

KERISA'S STORY

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Part I

Hi! I'm Kerisa Whitelock. That's said 'kih-REE-sah'. I'm a vixen foxtaur in my twenties. (You honestly think I'm going to tell you how old I am?) I have brick red fur that covers me all over, except for my four paws, which have the usual black 'socks'. I have one lock of white fur above my right eye, like my father; I think it makes me look sophisticated. My eyes are a dark gold, though I think they'd look better if they were green.

Anyway, the other day I was asked about my relationship with Sandwalker, who just happens to be my best friend. Why? I don't know. Maybe reading this account will answer any questions people may have about us. I certainly don't want to explain it a hundred times to different people.

Let's start back when I was nine years old. It was about halfway through the school year – July, I think it was – at one of the many primary schools in the Auckland region. The sky was really cloudy, threatening rain....

I sat at the table, quietly working on a crayon drawing of myself. To an adult, the picture might not have looked too much like me, but in my eyes it was a perfect duplicate. "What do you think?" I asked the tod next to me.

He paused in his work to look at mine. "I think you're easier to draw than me," he said, glancing back to his own. I looked over to see for myself. The face was all right; the rest of the body was, unfortunately, rather out of proportion. The arms were longer than the legs, and the feet were tiny.

"Umm..." I said, not sure if I should say anything. I've always been a critical person, but most of the time I know when to keep my mouth shut.

Before I could give a more in-depth answer I noticed the classroom door open to admit an elderly foxtaur – the principal. He went over to speak with Miss MarshWater, our reasonably young wolftaur teacher, then went out again to bring in...what appeared to be a 'taur like us, but based on a tabby cat. Then he left.

"Class, quiet please." Miss MarshWater waited a few seconds for all of us to stop our talking, then began speaking herself. "Class, we have a new student. This is Chakat Sandwalker. Shi's just moved here from the South Island, so I want you to be as friendly as you can toward hir." She gestured to one of the vacant spots at another table, and watched as the new pupil padded over to sit down. "You may now go back to drawing your self-portraits."

Almost immediately the quiet talking among us started up again; this time the topic of conversation was this new feline 'taur.

When recess rolled around I followed her out onto the playground, doing what I like to call 'covert observation.' She seemed happy enough, though I did notice that not many people, if at all, were engaging her in their activities. "This is my chance," I murmured to myself.

I mustered up all my bravado – which didn't really amount to much; after all, I was only nine years old – and padded up to her while she was waiting for a turn on the slide. "Hi, I'm Kerisa," I said, disgusted at the slight croak of nervousness in my voice.

She smiled at me, looking me up and down. "I'm Chakat Sandwalker, daughter of Skywatcher and Trailblazer." Her voice was quiet, yet held a hint of an outgoing personality in it.

I blinked at the odd greeting, then grinned. "Nice to meet you, Chakat. Tell me...what are you? I've seen a couple of your species, but I've never had the chance to find out." I had the guts to look suitably embarrassed at that admission.

"My personal name is Sandwalker; 'Chakat' is our species. When we introduce ourselves, we say 'I am Chakat Whatever, daughter of 'Mother' and 'Father'." She smiled at my minor misunderstanding. "You're not the only one to be confused."

“Hmm....” I thought about that for a moment, then grinned. “Well, it’s nice to meet you anyway, Sandwalker.” I was about to say something else when it was her turn on the slide. I watched as she ascended the steps, my eyes roving idly over her body. Petite, yet rather nice, breasts; shapely body, a small sheath....

My subconscious mind started ringing alarm bells as my gaze roamed over that part of her anatomy. I stood there in a state of intense confusion, suddenly not paying much attention to anything around me as I tried to make sense of what I’d seen. She was quite obviously female – anyone could figure that out just by looking at her breasts – and yet she had....

“Kerisa?” Sandwalker had gone down the slide and come back for another turn. She peered at my face, noticing my odd expression. “Is something wrong?”

“Wrong?” I squeaked. I took another try at sounding more normal. “Wrong? Nothing, I think. Just that...I thought I saw when you went up the steps....” I shot a quick glance down to her nether region.

Sandwalker noticed the glance, and she sighed; whether in regret or not, I wasn’t sure. “I guess I’d better explain that, huh?” She wandered over to stand underneath a tree, away from everyone else, expecting me to follow her. Just after I had, I felt the first few drops of rain begin to fall. “Lovely,” I muttered darkly. I hated getting wet fur.

“You know nothing about chakats at all?” When I nodded she continued. “I guess the only thing I can tell you that makes us different is that, although we look female, we are not completely female. We’re all herms – hermaphrodites – which means that we have both male and female parts.” She abruptly dropped to the ground and rolled over, spreading her belly fur so that I could see plainly the male sheath, as well as her femininity. “See?”

“Oh, yeah...I see, all right,” I murmured, a little shocked by her open display.

“Um, sorry about that,” she apologised as she got to her feet again. “I find it’s much easier to show myself off as proof.”

I just stared at her for a few seconds before replying. “Uh-huh. So...if you’re female, and you’re male, then...what do we call you? She and he don’t really seem to fit.”

“‘Shi’ and ‘hir’ are what we use instead.” Sandwalker momentarily turned her – no, hir – gaze on the playground that, now that the rain had started falling in earnest, had been vacated, then onto me again. “For example, ‘Shi played with hir ball outside’ or ‘I love hir’.”

I nodded. This was indeed an interesting person I was befriending. I looked at my watch, and saw there were still a few minutes left until the end of recess, so I lay down on the soft ground below the tree, inviting Sandwalker to do the same. “Do you have any brothers or sisters?” I asked, realising after I’d said it that the term ‘brother’ seemed a bit redundant.

