Upon reaching his house, he knocked on the door and shot straight past his mum as she answered. No point getting into it all with her and ending up barking again, anyway. He fell like a rag doll onto his mattress, his eyes immediately growing ten times heavier with the promise of sleep. He heard rustling, sounding as if it was far away. Lifting his head, he saw a familiar light glinting through the zip-seam of his bag. He sighed and went through the motions – retrieving the mask and fixing it to his face.

**“Your second challenge. We will play for the front legs.”**

“But... Oh, I see. You're pretty confident after your cheating last time huh? So, if I lose I end up with paws instead of hands?”

**“Correct. In addition, your arms will function as a dog's front legs.”**

“Of course... but never mind that. First – tell me what the fuck you are doing making me bark in public?! We haven't played for the mouth or whatever yet!”

**“I said you will not tell anyone about the mask's properties. You did not.”**

“You're bending the rules.”

**“Incorrect.”**

“...Oh? And what about my sense of smell – and the tail doing its own thing... and eating lunch with just my mouth?!”

**“Do you not typically eat with your mouth?”**

“You know what I mean. I feel... different. Don't think I haven't noticed.”

**“It is good that you have. With each change to your body will come adjustments to your mind. You will be gifted with my instincts.”**

“What if I don't want your gifts?”

**“Irrelevant. They will enable you to better use your new body parts – while they remain yours.”**

“I don't...” Seth tried to continue the argument, but his mouth was overcome with a sudden numbness – forcing his silence.

**“Enough. You have until midnight to steal a kiss of passion from a female of your species.”**

Feeling returned to Seth's mouth with a quick tingle of his lips. Stretching out his jaw side to side, he hesitantly spoke.

"A... a kiss? From a female of my species?" He raised his hand to anxiously fondle his chin. "Let me guess – there's some bullshit trick to it, like, you think I'm a dog – so I need to kiss a terrier?"

**"Avoid being facetious, boy. You have until midnight. That is all."**

Seth sighed and removed the mask as its silver glow faded. This should have been easy – you'd think. But Seth didn't have a girlfriend. He had, regrettably, *never* had a girlfriend. And after today's humiliation – he didn't stand a chance with anyone from school. A kiss... *of passion*. That ruled out his mum. The only girl he'd ever known to show an interest in him... had purple hair. He couldn't help but think, as he rushed downstairs, that this was all part of the mask's plan. He was going back to the mansion.

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Skidding to a halt on the grassy courtyard of the strobe-lit structure, Seth wished he'd known how far the fox would lead him the previous night – he might have ridden his bike then too. He'd taken to wearing his tail out and free, for comfort's sake. The feeling of it streaming in the wind behind him as he pedalled had been indescribable. There was no time to lock up the wheel as he assessed the dusky sky. The bass pounded in his ear drums, myriad colourful characters still partying as they had been the night before. Did this place ever sleep? He pondered, reflecting on the fact that he still hadn't slept a wink since his last visit. He entered and began the search, jumping every few seconds as he barged through the crowds – sweeping the room for a purple crown. No one seemed perplexed by his tail as it swatted around. In fact, it even got a couple of compliments as the revellers fawned over it and stroked its length. Seth tried his best not to be distracted by any of this, as he knew time was slipping away. The whole place smelled so much more vibrant than it had before – like the colours and sounds paled in comparison to the array of scents.

"Fox-man! Dude!" Seth recognised the voice. The dreadlock guy with the poncho. Maybe he knew where purple-hair girl was.

"Oh... hey... dude, am I glad to see you..."

"Whooooa! Fox-man! You got yourself a fox tail! Rad!"

“Rad? Um. Yep. Rad. More of a Husky tail though, don’t you think?”

“Nah, you’re the fox-man, man. You are the righteous harbinger of fox-flavoured retribu-...”

Seth interjected, “Uh-huh, all about the foxes – I am. Anyway, dude, have you seen any girls with purple hair round here?”

“Lavender or mauve?”

“Seriously? Umm more sort of dark-purple.”

“Sianna. She’s upstairs – on the sesh by the skylight.” The dreadlocked reveller pointed as Seth sprinted toward the stairs. “She’s a fox too. I got you, fox-man!” Seth smiled as he ran. She’s a fox, yeah...

Reaching the top of the stairs and turning down the hallway to the skylight, Seth caught a familiar scent. One he didn’t even know he had smelled before. Could it be? He approached a circle of people, obscured by plumes of white smoke, and glimpsed purple. He grabbed his tail and held it still as it began to wag with excitement.

“Hey guys! I’m looking for...”

“Backpack boy?” The purple-haired girl floated to her feet from within the cloud of smoke, locking eyes with him. “Where did you go?”

“I’m sorry, it was...” Seth stopped himself as he worried that he might be forced to bark if he tried to explain what had happened.

“Never mind.” Her eyes fell to the ground, slowly tracking back up Seth’s body and meeting his once more. “Come on.”

She stretched her hand out and grabbed his, leading him back down the hallway to the large mahogany door. Seth gulped. Déjà vu.

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They entered without interruption, the boy still clutching his tail behind his back as it tried to wriggle free. The room was smaller than he’d imagined. Three red walls and one pied feature wall, behind

the headboard of the king-size bed which was peppered with all-styles of pillow. Sianna took a seat between a frilly white-satin square and a felt dog-motif novelty pillow.

“Sianna... I *am* sorry.”

“What’s *your* name?”

“Huh?”

“Well, you know mine apparently. Are you just called ‘backpack boy’? I see you’re still wearing it.”

“Oh!” He looked at the strap on his shoulder, “Yeah, I have to because of the...” He didn’t want to bark in the girl’s face. “Seth. My name’s Seth.”

“Seth. I like it.” She smiled, letting her eyes close a little. “What are you holding behind your back, Seth?”

“Just my... hand.” Seth released his tail, flashing an open palm to Sianna – his nervous grin giving him away only a second before the fluffy tail did. It immediately began swishing side to side, peeping momentarily from behind each of his thighs. Sianna watched it for what felt like forever. Seth was conscious of her eyeline tracking across his crotch each time she pre-empted the tail’s motion.

“Cute. You’re not a backpack boy. You’re a dog boy. Come on over here and *sit*, doggy.”

Seth was speechless. His tail wagged quicker. He approached the bed, moving the dog-motif pillow out of his way and dropping his bag as he carefully sat. His tail rested in the valley of his butt cheeks beneath him, the tip still fidgeting between his thighs – slightly tickling his balls as it did. He looked at Sianna’s smile. He smelled her happiness and knew she was genuine. But wait – this all seemed too perfect. Why doesn’t she mind his stupid tail? Hell, why doesn’t she mind him having deserted her yesterday? Why does she even like him at all? Is she... an illusion, just like the fox? One of the mask’s tricks. Of course.

“Sianna... are you even real?”

She looked bemused as she smirked, cheeks turning red. “Sweet... does this seem real?” She leant in, placing her hand on Seth’s thigh and pressed her pink lips to his. Seth’s eyes were peeled, slowly closing as he reciprocated – leaning in to the embrace. His tail jittered wildly with delight, flicking Sianna’s hand. Their mouths parted.

“Someone’s happy. Good doggy.” Sianna teased the dazed boy with a giggle and withdrew her hand, placing it back in her lap. Seth beamed and shuffled where he sat.

“Sianna – you are beau...” A rustling sound from his bag and a faint glow. “Shit.”

“I’m what?”

“Fuck. No – not you. The backpack, I need to – wurff... agh.” Seth stifled a bark as he had been about to mention the mask. “I just need to go to the bathroom.”

“With your backpack? Okay...” Sianna watched, confused, as Seth grabbed his bag and ran to the ensuite.

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Locking the door, Seth reached for the mask. He stared at it for a moment as it shone, wondering if he was about to be stuck in the bathroom. That lock would be difficult to open with paws. Taking in a deep breath, he covered his face.