Shi grinned and nodded. “I have a sister – obviously. Chakats don’t have brothers; only sisters, because of our double sexuality. Hir name is Greytail.” Shi paused to think for a short period before shi went on. “I’d better tell you something else that’s odd to our species. My mum is Grey’s dad, and hir mum is my dad. You know what I mean?”

“I think I’m getting a headache,” I muttered after struggling with that alien concept for about a minute. “You have the same parents, but not the same parents as each other.... Oh, dear.”

Sandwalker shrugged. “Um...that’s sort of what it comes to, yeah.” Shi stopped talking then, looking out at the rather depressing rain, tail flicking to and fro idly. I followed hir example until the bell rang, signalling the end of recess.

When I got home from school that afternoon I found Mum in the kitchen making a start on dinner. After I’d raided the pantry for the usual after-school snack I just hovered in the background for a few minutes, watching what Mum was doing.

“How was your day?” she asked, opening the fridge to take out some cheese and a pepper, which I despised.

“It was...interesting,” I said, just a bit evasively. I went and fetched my schoolbag from where I had unceremoniously dumped it by the front door, and took out a textbook and an exercise book.

Taking a pen from the bright yellow desk caddy that stood on a corner table I began to do some math homework. A few minutes later I finally said, "We have a new person in the class."

Mum opened the fridge again, replaced the cheese, then took out some vegetables. "Oh? What are they like?"

"Well...it's a chakat, with fur like a tabby cat. Shi's about the same age as me, and hir name is Sandwalker. Shi has a sister named Greytail."

"Oh?" Mum paused briefly to look at me. "I wasn't aware that there had been a chakat family moving into town. Hmm..." She shrugged and went back to chopping vegetables. "I'll probably hear through the grapevine eventually."

"You know what chakats are?" I asked, wondering why I hadn't been told about them earlier. "I got a shock today when I found out that shi was both boy and girl."

There was a clatter of crockery as Mum pulled a large casserole dish out from a cupboard. "Well, we didn't think it was really necessary, considering how infrequently we saw them in the area."

Oh. In a way that made sense; 'Out of sight, out of mind'. I worked on another problem, then paused again. "May I bring hir around to play sometime?"

"Sure, honey. Just make sure you both do your homework before you do any playing, okay?" Mum dropped all the vegetables into the dish and started adding some thawed mince to it.

"Of course. Now...what's 7 times 12?"

A couple of days later I walked out the door of my house feeling much more enthusiastic than normal. There could be only one reason for that. As I walked to school I started wondering about Sandwalker's and my friendship. It was rather tenuous at the moment – after all, we had only met only two days ago – but I felt that it would develop into something more lasting. Some of the attraction was probably due to hir species' gender – or should that be genders? – as well.

I entered the front gate of the school behind some other pupils, and looked around to see if Sandwalker was anywhere in sight. After a few seconds of searching I found hir standing outside our classroom, the strap of hir schoolbag slung over one shoulder. I noticed that shi was by hirself, almost at the centre of a large area of apathy.

Frowning in disgust at the way people seemed to be treating hir already, I made up my mind to be hir best, if only, friend. "Morning, Sandwalker," I said in a tone with brightness slightly forced into it.

Sandwalker, who had been standing with a rather distant look in hir eyes, blinked and turned hir head toward me. "Morning...Kerisa, is it?" I nodded, and shi smiled, pleased that shi'd remembered my name. "I don't seem to be very popular," shi observed, gazing around at the emptiness surrounding us.

"So I noticed," I said, with a hint of hardness. "When I was new here last year everyone couldn't get enough of being around me, but with you.... Maybe it's because you're so different. You've seen that most of us here are foxtaurs? Of course, we have a few humans and wolftaurs as well, but until now we've never had any chakats. I think people are afraid of that which they don't know."

Shi looked at me, understanding in hir eyes. "I see," shi said, shuffling one of hir handpaws. Handpaws...hmm... I focused my gaze upon them a little more, examining them. To a casual observer they would appear as normal forepaws, but close up, it could be seen that they were actually a pair of modified hands. We have, I guess, what we could call handpaws, though their manual dexterity is less developed than it is in a chakat.

"I don't care what anyone here thinks of you; I think you're a great person...that is, from what I know of you." Against my normal practice of not hugging, I moved forward and embraced Sandwalker in a tight, friendly hug.

The surprised chakat just stood there, my arms wrapped around hir upper torso, for a few seconds before reciprocating, leaning hir head on my shoulder.

We stayed like that for a little while, probably no more than twenty seconds, but after we pulled apart, I felt as if a small part of me had been taken, and replaced with a small piece of Sandwalker. I wondered if shi felt the same way.

“You know,” shi began when we’d parted, “Hugging, among us chakats, is the one of the greatest forms of affection. We don’t even tip in restaurants – we just hug the waiter.” Sandwalker grinned at my slightly shocked expression. “We keep in mind the fact that hugging is not always acceptable in some circles, but if we’re in a place where chakats have a majority, then it’s okay.”

“Right,” I murmured, still rather amazed. I had a lot to learn about chakats, obviously. Just then I saw Miss MarshWater drive into the school parking lot. She got out of her car, locked it, and came toward us, mumbling to herself.

Together Sandy and I – I figured I could start calling hir Sandy for short, now – waved to the teacher, who smiled and waved back at us. “Good morning, you two. Friends already? That’s good. Settling in okay, Sandwalker?”

“Well...it’s mostly fine, but everyone seems to think I’m some sort of...freak to keep away from. Kerisa’s my only friend.” Shi sighed heavily, belying hir feelings.

As all teachers seem to do, Miss MarshWater merely nodded and spoke the usual formulaic reply: “It’ll pass, dear. New people always take a little while to fit in.” I rolled my eyes at this pathetic answer. A lot of help that was! We followed the teacher into the classroom, then a few minutes later the bell signalling the start of school rang.

The morning was relatively trouble-free; everyone except myself and Miss MarshWater kept away from hir. It wasn’t until after lunch that the situation started deteriorating into ridiculous examples of childishness which, now that I think about it, wasn’t unusual for people about nine years old, but still....

First came the ‘talk about hir as if shi wasn’t there’ treatment. I could hear people talking loudly – quite obviously projecting for the ‘benefit’ of Sandy – about hir, saying that the school shouldn’t have allowed such a gender misfit to enrol, and generally going on about hir background.

Next it was the ‘step on hir tail’ trick. Several people deliberately walked behind Sandy and trod ‘accidentally’ on hir tail, causing the poor chakat to yowl in surprise and pain. All through this my expression was darkening, like a miniature thunderstorm gathering force, which was almost exactly what was happening within me. I felt that if I heard or saw one more insult I’d attack the person with all claws bared. How dare they speak to anyone like that! Especially a good friend who was trying hir best to fit in.

When school finally ended I was just about ready to explode from the pent-up emotions. Most of the time I’m a rationally-minded vixetaur, but at that moment I just wanted to jump into a fight with somebody, no matter that my chances of winning were rather remote.

I stomped out of the classroom with Sandwalker in tow. Shi was on the verge of tears, or so it seemed to me, so I walked beside hir, putting an arm around hir shoulders to guide hir. “You’re coming home with me,” I said gently, but with a dash of hotness. “Mum said I could bring you around to play, and right now I think you need a friend more than anything else.”

By the time we’d reached my house Sandwalker was sobbing miserably, thanks to some jerks who’d tried to pull hir tail as we passed by. “Come on, in you go,” I murmured, opening the door for hir to precede me.

I closed the door behind me, and went into the kitchen, where Mum was making some chocolate biscuits. “Um...Mum, this is Sandwalker. Shi’s rather upset at the moment.”

Mum stopped her mixing to regard my friend with a look of concern and sympathy. “Come here, dear,” she said, pulling a tissue from the box kept on the bench for just such an occasion – or onion-peeling. “Let me dry those tears.” She guided Sandy to the kitchen table, and sat down, taking hir schoolbag off hir shoulders. “Now tell me, Sandwalker, what has you so miserable.”

In between sobs and blowing hir nose, Sandy told Mum the whole sorry story. Hir tears abated somewhat by the end of hir recitation, and shi just sniffed quietly. “I can’t tell the teacher, because she thinks that it’s just a ‘new kid’ phase, and that I’ll get over it.”

“Oh, you poor dear,” murmured Mum, bending down to embrace Sandy in a large hug. “What about your parents? Have you told them?” She frowned slightly when shi shook hir head. “Hmm...I’d better call and tell them that you’re here, too. What’s your number?”

Sandy told her, and Mum went off to the hallway to use the vidphone. We listened attentively, like most kids do, to what she said.

“Hi, I’m Sera Whitelock, the mother of your Sandwalker’s friend. I just called to say that Sandy is here. *pause* Yes, shi does have a friend, though I have to stress that shi has only one friend. Everyone else is...how can I put this...taking the ‘new kid’ thing too far. *pause* I don’t know if Greytail is having the same difficulties. *pause* I think I’ll let your daughter tell you hirself when shi gets home. *pause* I’ll bring hir over soon. *pause* Okay, bye.”

Mum ended the call, and turned to look at us, raising an eyebrow at our perked ears. “Eaves-dropping again, were you?” She came over to ruffle our head fur, then went back into the kitchen. “Perhaps you could tell us something about yourself, Sandy. Where you came from and such.” She went to a cupboard and took out a plastic container. Opening it she pulled out a couple of large chocolate chip biscuits. Mum handed us one each, then put the container away.

Sandwalker and I sat at the table while Mum returned to her baking. “Well,” began Sandy, taking a small bite of hir biscuit, “I was born to Skywatcher and Trailblazer, about a year after Greytail, in Christchurch. We lived in Riccarton, which is pretty much a ‘chakat only’ suburb. Other suburbs are mostly human, foxtaur, et cetera, or mixed.” We both nodded in acceptance of this. Mum had been to Christchurch, so I knew she knew what Sandy meant.

“Dad works in a software company, helping to write architectural programs. The company transferred its operations up here to Auckland about a week ago, so here I am...getting picked on.” Shi went silent, concentrating on eating hir biscuit.

“Um...” I said non-committally, “I see.” At that point I was at a bit of a loss about what to do or say next, so I was glad when Mum then stepped in. “I’m sure that you’ll overcome this problem of bullying eventually. When I was your age I was picked on, because I was the smallest in the school.”

I looked up at Mum in surprise. I hadn’t known that until now. She continued, saying, “I put up with it for a little while, but in the end I just got sick of it all, so I started giving back as good as they got. If someone pulled my tail, I pulled theirs, making sure that I was never around when they looked for the culprit. If they swapped my lunch for something unappetising, I did the same. It took two or three weeks to have any sort of positive effect, but the end result was that they left me alone after that.”

Looking at Sandy, I could have sworn that I saw one of those evil glints in hir eyes, a sure sign of impending havoc. “Really? Well, then...” Shi trailed off, thinking hard. I had a feeling that, whatever shi was planning, it was going to involve me. “I’ve got a bad feeling about this,” I muttered under my breath. Shi didn’t deign to elaborate, and we soon fell to the task of doing our homework.

The next day Sandy starting putting hir plan into motion. During the first hour or so of class, one foxtaur, looking very superior, came over to ask Sandy if he could borrow a pencil. Once shi had given one to him, he went back to his place and, while I watched, he picked up a pencil sharpener and began to sharpen the pencil down to a bare stub. When he’d finished he came back and thanked hir for the ‘use’ of hir pencil.

I looked at Sandy, wondering what shi was going to do. Nothing, it appeared...not immediately, anyway. Shi did, however, have a rather smug expression on hir face. “All right, Sandy,” I muttered, leaning closer to hir. “What are you up to?”