**“You win. You will keep your arms.”** Seth let a lungful of air escape all at once in relief as the deep growling voice delivered the verdict.

“Shh! There’s someone in the room next door!”

**“Not my concern. You have shared a kiss of passion – despite your nature. Now begins your third challenge. We will play for the genitals.”**

“Sorry – for my what?! The third challenge already?!” Seth whisper-shouted in anger. “I knew it. You lost one, so you just move straight on to the next. You’re a sore loser!”

**“Irrelevant. Now is the opportune time. If you can resist temptation until sunrise, you will change back.”**

“I’ll lose my tail?”

**“Incorrect.”**

Seth grew dizzy as the growl subsided. He felt an unfathomable skin-crawling itch in his groin. Thank god the door is locked, he thought, as he rushed to be rid of his trousers. He retrospectively praised

his decision to go commando as he beheld the mesh of warping skin swirling in his crotch. His pubic hair had already shed into his trousers, some of it finding its way to the white-tiled floor. He watched as it was replaced by fine snow-white fur, pushing out into thick silken tufts and spreading across his scrotum. The fur-coated skin of his ball sack tightened as the testicles churned around inside – undergoing their own invisible canine changes. There was no discomfort.

The skin underneath the fresh white fuzz of Seth's pubic mound began to thicken and visibly raise, wrapping, folding and inflating to form a neat sheath which travelled half way toward his navel. A tension grew within the furry cave and Seth noticed the familiar feeling of becoming erect. He'd almost forgotten that his penis was caught up in the middle of all this somewhere. The reminder came in the form of his familiar human dick steadily emerging from his new sheath, held flat against his stomach as it grew. As the horny pressure built in his hardening dick, its skin began to darken – the contrast between his shaft and bell-end blurring into a single shade of red. As quickly as the colour had crept across his manhood, it bulged at its base, lengthening further than it ever had before and tapering to a flat point at the tip. Seth's arms fell to his sides, limp, as his vision was filled by his new, rigid dog cock.

**“It feels good, no?”**

“...” Seth stared through the eye-slits of the mask at his deformed maleness, huge and throbbing. The white fur had sprouted up to his belly button, but stretched up under his perineum and joined around his hips to the grey coat on his buttocks.

**“Until sunrise, you must resist. If you do, then your genitals will change back. My instincts will be your enemy. That is all.”**

The low growling reminder of the challenge, along with the feeling of injustice that the change had brought, caused Seth's penis to slowly retreat into his sheath. Seeing this, he wondered how it could possibly fit so neatly back into the compact furry holster. He poked his finger inside, shuddering as it met the tip of his covert cock. It felt unbelievably sensitive. Is this what a dog's dick felt like?

He shook himself. Sianna! She's been outside this whole time. He began fumbling to put his trousers on as he attempted to concoct an explanation in his mind. He hoisted them up and pulled on his belt to fasten it. A yelp of pain escaped his throat as he doubled forward. He straightened up and lifted his shirt with care, seeing the problem. His belt had constricted his canine sheath roughly half way



up, pinching his sensitive cock inside. He undid the buckle and tried to adjust his trousers, pulling them higher over the sheath. The rim caught on his tail behind him. This was not going to work. He either had to wear his jeans so high that he would need to cut a hole out for his tail at the back, or risk crushing his sheath. Now he wished he hadn't gone commando – he might have had better luck ripping a hole in some boxers with his bare hands.

He tried the third and final solution: wearing the trousers low enough that they did not hurt his sheath, nor tail, but were on the verge of falling down at any given moment. Despite the obvious outline of his sheath apparent at the bottom end of his shirt, this seemed preferable. He braced himself to return to Sianna.

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Opening the bathroom door, he saw her – sprawled out on the bed with her eyes shut. He crept out and into the room, leaning forward slightly to let his shirt hang further from his body and disguise his obvious sheath-outline. Seth considered the challenge for the first time since the shock of his recent change had receded. Resist temptation? Now was the 'opportune time'? Okay. Clearly, he had to avoid having sex. Easy – he'd avoided it for the first 18 years of life. He chuckled grimly. He would just have to leave the room quietly, get on his bike and go home. End of... story...

He froze. Something wasn't right. He had his plan. It was fool-proof. So what was stopping him? He sniffed. His tail twitched behind him. A brief shudder in his genitals made him jerk his hips. His furry scrotum noticeably tightened. He felt the tip of his cock rub against the fabric of his shirt as it poked out from its sheath. He sniffed. There was something in the air. He sniffed. There was no discernible odour. It wasn't registering as a smell, so much as a feeling – an instruction. He sniffed again, trying to identify it.

Bad idea. It was making him hard and clouding his mind with a compulsion. A growing need. He plugged his nostrils with two fingers as his cock engorged, climbing up his abdomen and past his belly button. Something in his brain persuaded his fingers to recede, as he took another deep breath in through his nose. His cock was becoming painfully hard now. Aching and pulsing, forming a huge tent in his shirt. It all seemed to be automatic – it was happening against his will, no matter how hard he fought it. Why was he even fighting this battle? Why was he trying to identify what was happening to him? Why didn't he just leave? That would put an end to it. He knew it would. But why did he know that? It clicked into place.

He turned to look at Sianna, dog cock proudly erect and dampening a circular patch of his shirt with precum. He could smell *her*. It was like inhaling pornography through his nose. A trance overtook him, his eyelids drooping as he slipped into a warm horny complacency and approached the female.

The air thickened as Seth neared, sending a shudder through his groin. His pelvic floor muscles contracted in pulses on their own, squeezing more dribbles of pre from his tip as it bobbed.

Sianna stirred.

“Seth?”

She rose, stretching her arms out before rubbing her eyes. Shit. Seth’s mind snapped back from his trance. He forced his tongue back into his mouth as he noticed his own horny panting. Looking down at himself, the damp patch adorning the apex of his tenting shirt, his arousal mixed with fear. What if she sees me like this? What was I going to do to her?! He questioned his sanity, mind still reeling from the ever-present erotic smell in the air.

“That’s the second time you’ve deserted me – what was so interesting about the bathroom?”

Seth scoured his jumbled thoughts for an answer, but could only call to mind the truth – he was usually an awful liar anyway. He began to stutter through a response, “Nothing – it’s... well, you know... my tail? I only have it because WOOF! ARF!”

He slammed his hand across his traitorous mouth. Sianna looked to the source of the sudden barking, her eyes keen with surprise. At least she definitely wouldn’t agree to have sex with him now, Seth consoled himself.

“Because... you’re a dog boy, right? Makes sense. But I still don’t understand what took you so long in there...” Sianna rose from her seated position, walking in slow sensual fashion toward him to place a finger under his chin. “I don’t suppose it matters.”

Seth couldn’t believe it. But she still hadn’t seen his dog cock, tenting under his shirt – that would surely be the end of it. His entire being was now overwhelmed by the smell of her sex wafting through her clothing. His body rigid and tense. In lieu of having a girlfriend, he regularly masturbated and was no stranger to ‘edging’ – bringing himself nearly to the point of no return and then maintaining that plateau for as long as he could before he burst. This felt like that. He was on the edge.

Sianna placed her hands to his hips; she *had* to have noticed the obscene tent in his shirt, but she didn't comment. She pulled him toward her as she pushed her hips to his, letting her body slowly roll forward until her breasts pressed against his chest. Seth was practically shaking with lust as his aching red rocket was sandwiched between their warm bodies.

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He lost it. Not even knowing what he was doing – Seth craned his arms behind and under Sianna's thighs, easily lifting her as he pounced forward to the bed. He pushed her onto her back and began tearing at her clothes with animalistic clawing motions, nipping at her lower garments with his teeth as his hips began to buck with desire.