“Nothing much...but I can guarantee that the next time he needs to use a pencil, he’s going to be rather annoyed.” Shi raised an eyebrow at me, then went back to doing hir transactional writing.

When the bell rang for recess, shi hung back, waiting for everyone to leave the class. Against my better judgement, so did I. “Now,” shi said, making hir way over to where the impudent foxtaur had been sitting. Shi picked up his schoolbag, and rummaged around in it until shi found a pencil

case. “Ah, here we are.” Shi unzipped it, and emptied out the contents, which consisted of two dozen coloured pencils, a couple of ordinary ones, plus a blue pen. “Watch, and learn,” shi murmured quietly as shi picked up the sharpener he had left on the desk, and commenced sharpening each one down to the last two inches. Sighing heavily I did the same, taking another sharpener to help hir along.

Once all the pencils had been treated shi put them all back, and tidied up to make it look as if nothing had been touched. “Right...let’s go do some playing, shall we?”

We came back into the classroom just as the stragglers were getting in. Being careful not to look in the direction of our victim, we padded back to our table, and faced the front.

The fun started not long after. We took out our maths books to copy down some exercises off the board, all the while surreptitiously watching the tod open his bag. There was a startled yelp, then a very bad word said, widening eyes all around his table. He turned to gaze at us, knowing exactly who the culprit was; I could almost see ‘You’re dead meat’ flashing in his eyes.

“Uh-oh,” I muttered darkly, turning away from the hostile gaze. “Are you sure you know what you’re getting into?” I asked Sandy with just a hint of concern in my voice.

“Oh, I think I can handle it,” shi replied, purring quietly to himself. “I’ll see if Greytail can help me. Shi’s having a hard time too. Shi’s more practical than I am, but shi does know how to do things properly.”

I still wasn’t too enthused about the idea of petty revenge, but if it gave hir satisfaction, what could it hurt?

After the bell rang for lunch, Sandy and I went out to a secluded area of the school, a small copse of pine trees overshadowing one corner of the sports field. “Wait here,” shi said, “while I go and find my sister.”

While I waited I began to eat my lunch, which was made up of several Marmite or ham sandwiches, two apples and some Shrewsbury biscuits. I’d worked through an apple and three sandwiches when Sandy returned, a slightly larger chakat in tow. “Kerisa,” shi said, gesturing to the newcomer, “this is my older sister, Greytail. Grey, this is Kerisa, my best – and only – friend.”

“Hi,” said Grey. “Pleased to meet you.” Shi stepped forward and gave me a hug, before settling himself down on the thin carpet of pine needles. “So, what’s the order of business here?”

“Well, I guess you could say that this is a council of war,” I began, glancing at Sandy. “Have you been having problems with people going out of their way to make you feel unwelcome?”

Greytail nodded solemnly before replying. “Of course. My way of thinking is that it’s better to ignore the people who are being mean; eventually they’re going to realise that their teasing and provoking are having no effect, so they’ll move onto another person.” Shi then looked at us intently. “What are you doing about it?”

“Um...we’re actually fighting back,” I muttered darkly. “Fire with fire, so to speak. So far all we’ve done is sharpen a tod’s pencils to stubs, because he did the same to Sandy’s.”

Sandy stayed silent. Looking at hir I figured shi might be thinking, so I let hir be. “Should we be doing it your way?” I asked, thinking that the idea didn’t seem that unfeasible. “As I see it, if the bullies weren’t getting any reactions, they’d just try harder, wouldn’t they? Until it got to the point where it might be harmful to the person?”

“You have a point,” Grey murmured, tapping a finger against hir chin as shi mulled over what I had said. “The people in my class tend to just make life difficult; hiding my stuff, pulling my tail, talking behind my back...that sort of thing. If they got to the stage where I was in danger of getting injured, I’d think very strongly about telling someone in authority, like our parents or the principal.”

“Okay,” Sandy broke in, having come to a conclusion of sorts. “Here’s an idea. What about using reverse...reverse.... Oh, help me out here. You know, when you do the exact opposite of what’s expected?”

“Reverse psychology?” suggested Grey, peering at hir younger sister. “Actually...that could work. If someone pulled your tail, Kerisa, what would your first reaction be?”

I blinked at the sudden change of tack. “I’d probably pull their tail in return, assuming I didn’t get beaten up first. Why?”

“If, instead of retaliating, you responded with a hug, what do you think their reaction might be?”

“Well...I guess they’d be rather surprised and confused that their victim didn’t fight back.” I began to think the idea through a bit more. There was definite merit to it.

“Exactly,” said Grey, smiling. “It couldn’t hurt to try it out, to see what happens.” Shi opened hir mouth to say more, but was interrupted by the ‘end of lunch’ bell. “Oops...time to go. We’ll talk later. Bye, sis.” Shi gave Sandy a strong hug, then one to me, before disappearing. Sandy and I weren’t too far behind hir.

The rest of the day went as normal, with the exception of one more incident. We were having an afternoon of painting, and Sandy was working on what appeared to be a space scene. I wasn’t watching at the time, and the first inkling I had that someone had perpetrated another misdemeanour was when I heard a loud gasp from beside me. I looked across to see what was wrong, and found a large red blob in the middle of Sandy’s ‘canvas’.

“Oops, how clumsy of me,” said the vixen who had done the deed. She was smirking in a very superior manner. I was about to go over and rearrange the smirk until Sandy took action. “Why, thank you, Taina! What a stroke of genius!” Shi stepped forward and enveloped the vixen in a strong chakat hug. “Now if I add a dash of green here —” Shi dipped hir brush into the pot of green and flicked it at hir painting. “— and a bit of yellow there —” Sandy threw a blob of yellow on as shi spoke. “— and there we have an abstract masterpiece! Let’s see...what to call it.... Ah! ‘Cosmic Clutter’!”

Taina just stood, her mouth agape. I could almost see her thinking ‘This is not what is supposed to happen!’ Fuming silently she went back to her own efforts at artistry.

“Nicely handled, Sandy,” I murmured when the vixen was out of earshot. “I couldn’t have done better myself.” I studied hir painting, then grinned. “You know, it does look pretty cool with those blobs of colour on it. Think it’ll sell?”

“Nah...it might if I were dead,” shi said, appraising it critically. “Paintings always seem to sell better if their creator is dead first.”

I winced at hir choice of words. ‘Dead’ was not a state I fancied either of us being in. “If you’re going to use that word, make sure nobody hears you!” I whispered in Sandy’s ear. It might have been my imagination, but I was sure that I’d seen several pairs of ears perk up at the word ‘dead’. “Call me paranoid, but I’ve heard of cases where someone who ‘didn’t belong’ was done away with. How many chakats have you seen in this town? Other than your family, I mean.”

“None, now that I think about it. Our neighbours seem nice enough towards us.... You think it could be a front? The adults seem all nice, but they may be planning an hidden attack?”

“Well...it’s not impossible,” I said, not entirely sure if I had a legitimate reason to be concerned or not. “Adults have age and experience to guide them, but sometimes even that may be overridden by sheer prejudice.” The more I thought about the possibilities of something harmful, or even fatal, happening to Sandy, the more my stomach seemed to knot up around a cold hunk of ice. I took a moment to look around, noting a few who were in deep discussion, occasionally looking up at us before continuing.

Sandy nodded, silent for a few moments. “Well, I guess all I can do is just be on the lookout for suspicious activity,” shi said, shrugging.

I nodded, a bland expression on my face. Inwardly I was cringing. I just knew something was going to happen that would involve Sandy and/or hir sister...and possibly me, if I was unlucky enough. Having a chakat for a friend was all well and good, but in a town where the majority of people were against any sort of non-foxtaur, it could very well be a ticket to Hell.

An attempt on hir life came just over a week later. Sandy and I were walking home after school as usual, chatting idly. Greytail was normally with us, but on this occasion shi was still at school, get-

ting some help with hir homework. On our way we passed the corner dairy. “I’ll just some snacks to eat while we do our homework,” I said as I entered the shop. “You go on ahead.”

I was in the dairy for about five minutes, picking up some potato chips and two bottles of drinks. I paid for them with a few coins from the belt pouch I sometimes wore, and went back outside.

To get to my house it was a twenty minute walk down the street from the dairy. It’s straight, so even after five minutes I should still have been able to see Sandy; after all, shi would have been fairly easy to spot, being virtually the only chakat in town.

I was slightly puzzled, but I didn’t think much of it. I thought that shi might have decided to run – we often had races – but then I dismissed that idea, as running by oneself was much less enjoyable, and shi was the type of person who delighted in having fun.

I was crossing one of the several streets than ran across my street when I saw several tods and vixens gathered around a large wheelie bin. I stopped for a moment, staring at the group. “What on earth are they doing?” I muttered to myself. “What could be so interesting about a trash bin?” As I watched, two of them helped to push it over so that its wheels could be used, then another began to tow it along the street towards me.

They passed by on the other side of the street with barely a glance at me. One of the vixens waved at me, and with a puzzled smile I returned the gesture. I dropped my gaze to the bin, and for a brief second I could have sworn I saw the tip of a tail peeking out of the top. I blinked, and it was gone. “Gods,” I said under my breath as I turned toward home again. “That has got to be one of the strangest things I’ve seen yet.”

When I got home, I went to my room, and found it empty. Sandy obviously wasn’t here yet. “Mum,” I said when I found her in the lounge, reading. “Has Sandy come in at all?”

“No, dear,” Mum replied, looking up from her book. “Why, was she supposed to?”

“Yeah...she was coming home with me so we could help each other with our homework.” I went quite for a few seconds while I thought. “That’s strange. I wonder where shi could —” I suddenly broke off, eyes widening. “Oh, gods! Surely they wouldn’t have...!” Leaving Mum extremely perplexed, I bolted from the room, dashing out of the house as fast as my legs could carry me.

Within minutes I had reached the intersection where the group of my peers at passed me. Looking down the street to my right, where they had been going, I could think of only one place where they might have business to conduct.

At the end of the street I could see the dark blue expanse that was the lake. Another street ran around the edge of it. I ran, a bit slower this time, because I wasn’t used to such physical exertion, down the street until I got to the end, where I looked up and down the lakeshore.

About four hundred metres up the shore was a wooden jetty extending some forty metres into the lake, screened from sight by a number of tall oak trees, where a number of boats were moored, swinging empty on the gentle waves. I took a few seconds to catch my breath, then gasped sharply when I saw the group walking out onto the jetty, bin in tow.

I watched in horror as the bin was wheeled right to the edge, then pushed over with an audible, even at this distance, splash. The group watched for a few seconds before moving off, leaving the bin to sink behind them.

With barely a thought I ran onto the beach that ringed most of the lake, jumping down off the two-metre cliff, before sprinting up the beach toward the jetty. Down here I knew I wouldn’t be seen, to be possibly subject to an equably unpleasant treatment from the would-be murderers walking above me.

It took me a bit over a minute to reach the jetty. Looking around I saw some steps cut into the rock face, and I quickly clambered up to the wooden planking above me before running down to the end. The bin had disappeared below the water’s surface, and a faltering stream of bubbles was rising from somewhere down below.

I was in the water before it occurred to me that I really wasn’t all that good a swimmer. I guess in a panic, things like that don’t matter too much. Taking a deep breath, I dove under the water, searching with my arms and paws for the smooth surface of the plastic bin, as I couldn’t open my eyes underwater.

I found it pretty quickly, and as I felt around a bit more I realised that the bin's lid had fallen open. I was starting to run out of air, so I went to the surface again to grab another breath.