Sianna assisted his clumsy endeavour, seeing how horny and uncoordinated he had become. Only her bare skin left, she twirled onto her front – propping herself on her hands and knees. Seth saw her vaginal entrance, moist with arousal. He drank in its scent, driving him into a frenzy. The boy ripped his clothes from his body and stood naked, tail swishing side to side and dog cock pulsing with lechery.

Somewhere, deeply buried in his mind, a faint voice – his voice, asked if this was okay. It tried to remind him of the challenge and of his waning humanity. He mounted the female and thrusted wildly, missing her entrance on the first two attempts. His shaft stroking along her silky wet lips spurred him on nonetheless. On his third attempt, his tapered tip found its mark – plunging deep into her warm embrace as his stomach muscles contracted. She moaned seductively as he filled her.

Humping and panting, he could smell their carnal union. He felt her pussy tighten as his dog cock ballooned inside her. Just as it became difficult to push his engorged canine cock in any further, his hips snatched the baton and took over. His tail, which had been erratically thwacking around in the air, wriggled its way between his legs and curled up under him.

Now *all* of the muscles in his hind quarters found their rhythm and began hammering his swollen knot into the female. Five or six gargantuan thrusts later, his inflated knot slipped in and locked the dog boy in place. His mate lowered her head to the mattress in ecstasy as he continued to pound her in tiny spasming motions. His undulating hips slowed, each movement becoming more pronounced as he reached his peak. Seth's head felt like it was on fire as his dick became yet more rigid.

His neck flung his head backward in time with the final buck of his hips. He pumped what felt like the contents of his entire being into his bitch. Wave after wave of viscous dog juice rippled up his shaft and into her passage as Seth convulsed with pleasure. He collapsed onto her back as her simultaneous climax milked his hypersensitive member.

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At least ten minutes had passed and neither body had moved, but for Sianna adopting a lying down position and Seth laying on top of her as he remained tied. His rational thoughts had returned and his anxieties were running wild. On one hand – he was no longer a virgin. It counted even though he had a dog’s cock, right? On the other, he had a dog’s cock. Which he would presumably now be keeping.

He led there, inhaling the rich smell of their aftermath as he wracked his mind. No words had been exchanged since their orgasms. Why hadn’t Sianna questioned the fact that Seth was still rock hard inside her – with a bulbous knot that was too big to pull out?! At least his mind was his own again – the desire had dulled. He half-expected the mask to begin glowing and wondered how he would deal with donning it while still inside Sianna.

“That was fantastic, dog boy. You’re a real animal.” Sianna spoke, her mouth slightly muffled by the duvet. She... didn’t care about his obvious penile deformity? Or hadn’t noticed? She *must* have noticed. “When are you thinking that knot of yours will go down? I wouldn’t mind grabbing a drink.”

She *had* noticed.

“Urrmm. I don’t know to be honest. This is kind of my first time... with a dog’s... you know.”

“Aww really?! You were good. I’ve never had a dog boy before. So it was a first for me too.” He could hear the smile in her voice and felt at ease, though still found her nonchalance a bit perplexing. “I really wouldn’t mind that drink. Work with me here?”

“Oh. Yeah.”

Seth slowly rose from the bed as he and Sianna, still tied, manoeuvred their way to a small mini-fridge. Every so often, their coordination left a little to be desired and Seth felt his knot tugging at her entrance. As they bent forward in tandem to grab some drinks from the fridge, they couldn’t

help but laugh at their predicament. Seth felt content. This was a closeness he'd never experienced before.

The couple laid in the bed and chatted, Sianna intermittently toying with Seth's cock and tail – much to his delight. They even had sex again as Seth's nose stoked his desires, enjoying another twenty minutes or so of being tied to one another.

Upon slipping out from her, Seth rolled onto his back, noticing that the sun was rising. He felt the stress bubbling up in him as he recalled the mask's deadline.

"Sunrise already?!" Sianna spoke first, quickly pulling the duvet over her naked skin. This was the first time her calm persona had cracked. She hadn't kicked up a fuss about a boy with a dog's dick and tail barking at her and then fucking her. What was so scary about the sunrise? Despite the curiosity her reaction had peaked in him – Seth wasn't happy to see the sun either. He needed to leave before the mask demanded to be worn.

"You need to leave Seth!"

"Yeah..." Seth suddenly felt a shiver. He could smell Sianna's... fear? "What's wrong, Si-?"

"GO! Please!"

Seth hurriedly dressed himself, trying to find the sweet spot where his jeans wouldn't hurt his tail and sheath. He threw a couple of concerned glances at Sianna, who was hiding beneath the duvet now.

Fully clothed, with his bag on his back – he quickly rushed to the bedside and peeled back a corner of the duvet, hoping for a final kiss.

"Leave!"

Sianna screamed, her hand snatching the cover back as she hid. Seth drew back in confusion. He thought he saw a clump of reddish-ginger hair on her fleeting arm. Feeling bewildered and hurt, his thoughts returned to the mask as he exited the room.

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Seth was half-way down the enormous curving staircase when he finally looked up from his feet. Something was wrong. The party had stopped. The rainbow-lights were nowhere to be seen, the chandeliers hung dull from the ceiling – seeming as if they needed a polish. The huge marble sculptures looked cracked and weathered. The carpet was scraggy, wood chippings strewn about and wallpaper peeling from every surface. This was not the resplendent pit of debauchery and decadence he had entered the night before. There was no music, there were no people.

He walked toward the front doors as the dim light of morning seeped in – drawing attention to the dusty air of neglect. Reaching the exit, he stopped in the door-frame and saw the courtyard was empty.

A sudden clang rang out behind him, like a metal pot hitting a stone floor. He spun to see a thick wooden door slam shut, a single white feather slaloming to the ground like a sycamore seed.

“Weird.”

He uttered his thought aloud, just as a rustling started in his bag. He didn’t want to leave Sianna in this strange place – but there wasn’t much he could do. He ran outside and through the empty courtyard as the rustling got louder. Reaching the alpine tree line, he fished the mask from his bag.

**“I win. You will remain as you are...”**

“Yeah – I know. I already guessed. But... do you...”

**“Quickly. I am not finished.”**

“Okay. Do you know what is going on with this weird mansion? Your challenges have led me here twice now and – ...”

**“Do not concern yourself with it. Lost souls alone fill the halls. Those who were unwilling to change but now who must.”**

“...and Sianna?”

**“Enough.”**

“But!”

**“Have you noticed, boy? These challenges are not meaningless.”**

“Not to you. They’re just a way to transform me into a dog so you can steal my body, right? I *have* noticed.”

**“Fool.”**

“What? Why?”

**“Each challenge has its purpose. Your fourth challenge would have taught you the virtue of being comfortable in your own skin.”**

“It... *would* have?”

Seth moved his hand to scratch the itch at the back of his neck as he spoke. He raked his fingernails across the skin – but found no relief. Suddenly, the same itch wrapped around his shoulders and draped across his torso in advancing waves. Launching a coordinated assault with both hands, reaching and scratching every inch of his chest and upper back – it dawned on him.

“The fourth challenge...” He continued itching himself, all over, even scratching his thighs now.

“Would we have been playing for ‘the skin’?”

**“Good boy.”** Seth felt a weird pang of pride.

“And it would have taught me to be confident in myself or something?”

**“Yes. But such a lesson was rendered pointless as you laid with the female for a second time. Clearly, you need not learn it.”**

“So, if I learned the lesson – why am I losing the challenge?!”

**“You need not win each challenge to learn its lesson.”**

“I don’t understand...”

Seth’s thought process was cut short by the itching reaching a feverish level across his entire body. He scratched and scraped each part of himself that he could reach, even gnawing at his shoulders with his teeth.