On my second dive I managed to get an arm into the bin, and grabbed hold of a hunk of fur. Reaching in as far as I could I hauled with as much of my failing strength, gradually pulling some of the heavy body out from the bin.

It took one more breath of air to get the body out of the bin and up to the surface. By now I was nearly exhausted, the adrenaline that had spurred me on originally now depleted. A mixture of feelings ran through me when I realised that it was indeed Sandwalker I had rescued, ranging from relief, to anger, to extreme weariness. I still had to get hir to shore, though!

Grabbing hir in a careful hold around hir upper torso, I began to very wearily paddle back to shore. As I swam, I found myself wondering why there hadn't been any people to see this happen. Normally the lake was such a busy place. Part of my mind came up with a vague memory of some news article about it, but for the moment it evaded me.

After what seemed like an eternity, though it was probably only two or three minutes, I reached the hard-packed sand of the beach, dragging Sandy's inert body up onto the sand. I collapsed beside hir, panting and wheezing in exhaustion. A few seconds later it hit me that I hadn't even checked to see if Sandy still had vital signs. With a tired groan I lifted up one arm and felt for a pulse. "Damn," I swore softly to myself. I'd learned that chakats had two hearts, but I had no idea what a two-heart pulse would feel like. Well, so long as I got at least one heartbeat, I knew shi'd live. Shi was breathing, but very raggedly, probably from all the water shi had inhaled.

I was so tempted to just lie down and rest – and mostly likely sleep - but I knew I had to get help for hir. I clambered slowly up the steps onto the jetty, then slowly walked up through the trees to the street. Eventually I staggered up to the front door of the house just across the street, and knocked on it. A few seconds later it opened to reveal the face of an elderly vixen. "Yes? Can I help you?"

"Please...an ambulance. Near drowning on beach," I murmured weakly, suddenly feeling my legs buckle beneath me as a wave of dizziness swept over me. I was only peripherally aware of the vixen calling to someone who I assumed was her husband as I closed my eyes and tried to regain some of my energy. Then the vixen was back, helping me to my feet and guiding me into the house. "Oh, you poor dear. Come inside and get dry." Never mind the fact that I was dripping water everywhere and partly covered in sand.

After a hot shower and a good blow-drying I was feeling much more energetic, though I was still terribly worried about Sandy. As a cup of hot chocolate was pressed into my hands I asked about hir. "My friend, on the beach. Is shi okay?"

"The chakat? I'm sure shi is. My husband went with hir in the ambulance to keep an eye on hir." The vixen lay down beside me and stroked my head fur, which I found was rather comforting. Mum did the same thing when I was worried. "Oh! My Mum! I'll have to call her!"

I was led to the vidphone in the hallway and, cup still in hand, I made the call, fidgeting anxiously while I waited for the connection to go through. "Hello? Kerisa! Where are you?"

I quickly filled Mum in on the details, and she said she'd notify Sandy's parents immediately. "Thanks, Mum. I guess the police should be told, too. It was an attempted murder, wasn't it?"

Mum frowned, then nodded. "As much as I hate to go through all the rough-and-tumble, I think so." Half to herself, she muttered, "What on earth possessed them to do such a thing?" She sighed then spoke to me again. "Well, you stay there until I come round to pick you up. What's the address?"

I looked at the vixen standing next to me, out of sight of the camera, and she told. I relayed the information, and Mum nodded. "Okay. I'll be there soon. Bye, love." The screen went dark when the call terminated, and I sagged back onto my haunches, taking a warming sip of the hot chocolate. "Gods," I muttered, shaking my head in a gesture of disbelief. "Why me? Why hir?"

“Come on, dear. Finish that drink and we can go outside to sit on the porch. The sunset will be beginning shortly.” The vixen smiled at me, and I returned the smile. “Thanks...that would be nice to see.”

Mum arrived about fifteen minutes later in our PTV. She parked it by the curb, then got out and walked up the path to the porch. “Hello, I’m Sera Whitelock, Kerisa’s mother,” she introduced herself.

“Dorotea,” the vixen said, nodding acknowledgment. “She’s been very good company. Reminds me of the days when I had young children. Now they’re all grown up...” She trailed off with a sigh. “Anyway, she was a brave little vixen to go to the rescue of her friend. I can’t imagine why anyone would go to such lengths...” She shook her head in a regretful manner.

“Yes, I know. I know kids can be cruel, but that is taking it way too far,” Mum said, a hint of heat in her voice. “It’s almost as bad as the Nazis back in the twentieth century. Of course, back then their leader was spurred on by his ambitions to rid the world of non-Aryan people, leaving behind only the ‘master race’, but I think a similar principal applies here. Then, it was one man against millions. Now, it’s millions against a few.”

Mum and Dorotea talked for a few minutes longer, while I watched the sun setting over the hills in the distance, before we left. “Thanks, Dorotea,” I said as I stepped down off the porch.

“A pleasure, dear. Feel free to visit again. I don’t get many visitors.” The elderly vixen sighed then smiled. “Come by and tell me how your friend is doing sometime.” She waved as I followed Mum down the path to the PTV.

“Gods,” I said as I climbed in. “As much as I like to be active, I think this afternoon was just too active for my liking.” I belted myself in, then leaned against the seat as Mum started the PTV and put it into drive.

“I’m very proud of you,” she said, then her voice became slightly harder. “But you gave me quite a turn when you dashed off like that. If you’re going to go off and rescue someone, could you at least tell me first?” She said it with a smile, so I knew Mum wasn’t too serious about it. “Anyway, I’m taking you down to the police station so we can file a statement.”

I was silent until we got to the station, then, as I got out of the PTV, I asked, “Can we go visit hir tonight?”

“Sure, hon, but after we’ve had a chat with the sergeant. I’d imagine they won’t take this lightly.” She preceded me up the steps to the door, then opened it to let me go first.