Beginning to tire, he submitted, clenching his eyes tight as he fell to onto his back and waited. Dense fur began to sprout from every inch of his skin. The fluffy follicles shot through every pore at once, looking like a time-lapse video of fine grass growing. The itching stopped.

Seth’s eyes opened. He closed one and focused on his nose – it was covered in short white fur. Bringing himself to his feet, he took stock. He was covered, head to toe – probably, in a thick dual-layer of fur.

As he ran his fuzzy fingers under his shirt and through his stomach fur, he could feel it. A heavy undercoat, obscured by much taller coarser hairs. He was hot, boiling in fact. This thick fur was so warm. Stripping his shirt and trousers off, his tail began to wag with delight as he felt the breeze ruffle his coat. His body was patterned with dark grey on his back, a silvery hue across his ears, arms and legs, and bright white hands, feet, belly and face. He couldn't yet see that his head-hair had also faded to a mix of dark and silvery grey.

Suddenly realising he was naked outdoors as his examination led him to his sheath and balls, he looked all around. 'I suppose this fur is basically my clothing now', he thought to himself, as he admired his Husky fur.

**"Better."**

Seth's attention snapped back to the mask.

"Unfair, I'd call it. That was two challenges in one!"

**"It was your choice to lay with the female once more."**

"That doesn't seem... Wait... Aww fuck. I didn't use protection. I... I was too horny!"

**"Irrelevant. Your genitals are those of a dog."**

"So she isn't pregnant?"

**"Irrelevant."**

Seth briefly contemplated the gravity of this realisation. "So, I can't have children now? Apart from... what? Puppies?"

**"Enough. You need sleep, boy. Your fifth challenge will begin soon. That is all."**

Seth knew the mask was right, though he was disturbed by the sudden care it seemed to demonstrate for him. Teaching him life lessons? Caring about his sleep? Madness.

He was shattered with exhaustion, naked, and covered with fur – having just discussed the 'birds and bees' with a mask. If he was going to stand any chance of keeping his body, he needed sleep.

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## Part 2

Sianna sat, swinging her legs from the grassy outcropping atop the quarry cliff-side, her purple hair held gently aloft on the summer breeze. Seth stood far below in the dusty basin. He wanted to climb up to her, but it was steep. Nervously surveying left and right, he spotted a familiar winding path – obscured under thick leafy canopy. He sprinted for it, scrambling up as the gravel gave way under his feet. He grasped at branches and foliage and dug his fingers into the dirt; he needed to reach her.

Emerging from the narrow path, he rounded the corner. His eyes zig-zagged up the outstretched carpet of green strands, toward an upturned purple tear drop. Her vibrant frame perched at the edge of his world. She was silhouetted against the endless blue sky – brilliant plumes of white streaking through it.

Picking up speed toward her, he shouted. She did not turn. Instead, Seth dropped to his knees as Sianna slowly fell forward and out of sight.

Sombre smears of white loomed and sank into the hollow blue backdrop. He was alone again.

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Seth awoke at midday feeling raw, having stolen barely 4 hours' sleep. He immediately set about with a razor, shaving off all the fur that covered his face – it had worked before. It still seemed horrendously unfair that he had to wear a permanent winter coat, just because he'd failed one challenge twice. He sheared away at the facial fuzz, slowing down as he noticed a minor problem. To his horror, the skin underneath had altered complexion. It was much more pale, tinged pink and clearly belonged to a dog.

Shit. He would have to blame it on a freak rash or something. He had arranged to meet Rich near school to catch up following their awkward encounter in the toilets the other day. Actually attending class in his current state – was not going to happen. He left the house, wearing his most loose-fitting, breathable clothes and allowing his tail to wag freely.

Walking the same route he took every day, he marvelled at the assortment of scents on offer for his enjoyment. He could smell a tree-sized bouquet of different plant life, birds and squirrels, air fresheners inside distant cars. He could smell what people had in their carrier bags as they strolled

down the street. He could even smell their emotions. His tail reacted to each smell differently, wagging at different paces or retreating between his legs, trying to trip him as he walked.

His sheathed manhood reacted to some of the smells too. It was all he could do to break out into a sprint in the opposite direction when he smelled a female dog approaching, about eighty metres in the distance. His instincts were sharp and difficult to control. What would happen if he actually ended up with a dog's nose? Better not lose *that* challenge, he thought. He heard a rustling from his bag. It must be time for the fifth one, Rich would have to wait.

**"You are rested?"**

"Uhh... Yes. Thank you." That uncomfortable feeling returned as it seemed as though the mask was trying to parent him again.

**"Good boy."**

Seth's tail wagged and his tongue pushed past his lips to pant. He thought he felt a sound rising in his throat in response, but quickly quelled it.

**"Your mental fortitude will be tested in your fifth challenge. We will play for the torso and neck."**

"Ughm... wrrf – okay." He coughed as his throat felt a bit rough. "What's the challenge?"

**"You recall your childhood? You would lead your pack together in games of fantasy."**

"Yees. But how do you... Never mind. I remember it. And?"

**"You have one hour to become a leader once more, to those who admonish you."**

"Okay – so Joe and Adam? And only one hour... to become their leader. Let me guess – *that is all?*" Seth imitated the low rumbling growl of the mask's voice, sniggering a little.

**"No. You must wear the mask every moment that you are with them. You will not reach them with words. *That is all.*"**

Only one hour. To deal with the most cryptic challenge yet. At least he knew Joe and Adam would be at school – maybe Rich would know where. Seth put the mask away and ran.

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“You’re taking it a bit far now, don’t you think?” Rich looked his friend up and down, his eyes catching on the grey and white-palmed furry hands as Seth stuffed them into his pockets.

“What do you mean?” A toothy grin grew as Seth’s tail visibly kept a beat behind him.

“What do I – the pointy ears... the furry hands. The *fuckin*g tail! And what is wrong with your face Seth?! That’s what I mean!”

“Rich... Honestly, I – “

“I’m sorry man. It’s just – everyone’s talking about the other day. How weird it was. They’re asking *me* about it. I don’t know what to say. You barked at me in the toilets... now you miss another morning of school and you’ve glued fur to yourself and got some weird rash on your face? What’s going on with you?”

“Okay, okay. Seriously. Rich – I’m sorry too. I didn’t mean to... bark at you. And you’ve got to believe me – I’m not *trying* to be weird. Some really strange stuff is going on at the moment. I need your help.”

“Anything man. You know I’m here for you. It just felt like you didn’t give a shit. Like you were taking the piss...”

“I know. I promise I’ll explain as soon as I can. For now – I desperately need to find Joe and Adam.”

“Why?”

“Please, Rich. Do you know where they’d be?”

“Well – it’s rugby practice, so I guess they’re probably just finishing up at the pitch by the woods. You got the urge to wrestle again that badly, huh?”

“Pfft! Nope. I need to discuss something with them.” Seth pointed himself in the direction of the pitch and began a jog, shouting over his shoulder, “Cheers Rich!”

“No worries man. But Seth?! Take a shower! You smell like my old dog!”

He could smell it too as he ran. He stank of dog. It must be the fur trapping the odour from his canine scent glands.

“Agh – I almost forgot!” Seth exclaimed, remembering the condition that he needed to wear the mask when confronting Joe and Adam. He fidgeted around, grabbing it and placing it on his face

while still in transit. The condition seemed stupid – how was he meant to *become their leader* while wearing a silly dog mask. He sighed.

The rugby pitch was nearing into focus, with tall white goal posts set in bright contrast against the thick dark mass of trees beyond. The woods.

Roughly thirty or so sturdy bull-necked boys tore back and forth, slamming into one another, wads of turf flying from beneath their feet as they clashed. As Seth came to a halt, he sat down in the grass and managed to pick out Joe and Adam amid the vortex of mud and muscle. The game didn't have long left, so he was happy to sit and watch, despite his distaste for sport and the looming time limit. They were actually pretty good! Joe, in particular, sped through five or six other boys on his way to planting the ball in the try-zone. He was a tank.

Seth noticed his tail clipping across the grass as he got into the game. He even tried to clap, but found it difficult to make any appreciable sound with furry hands.

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As the army of chunky boys began filtering from the field, Seth bounded over – shouting to get Adam and Joe's attention – all while wearing the mask. The two lads halted their post-game tactical breakdown as they saw the masked boy springing toward them, tail flailing. Not wanting their teammates to see them interacting with the furry lunatic, they veered around and toward the treeline of the woods. Perplexed, Seth continued his chase and caught up with them as they drew level with the trees. At least here they wouldn't be seen.

"Hey Seth. It's obviously you – take off that mask." Joe spoke first, as usual.

"Yeah, don't act so lame with that stupid *furry* stuff or whatever! What do you want?" Adam provided punctuation.

Seth stared at the two heavy-set lads, wondering how best to 'become their leader'. He assessed what he was dealing with. They both wore matching striped jerseys, which, despite being extra-large size, hugged their physique. Worse still, their obscenely tight white shorts were barely containing their huge muscular thighs and didn't leave very much to the imagination. Adam was the clear winner in lack of subtlety, as his bargain bin pair were made from a cheap semi-transparent polyester. At least Joe had paid for canvas. Seth felt a small tickle from within his sheath. Must be reluctant admiration. This would not be easy, he thought.

“Hey Adam, shall we wrestle that little pup’s mask off him?”

“Huh-ha-ha, yeah bro!”

Seth braced himself, as the human tanks approached. His tail began to cut through the air aggressively as he mustered his words and...

“Wrrrrgh-OOF! WROOF!”

Oh fuck, no. Seth heard his bark echo through the trees and in his ears as it dissolved into a hostile growl. He stopped.

Joe and Adam, who had momentarily stopped in their tracks upon hearing the authenticity of the sound erupting from Seth’s jaws, looked to each other. Their hands fell to hug their bellies as they guffawed with laughter. Seth’s tail tickled the inside of his knees.

“God fucking damn it, Seth! Not bad! You been practising? Pretty good job. Whooo-ee! Just like a real doggy! Had me there for a sec. Right, now take off that – “

“Joe... Joe?!”

Joe stopped mid-sentence and looked to the direction of the frightened squeal. Adam was holding a hand in front his face, gripping his wrist with the other.

“Joe, my hand – what the fuck is wrong with my hand?!”

“What the hell bro? Looks normal to me. Stop whining.”

Seth tentatively looked on.

“I can’t fucking bend it, bro. It’s... stiff!”

“Huh?”

All three watched as Adam’s stiff fingers began to shrink and recede toward his palm, merging together. The whites of his eyes flared with terror as he watched the digits on his other hand lose their grip and straighten, against his will. He flashed a teary look at Joe, begging for help with his eyes alone.

Joe was unresponsive – watching his friend’s fingers shrink away and become useless nubs. Then the fur came – a coating of brown across his hands and wrists, while his thumbs migrated and shrank,

becoming dew claws. His palms swelled, forming four callous pads on each. Small black claws poked through between the nubs that had been Adam's fingers a moment ago.

The trembling boy stared at his paws.

"What is this Seth?! Some fucking furry shit?! Change him back now, you prick!"

Seth fixed his glare onto Joe.

"WRUFF RUFF!"

A harsh bark deafened the rugby lad, who immediately covered his ears. Suddenly, he felt an uncomfortable stretching at the sides of his head. Joe's ears and the surrounding skin pulled upward, dragging his hands with them. He shakily patted around the top of his head as the ears flattened and grew much longer, folding over and draping down to frame his face. White fur fluffed into existence all over their surface as Joe pinched them at the tips and held them at ninety degrees in shock.

Seth chuckled as the jock looked like he was playing aeroplane with his huge flat canine ears.

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So, *this* is how he would 'become their leader'. Using the power of the mask to turn them into dogs. Seth felt conflicted as he watched his estranged friends falling over themselves in terror at their changes. He wondered what lesson this challenge was teaching him. He thought back on their waning friendship and all of the pseudo-bullying he'd endured from them in recent years. With an uneasiness in his stomach, he steeled his resolve.

Seth looked at Adam, now down on his knees in the dirt – his eyes vacant as he beheld his brown paws.

"WOOF!"

The fur continued up Adam's arms, advancing under his sleeve and appearing again as it crept out from under the jersey and up his neck. The jersey hung loose as the boy's torso contorted into a dog-like barrel-shape.

"WOOF!"

His arms fixed into an inflexible position, good for walking on all fours, as his legs were overcome with fuzzy brown hair and began to warp too. He tried to remain kneeling upright as his back legs

formed, but the changes to his hip alignment forced him onto his front paws. He hopped, trying to gain momentum and stand up again, but it was futile. His neck began to thicken relative to his torso as his face elongated.

Adam held his head outstretched, bearing his teeth as they sharpened and found their new homes – lining his extending muzzle behind black lips. As his ears reached the top of his head and his nose darkened, a sorry high-pitched whine crept out of his throat.

The cause was obvious as Seth and Joe watched the transformation unfold. Tight white polyester shorts were not tailored for a dog's hindquarters. The fabric could be heard straining as it clung taut to the beast's hunched behind. The whining grew louder as a lump appeared at the back of the shorts. Simultaneously, Adam's dangling manhood was scooped up into a fold of skin which stitched to his stomach and began pushing against the failing elastic at his undercarriage. The lump grew into a bulbous mound; the semi-transparent shorts showed a thick-furred bunched-up tail rapidly expanding underneath.

It was clear to Seth that Adam was in a great deal of discomfort. He wavered, before imagining that another transformative bark might now be akin to putting an injured creature out of its misery at the roadside.

“RUFF!”

The shorts stretched, reaching breaking point. The tail bulged, eager to escape into the woodland air. The brown Shepherd whined, as its red cock rocketed from its sheath and into the white cloth barrier.

With a great tearing sound that reverberated off the surrounding trees, the dog bucked its hips and the shorts gave way. Adam's swollen red cock stabbed through the fabric at his groin as the huge bushy tail burst free through the taut white threads at his rump. The ragged remains of his white shorts affixed to his furry rear via the holes carved by his tail and cock, Adam barked happily and began lapping at his turgid phallus.

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Joe, still fondling his flat ears in disbelief, witnessed his former teammate – sat on his haunches and licking his cock. Simply a frustrated canine. He turned and met Seth’s eyes through the mask-slits.

“Seth! Bro! I won’t tell anyone about Adam if you just let me go.”

“...” Seth waited silently to hear the plea of his old friend.

“Honest. I’ll just forget I saw any of this – I’ve got these ears now, and that’s fine! I get it! It’s cool being a dog and everything – but the ears are enough, bro! Please! Ple – Please, Seth... Seth?”

Seth couldn’t believe that Joe was willing to just abandon Adam – his closest friend. Aware that he wasn’t exactly the epitome of substantive morality himself right now, the half-Husky chewed over Joe’s words. Was Seth currently doing the same thing – sacrificing others to save himself?

No – this was different... it had to be. He’d come this far anyway, and Joe’s words were confirmation that he would do exactly the same thing! His selfish appeals weren’t going to cut it!

“Grrr-WRUFF RUFF! WOOF!”

Letting loose a particularly vicious string of barks, Seth waited. Joe covered his eyes and began sobbing and moaning – which quickly morphed into whining and hushed barks as his vocal chords shifted. His clawed paws scratched at his own face as they formed, and were swiftly pushed away by his stretching muzzle.

His whining ceased for a moment as he inhaled sharply and began pawing at the back of his shorts. He could feel the bulge forming and knew what came next after watching Adam’s ordeal. He desperately fumbled with his clumsy paws to push his shorts down and off, but it was too late. They were too tight and he no longer possessed the dexterity in his stiff padded-paws.