The hour or so we spent in the station would have to be one of the longest hours I have ever experienced in my life. I was asked for the details of what had occurred, and I gave them as accurately as I could, including the names of those I knew in the guilty group. I was told that I might have to be present for the formal inquiry as well, which was fine by me.

Finally we were allowed to leave; I couldn’t get out of the station fast enough. “That was awful,” I commented when Mum arrived to unlock the doors. “Let’s just get out of here.”

“I’ll second that notion,” Mum replied, getting in and starting the motor. “Now...to the hospital.” After making sure I was buckled in safely she entered the traffic stream, heading toward the other end of town, where the hospital was situated.

We had to make a few inquiries to find the right room, but when we did, it was with incredible relief that I entered the room where shi was being kept in overnight. Mum waited outside for me, wanting to let me have some private time with Sandy.

“Kerisa!” exclaimed Sandy when shi turned hir head at the sound of footsteps and saw us. I rushed over to hir side and gave hir a careful hug. To all outward appearances shi was fine, but I didn’t want to take any chances.

“Are you all right?” I asked anxiously. “You were in a pretty bad state when I left you.” I lay down on the mattress next to hir, putting an arm around hir shoulders. “If I hadn’t seen the tip of your tail peeking out of the wheelie bin I probably might not have rescued you in time.”

“I know, I know,” shi murmured, hir face carrying a slight haggard look. “The mongrels ambushed me as I was crossing the street, whacked me over the head with something heavy, then stuffed me head down in the bin. At that point I was still conscious, but my head got a blood rush from being upside-down and I fainted. Then next thing I remember is waking up here about —” Shi looked up at the wall clock. “— an hour ago. Anyway,” shi went on, “I’m okay now, thanks to you. I think that such an experience can only make a friendship stronger, don’t you think? All through these troubled times you’ve been there for me, and I really appreciate that.”

I blushed a bit, my ears turning a brighter pink. “Um...you’re welcome, Sandy. I’m sure you would have done the same for me.” Shi began to purr, the vibrations running through into my body as well, and I hugged hir closer to me, enjoying the contact with hir. I sighed happily, remembering a line from an old song from way back in the twentieth century: That’s what friends are for....

Well, that’s the end of the story. To bring it forward to the present day, Sandy’s family moved to Auckland itself, where there was a reasonable population of chakats. We kept in constant contact, calling each other on the vidphone and writing letters. A few years later I moved out of home to study at University, and found that shi and hir sister had inherited a house close to where I was flatting.

There we have it. If you have any other questions, direct them to Sandwalker. I’m sure shi’d be more than happy to field them. In the meantime, adios, muchachos. I’m off to have my fur professionally groomed.

Part II

I thought I told you to forward any inquiries to Sandwalker? I suppose shi managed to find some lame excuse for evading your questions, eh? *sigh* All right. Just let me get comfortable....

There. Now, what is it that you want to know? Did our friendship ever become more than that? You want the full details? Well, you can just march right back to Sandwalker for that info. Shi'll most likely tell you, but I'm certainly not going to give away the sordid details of our sexual encounters!

Oops...did I say that out loud? Damn...I guess I'll have to tell you now, won't I, now that I've completely got your attention? Sit down, and make yourself comfy. This could take a while.

I'll pick up the tale from when I shifted into my flat. That was just after I'd turned twenty....

"Bye, Mum!" I called from the doorway, waving as she drove off with a quick toot. Closing the door, I turned to survey the mess that was my belongings. Boxes lay opened through the foyer, the newspaper that had protected my breakables strewn across the floor. "I'd better get at least some of this mess organised before Dréko comes home." My new flatmate was currently working, but he had said over the vidphone that he'd leave the key with the neighbour for me to get in when I arrived.

I spent a few minutes straightening the newspaper and folding it into recyclable bundles, and I had flattened most of the boxes before I heard the soft footfalls of my flatmate on the porch. "It's unlocked!" I called, turning to see him face to face as he walked in the door.

He was even more handsome in person than he was over the phone. A youngish wolftaur, he had thick grey fur, streaked with white and black, with lush black hair cascading down his upper back. As he stepped closer, shutting the door behind him, I could see light blue highlights streaking his hair. His eyes were the most gorgeous blue I'd ever seen, and I found myself losing myself in those clear pools of blue....

"Hi. You must be Kerisa Whitelock, correct?" I snapped back to reality in time to hear the end of his question. "Hmm? Oh, sorry. I got...distracted. Could you repeat that, please?"

He grinned, his wolfish smile showing off an impressive range of teeth. "You're Kerisa Whitelock, correct?" he said again, waving his hand in a 'no problem' gesture.

"Um, yeah. That's me. And you're —" "Think, girl, think!" I told myself urgently. I had been looking forward to meeting him all afternoon, and now that I was finally seeing him, I was a nervous wreck! "You're...Dréko! Dréko Bluestreak."

"That's my name. A pleasure to have you as my flatmate. Oh, in case you're wondering about my name —" I had been wondering. "— my mother was originally from France, and she wanted to give me a French name. She did...and I legally changed it to something a little less long-winded. I kept the Frenchness of my new one, as a concession to my mother." He leaned forward to give me a quick kiss on both sides of my muzzle (a rather quaint French custom, I thought), then padded into the kitchen, stepping around the few boxes I had yet to flatten.

"So what was your name, just out of curiosity?" I asked as I followed him. Part of my mind was drooling over this hunk, and another part was trying to keep some kind of order. "And do you have any coffee?"

Dréko looked a little embarrassed as he went over to a set of cupboards and opened it, rummaging around to pull out a jar of instant coffee. "Antoine Pierre Bordeaux de Maison de Gauss. As soon as I turned eighteen I had it changed to Dréko Bluestreak – Dréko, because I'm heavily into dragons, and Bluestreak...well, that's rather self-explanatory." He took two cups out of another cupboard, and spooned some coffee into them. "You take sugar and milk?"