The pressure mounted in the seat of his white canvas prison, as the firm tail grew longer. He felt the flesh of his crotch re-shaping as he began to get hard, his rigid dog cock tenting at the front of the white textile. He could hear the cotton flexing and tearing at a microscopic level with his sensitive floppy ears.

“WROOF!”

Joe’s red cock pumped up further in response to Seth’s bark, pressing hard against the cotton and dousing it with precum. His half-length tail continued its advance at his rear, fighting an erotic game of tug of war with his dog-ness via the tight white shorts.

He could feel his knot inflating and stood bolt-upright in the hope that his tail might simply travel down a short-leg and relieve the cruel pressure.



“WRUFF!”

He felt himself being uncontrollably bent forward at his waist. He gritted his sharp teeth and muzzle, face wrinkled with the strain of fighting the changes. Any attempt he made to resist was overpowered as his posture was dictated to him. He was forced to the ground.

As he folded forward, his shorts were pulled tighter and tighter by the motion and angle of his hips. They held fast against his groin like a pair of speedos as his powerful canine cock throbbed and fought to rip through. His tail had nowhere to go. Still, it inexorably extended from the point above the valley of his butt cheeks. The pressure ripped small tears along the grain of the cotton weave as the squirming tail threshed outward.

Joe heard his own heartbeat quicken, the ruined fabric at his behind giving way, and howled in pleasure as his tail ruptured its confines. The furry baton pierced the air and swished around as wisps of collateral fur peppered his butt. A second later, his knot swelled to massive proportions as his aching canine cock spasmed, splashing the pristine white shorts with sticky dog seed.

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Seth kept the mask on, just in case, watching the results of his barking. Before him lay an exhausted white Labrador Joe, prone on his belly – next to a puffed up German Shepherd Adam, enthusiastically lapping at his red cock with a long thin tongue. The mask began to glow with moonlight around Seth’s face.

**“You win.”**

“What’s going to happen to them?”

**“Irrelevant. They are dogs.”**

Seth creased his lips as he internally questioned his actions.

**“You will keep your torso and neck.”**

“So I can keep my human speech then? No more barking?”

**“The vocal chords in your neck will not change.”**

“You dodged that one.”

**“Your sixth challenge begins now.”**

Labrador Joe could be heard yelping nearby. Seth ignored the dog.

**“We will play for the head.”**

“Whoa! Slow down – can we be clear on this? My *head*. That doesn’t include my brain, right?”

**“You are slow, boy. I have told you. With each change to your body, you are gifted more of my instincts. Instincts take root in the mind.”**

“So that’s a no? You’re saying my brain has already been changing this whole time?”

**“You will see. Your sixth challenge is to deny your instincts until the seventh. That is all.”**

Seth felt a nervous jitter spark through him. It didn’t go so well the last time he had tried to deny his instincts with Sianna. He wondered what temptations he’d have to endure this time round. And ‘until the seventh’? Seventh hour? Seventh of June? Seventh... challenge? How was he meant to know how long that would be?

Seth broke his contemplation and removed the mask as he felt a prickling sensation in his nose. The Shepherd that had previously been Adam began to sniff around the tail of Labrador Joe, its pointed red cock still erect and dribbling. The Lab rose to all-fours as his ex-teammate attempted to mount him and both dogs ran deeper into the woods, indulging a horny game of chase. Seth felt sorry for the poor creatures – he hoped he might find a way to change them back after all this was over.

His nostrils flared. He rubbed them with his furry hand and sneezed.

“What is up with – aaahhh aaaaaahhh – choo!” He rubbed his nose again, closed one eye and focused on it at the corner of his vision. It was turning black and shiny, bloating in size.

“Fuck sake! God damned mask doesn’t stick to the fucking rules!” Seth flung his arms around as he let loose a small tantrum. “It’s just like with my dick! Transforming me before I’ve even – “

He stopped, sniffing the air. There was a hint of something familiar drifting through the trees. His tail got a mind of its own – bashing his flanks wildly. A jiggling within his sheath caught his attention. Oh, NO! Just like with the female dog in the street earlier. As soon as the thought occurred to him – he noticed that his body was already running deeper into the maze of trees.

With difficulty, he skidded to a halt. Every fibre of his being was willing him forward. He noticed his dark puffy nose was more now more visible – raising a hand to confirm what he already knew. It was travelling farther from his face as his jaws slowly pushed forward.

After trying to pinch his stunted canine snout, he settled for plugging each nostril with a finger and walking with purpose toward the rugby pitch clearing. The stress of the situation, his concentration, the clothing and the dense fur all conspired to force his tongue from his lengthening maw. It draped over his chin, rolling free of his mouth – flat and wider at its end.

\*Pant\*

He couldn’t spare the attention to rue this change as his focus was dedicated to keeping his nose plugged and escaping the woods.

\*Pant\*

The shaven-sore doggish skin of his face incrementally filled with grey and white fur once more. Piercing canine teeth now spanned the whole of his three-quarter-length muzzle.

\*Pant\*

“Aghk!”

A sharp fang pricked the underside of his thin tongue as he panted and marched. The brief jarring pain and Seth's reflexive yap shook one finger-plug free from its nostril.

He moved to replace the plug with lightning reflexes, but he'd already automatically turned to face the direction of the alluring scent by the time his nose was secured. It was hopeless. His dog cock was quickly expanding, protruding from his sheath and tenting up under his shirt. He was boiling hot with lust.

\*Pant\*

Too... hot. He couldn't concentrate. He wriggled his trousers to his ankles and kicked them away, tearing his shirt off as well.

Seth's inhibitions cowered in awe at how much stronger this smell was than the dog in the street, or even Sianna. It was just so *suggestive*. It implied that he should drink it in, rush to find its source, get on all fours, lick it thoroughly, and...

\*Pant\*

"STOP. Please... just..."

He couldn't control himself or his thoughts as his furry body gained momentum. Growing thicker as he sprinted closer – the scent became like anaesthetic, numbing every human objection.

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Seth nimbly rounded a few final trees, his tail whipping in the wind and came to a stop automatically. He was, at this point, a spectator in his own body. Every muscle was primed toward following the instructions of his puffy black nose, which now sat at the twitching, sniffing point of an angular whiskered muzzle.

The human part of him rationalised his behaviour as his monochromatic canine eyes set upon their prey – a female dog in heat. A white... Labrador... that looked like... Joe?!

Seth's suspicions were confirmed as a horny German Shepherd bounded out from behind some foliage, at full mast. Adam approached Joe's swollen vulva as the female dog, clearly succumbing to its own instincts, presented itself – tail high and cocked to one side.

A moment of wonder coursed through Seth's mind as he put it all together. Joe's gender-swap must have started just as the mask pronounced the start of the challenge – that yelping! Adam already had a muzzle at that point and must have smelled it first – chasing poor Joe into the woods. He felt pleased with his deduction.

Meanwhile, his nose had guided him to growl Adam into submission and mount Joe's oestrus-inflated canine cave. Seth freaked out – how was he now knot-deep in his transgender feral dog-friend without even noticing how he'd got there? He'd already begun pounding the Labrador by the time that thought had finished. It was too strong. The scent of Joe's sex in heat had hypnotised him. His canine instincts had taken control.

Down on his furry knees in the coppice, Seth rammed his knot deeper – feeling it balloon as he reached his finale. His fully-triangular ears roamed to sit atop his flattened furry head while he drove his cock forward a final few shuddering thrusts. His hips pressed forward against Joe's swollen dog cunt as he arched backward, tail tickling his balls and muzzle to the sky in delight.

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The mask, somehow by his side despite his bag having been lost during the heat-fuelled frenzy, started glowing. It had altered – it's wooden muzzle section having stretched to accommodate Seth's new canine proportions. Still tied to Joe, cock to rump, he donned it.

**“I win.”**

“Of course you fucking win! You put my now-a-dog ex-friend into *HEAT*! And then you gave me a super-sensitive *MUZZLE* for sniffing him out!”

Seth was shocked by how loud he had shouted in his anger, before feeling a twitch atop his head and surmising he now had dog ears too. He stretched out his huge vicious-looking jaws. Speaking worked a bit differently with a muzzle, but he could manage.

**“Your head is now that of a dog’s.”**

“I know! But one question... one *fucking* question, mask. What the hell kind of lesson was that meant to teach me?!”

**“If you do not know, then you have not yet learned it.”**

“Prick. Fucking *prick*. And ‘until the seventh’ – what kind of time limit is that anyway? This whole thing is fixed. I’m out.”

Seth removed the mask, throwing it to the ground in fury.

**“The seventh challenge. He is on his way. You would do well not to give up at this late stage, boy.”**

Seth looked at the moonlit mask as it spoke through his new muzzle. *Who* is on his way? He felt a creaking in his knees. Still tied to Joe and unable to move to look, he knew what was happening – his legs were transforming by default. His ankles lengthened as he felt his feet starting to constrict and re-mould into paws. Taking a stubborn second longer, he chucked the mask back on.

**“Good boy.”**

Seth felt the inevitable rush of endorphins that now accompanied such patronising praise as his tail wagged.

**“The seventh and final challenge. You must await it here. That is all.”**

Seth huffed in anger at his forced obedience. Sitting on the ground, with Joe attached to his lap – he searched his mind. He was trying to piece everything together – to make sense of the mask’s words. Discern its lessons. To work out *who* was on their way. He thought about Sianna too. In that fucked up mansion with god knows what kind of creeps. ‘Lost souls who refused to change’? Why had she wanted him to leave so badly?

With a pronounced suctioning sound, Labrador Joe happily bounded from his lap and padded a few steps away. Relief overtook Seth’s mind and his tail began to wag. Phew! Wait, what? While indulging in the moment of separation, his nose had led him to Joe’s sopping wet vulva. He was on his hands and knees, gluttonously slurping at Joe’s canine juices.

“Pthhhh-flurgh!”

Seth spat as he came to his senses and retreated. Clearly, his nose could not be trusted while Joe was still in heat. He looked at his stiff red cock as it began to slowly deflate and sniffed. It was covered in Joe’s fluids. Seth knew he’d be licking his dick clean too by now, if not for his torso lacking the requisite flexibility.

He got up and almost fell back to the floor. The stubborn second spent refusing to wear the mask had cost him. His feet were padded-and-clawed paws, while his ankles were now permanently suspended almost a foot from the ground. His thighs had reshaped too. Overall though, his legs somewhat kept their human dimensions.

Reflecting on the fact that he now looked exactly like an anthropomorphic Husky dog, Seth giggled to himself maniacally. Minus the whole losing his mind and fucking his friend thing – this was something he’d dreamt of for a long time.

Feeling the breeze massage his fur, he noted his nonchalant nakedness. The body he occupied had become so canine – he was confident that clothes didn't really matter anymore. The mask began to vibrate and glow in the undergrowth.

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**“Your final challenge. We will play for the waist and hips.”**

“So this is to decide whether I can walk upright then? It's a big one...”

**“The gravity of this challenge cannot be understated, yes. But...”**

“What?” The mask had not done this before. It paused as if to think. “What?!”

**“Shall we up the stakes?”**

“How? What do you mean?”

**“Currently, I have won four challenges. You have only two.”**

“So?”

**“Hence, even if you win this final challenge – you cannot succeed.”**

Seth growled without meaning to.

“Grrgh – Here we go. So it's just another new rule, right when it suits you? No matter what – you get to turn me into a dog on all fours and take my body? Why am I even bothering to play your game? Why don't we just get it over with?”

**“Fool. Your words are wasted. I am offering you an opportunity.”**

“...”



**“This final challenge shall decide it all.”**

Seth looked shocked at the concession.

“Like – a tie-breaker?”

**“No. A gamble. If you win – you will be free of me. If I win – you will become, in every aspect, a dog.”**

“Every aspect... But, why would you offer this if you’re already in the lead?”

**“I cannot transform what I have not won. An incomplete body would displease me.”**

“Really? I kind of like this half-way sort of thing. Best of both worlds... y’know? Apart from the...”

**“Cease. Do you wish to gamble?”**

“If it means I have a chance at keeping my body – then yes.”

**“Good. I will be explicit. The final challenge will begin in sixty seconds. A human will arrive here. One of you will leave as a dog. You will choose.”**

“Sounds... easy. What’s the catch?”

**“The choice is absolute. If you wish to transform the human into a beast, you need only bark at them – as before. If you wish to become a beast forever, you must receive the human’s commands and obey. If you do not choose – I will have two dogs.”**

“Clever. Not much of a *gamble* for you, is it? You get a body either way. Oh well, obviously I’ll just bark a couple more times and then never again – easy. Everyone wins. Sixty seconds from now, yeah?”

**“Thirty-five seconds remain. That is all.”**

Upon slipping the mask from his muzzle, Seth caught a scent he recognised well. His tail began to wag in excitement, then fell still with dread as he realised who was approaching. Rich. He was probably searching for his three friends.

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“What the *FUCK?!*”

Rich slowed to a stop, finding the breath to exclaim his confusion at the outrageous scene before him. There stood a grey and white half-human-Husky, naked with its neat furry package on full display. And nearby, a whimpering German Shepherd enthusiastically penetrating a white Labrador like a jackhammer. What kind of satanic, full-moon, werewolf orgy shit had he stumbled upon?!

“Hey Rich.”

The bipedal Husky spoke with Seth’s voice – a slight gravel in it.

Rich looked the creature up and down maybe three times, taking a couple of slow steps backward.

He mustered the courage to respond.

“S-Seth? Is that really... Are you a werewolf?!”

“HA HA HA! Good one Rich. I thought you’d be freaked out or something. A werewolf! HA!” Seth bore his fangs on full display as his muzzle snapped with laughter.

Rich’s eyes flinched with fear. He hadn’t been joking.

“Stay away, Seth! You’re not turning me, okay! It’s gone too far! I’ve had enough of this crap.”

His words reminded Seth of the challenge. The choice. His heart sank. Could he *really* just bark and condemn his best friend to a life crawling on the floor? Rich was the most genuine person he knew. He'd always been there for him.

Seth thought about the fate of Joe and Adam, turning over his shoulder to see the eager canines fucking by a tree. He recalled Joe bargaining for his own safety – abandoning Adam. Rich wouldn't do that. Rich doesn't deserve that.

"Listen to me. I know this is fucked up – and I'm still not sure if I'm allowed tell you how it has happened. I don't want to risk barking right now – put it that way. But you need to just listen to me..." Seth held his furry palms up in front of him, trying to calm the frightened human. "You need to treat me like a dog."

Rich' eyes widened.

"Seth! Man! This is not the time for preaching that furry equality crap! I can see that you're very serious about – ..."

"No! I mean – right now. Give me... the sort of commands you might give to... a dog, yeah?"

"Is this a sexual thing? Because – ..."

"Grr-RICH!" Seth accidentally growled, quickly softening his tone again as he smelled fear in the air.

"Rich. Just do it. Please."

"Oh – o – okay. Just don't bite me, please. Umm... Heel!"

Seth felt a shiver run down his spine and continue through to the tip of his tail. He launched forward on his springy padded paws.

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Rich jerked his hands to his temples as his eyes clenched tightly shut – waiting for the great beast to sink its teeth into his tender pale flesh. He waited. And waited. He could hear... panting? He opened his eyes and looked down to see the huge human-Husky on its hands and knees next to him, panting excitedly and tail swishing.

“Seth?”

Seth shook his head and retracted his tongue.

“That’s good, Rich! More!”

He could feel the canine instincts flooding his mind and drowning his thoughts as he obeyed – he could feel minute changes sparking throughout all the cells in his body. Soon, he would be a dog and Rich would be safe. His mind flashed briefly back to Sianna – he felt regret.

Rich began to edge away from the large furry creature.

“This is too weird for me, Seth. I can’t...”

No, no, no! He needed to make sure Rich would see it through to the end, before there wasn’t enough left of him to communicate properly. He reluctantly settled on a different tactic.

“Grrrgh-RICH!” He snarled with menace. “You better do what I tell you, or... I’ll turn you into a dog like I did Joe and Adam! WROOF!”

Rich snapped his vision to the two copulating hounds – not believing what he was hearing.

“Those dogs are...?”

His confusion was interrupted by a sharp stab just above his rear. His hands flew back to investigate, his jaw drooping as he felt a small bulge wriggling around above his butt. Worse – he could feel his touch upon it. The burgeoning tail belonged to him. He felt faint.

“Okay! Okay, please! What do I need to – ...”

“Treat me like a dog! Grrrgh.”

“Yeah, s-s-sorry! Uhh... SIT!”

Seth felt his legs going weak as he almost automatically lowered to the ground. He placed his hands neatly in front of him and stuck his tongue out to pant in obedience. He felt his tail sweep the leaves around behind him as he watched his curled-up hands melt and reshape into paws.

“Good dog?” Rich hesitantly praised him, with growing enthusiasm as he noticed Seth’s tail wagging quicker. “Good doggy! Yes! Good... boy!”

Seth’s mind fizzled with euphoria as he began to drool – saliva dripping from his panting tongue. His legs began to shrink, losing their human length and making it much easier to sit like a dog. He felt the urge to pad over to Rich and lick him, to show how happy he was. Rich saw the canine lifting up from his furry haunches and reacted to keep it at bay.

“STAY!”

Seth fell back to his hind legs, sitting proud with a puffed-out fuzzy white chest. He was rooted to the ground, though he felt an ecstatic energy coursing through every inch of him – he wanted to run and play and lick his master. He raised his right front leg, adorably pawing at the air a few times and faintly whining. Rich couldn’t help but feel sorry for the poor creature, nearly forgetting that it was Seth due its doggish gestures.

“Good boy! Roll over, Seth!”

Seth barked happily and flung himself onto his flank, rotating until he was on his back – white fluffy belly on show. His legs were folded near his haunches and flailing as he writhed around in excitement – his hips fully morphed into a quadrupedal arrangement. Rich's budding tail advanced further into his pants.

Rich approached his playful furry friend and knelt down, rubbing his belly. Seth felt pure joy as he kicked three of his legs in the air, the fourth pounding the ground while he was tickled. His pointed red dog dick put in a subtle appearance, poking out from its sheath an inch without his knowledge. Rich noticed and withdrew.

"Uhh... Okay, boy. Stand?"

Seth twirled back to his four feet in a whirlwind of fur. His red penis hung from his sheath and he didn't care.

"You need to cool off, huh? Down!"

The Husky fell flat to its stomach, paws outstretched in front, and placed its muzzle to the ground – staring up with puppy dog eyes. The mask that had led Seth to this moment of pure abandon began to gleam with the gentle light of the moon – his decision had been made. Seth the Husky didn't even notice, as he keenly anticipated his master's next command. Rich, now smiling with memories of his old Retriever and wishing he had a bag of treats with him, stood straight and raised his hands – his own stubby tail wagging.

"Now... here we go, boy... on three..."

Seth pawed at the floor with his front legs.

"One..."

His tongue jutted from his muzzle as he raised up from the floor expectantly.

"Two..."

Seth's back legs began to squirm and fidget uncontrollably as excitement frothed up inside him. He could barely contain himself.

"Three – SPEAK!"

"WOOF!" He sprang up onto his back legs, hoisting his front paws to his muzzle and snapping at the tree-tops as he erratically barked with joy.

"WROOF! ARF!"

"Good dog, Seth."

The moonlight emanating from the mask intensified, exploding into a solid pillar of white light and engulfing the area. Animal calls of every kind echoed out all at once, making the trees vibrate with sound and deafening both boy and dog. Rich and Seth's vision faded to pure white.

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**"You win."**

Seth neither woke nor stirred – but simply knew the mask's words as they passed through him. A diaphanous blanket of moonlight enraptured each sense in a blend of thought and feeling. He had no body. His being existed only as a collection of experiences. It spoke.

"I... win?"

**"Yes."**

"But... Rich?"

**"He is fine."**

"So, then... the *choice* was..."

**“When first we spoke, I said – ‘let us see who remains’. I had never intended that it would not be you. The question was, simply: ‘which version of you?’”**

**“...”**

**“You have grown. You have willingly changed. My lessons have become a part of you. Use them as you see fit. That is all.”**

**“Mask? What’s that supposed... to... t-to... mean?”**

Seth felt himself fading; unravelling into the mist of his memories. He didn’t understand. He was scared. He clung tightly to an image of Sianna as his thoughts failed.

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Rich awoke in the gloomy clearing, the low afternoon sun glinting in translucent shafts amidst tree-branches. He rubbed his head as events played back in his head up to – nothingness. What *was* that? He ran his hand over his lower back, feeling for the tail that had started growing. Nothing. Twisting his torso around, he scanned the area. Where was the grey and white Husky? Where was Seth? The wind blew gentle and slow, as if to whisper what he knew to be true. Seth was gone.

Rich sighed, climbing to his feet. Hearing movement behind an ancient-looking monolithic tree trunk, he jumped.

**“What now? F-f-fuck sake... Seth?!”**

He crept carefully and quietly, sidling round the huge trunk – his hand tracking across the rough bark. His breathing stopped, his hand fell limp from the tree.



There, sprawled in a heap on the ground, was Adam – led squarely on top of a face-down Joe, as if mounting him from behind. Both were completely naked to their bare skin and dreary-eyed, only just waking from their bad dream. Rich recalled the Shepherd and Labrador he'd seen going at it before the flash of light and sniggered to himself.

“Wrestling again, boys?”

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The dilapidated mansion stood tall, windows cracked and paint peeling from its walls as the alpine trees kept watch. Its courtyards were empty but for the weakening light of day as the sun fell, dipping beyond distant hills.

A flake of paint caught the breeze and chipped free of the vast wall it had clung to. And another. More followed. The white window frames began to fray into splinters and fall from their fixtures as brick and mortar crumbled. Vestiges of rainbow light beams started from within the disintegrating walls as the entire structure was carried, bit by bit, as dust on the evening zephyr.

The grand edifice washed away to nothing, revealing countless bodies strewn across the grass where it had stood. All shapes, sizes and colours of people lay motionless. And next to each one, in equal number, were myriad cracked masks – each a different totem to some type of creature.

A broad-shouldered young man stoically advanced toward the scene with unwavering stride. Placing his feet between the paralytic bodies, he stood above one in particular and held out his hand, watching as the purple-haired girl drew breath.

Her image flickered as her lungs filled and emptied. For a split-second, the man glimpsed ginger fur, long whiskers and a petit muzzle as he stared. Her ink-dipped paws flashed into being, shedding their fur and becoming hands as quickly as they had appeared. A bristling white-tipped tail materialized and receded. Next to her head, glowing in the grass, was a fractured wooden fox mask. She blinked her eyes open, focusing on the man.

“...Wha – ... Backpack... boy?”

He smiled with his eyes and replied.

“Nope. *Dog boy.*”

Seth placed the Husky mask to his face, silvery fur sprouting all across his skin as he took his canine form and embraced Sianna.

~ END ~