"Two sugars, no milk." I parked myself at the small polished wood table, and watched him make coffee. "You poor thing, being saddled with a name like that. What did your mother say when you told her?"

“Not much, actually. She’s not known for her patience and understanding.” He filled a jug with water and put it in the microwave oven to heat up. “I don’t usually use the kettle, because it takes too long to boil.”

I nodded in agreement. I was quite partial to microwave cooking as well. I thanked Dréko when he brought my cup over and handed it to me. “I hope you like it. I don’t make coffee for other people very often.”

‘I can’t believe that a handsome wolftaur like you isn’t called in on constantly by flirty females,’ I thought privately. I sipped at my cup, and smiled. “Just the way I like it.” A few silent seconds went by, then I spoke up again. “So, how long have you been living here?”

“Oh...about three years? It’s a nice place, with modern amenities. It was designed especially for ‘taurs, which was partly the reason why I rented it.” Dréko chuckled, and gestured with a thumb in the direction of the next house down the street. “The landlord, or should that be landlady...? Anyway, shi calls in now and again to see how things are, has morning tea.... Shi’s a great chakat to be with. Shi can be a little on the officious side, but other than that, Skywatcher is pretty fair.”

I was in the process of taking a sip of coffee when he said that, and I damn near choked on it. “Are you all right?” Dréko asked, a worried expression crossing his face. “Did I say something to upset you?”

After coughing for a couple of minutes I managed to get back some of my breath. “You just startled me, that’s all. Chakat Skywatcher is your landlady?”

“Yes. Why, do you know hir?”

“I know hir, all right. Shi’s my best friend’s mother!” Now it was Dréko’s turn to be surprised. “Really? Well, isn’t it a small world?”

‘I’ll say,’ I said when I’d regained some of my composure. “I haven’t seen my friend in several years – well, not face to face, anyway – and here I am living next door to hir parents!” I took another sip of coffee, giggling at the irony. “I’ll definitely have to drop in next door for a chat.”

Dréko grinned at me. “It’s very likely that shi’ll come over here; probably tomorrow, as the rent is due.” He finished his coffee and stood up to put it in the dishwasher. “Are you done with that?” he asked me.

I looked down at my cup, and saw it was still half full. I quickly drained the rest of it, and handed the cup to him. “Thanks. Say...when shi comes around, why don’t I answer the door? I’d like to see the expression on hir face when shi sees me.”

“Shi knows you, I assume,” the wolftaur said, closing the dishwasher and leaning back against the bench.

I nodded. “Me and Sandy used to call each other on the phone every few weeks, and Skywatcher would often answer and have a little chat with me.” I sighed as I remembered the good old days. “Anyhow, you know how long distance friendships go – communications just get more and more infrequent. I think it’s time to get in contact with hir again.”

“Ah, Sandwalker. Hir mother has mentioned hir a few times. Tabby-furred, golden eyes, black hair?” I nodded again in response. “Shi starts at South Auckland University next semester.”

I perked my ears up at that piece of info. “What a coincidence! So am I! I wonder what study course shi’s doing....” I could imagine Sandy’s face if shi saw me in the same classes. “I was going to study for at least a Certificate in Botanical Studies.”

Dréko frowned, scratching at his right ear. “I think that’s what shi’s doing too. You’ll have to ask Skywatcher when shi visits.” Just then my stomach grumbled its unhappiness at not being fed for several hours.

“Well, seeing as it’s your first night here, how about I treat you to dinner? Fish and chips, if you don’t mind. I’m not exactly rich these days.” The wolftaur looked apologetic, and I smiled at him. “That’s fine. I’d go for unhealthy, greasy take-aways every night if offered. Except for Saturday nights. I always like to have spaghetti on toast on Saturdays.”

“Fair enough,” Dréko said, moving towards the hallway. “I’ll just get my wallet, and then we’ll go.”

I followed him out into the hallway, and down to his bedroom. I didn't go inside, instead electing to just stand at the doorway, but what I could see from there was neat and tidy, with a complementary colour scheme. The walls were painted sky blue, and stencilled all over it were what appeared to be dragons of various sizes and colours. "That's so creative!" I exclaimed, taking a few steps in to examine the artwork.

"You think so? I did each one myself," he said with pride infusing his voice. "One or two each night for five months." He opened a small dresser that sat by his bed – a large square mattress about a foot thick, typical of most 'taur beds – and pulled out a leather wallet. He looked inside it, counting his cash, then nodded to himself. "Okay, let's go."

I went to the front door, opened it, and stood on the porch staring out at the sunset. The sun was just disappearing below the horizon in a blaze of oranges and yellows, deepening to reds and pinks. "Brilliant, isn't it?" Dréko murmured as he shut and locked the door behind him. He started off down the front path at a trot, forcing me to almost run to catch up.

"There's a nice take-away shop a few blocks away," he said as we walked. He raised an eyebrow when he noticed that I was craning my head around, taking in my new surroundings. "Familiarising yourself?"

"Hmm? Oh, yeah, I am," I said, slightly embarrassed. "I feel like a tourist, out to see the night life on holiday." He smiled at my admission. "No problem. I do the same, sometimes, on the off chance I'll see something new."

It took us about twenty minutes to reach the shop, and when we walked inside it was quite busy. Three humans, three chakats and a foxtaur were waiting around for their orders to be filled. Dréko gave our order, and then we sat back against the wall to wait patiently.

"Thanks, mate," said my flatmate when he collected the fairly large package from the wolftaur who served us. We stepped outside into the cool night, and started home again, chatting quietly.

We had walked about three blocks when we almost ran into somebody coming around a corner. "Reemus!" exclaimed Dréko, eyes wide in surprise when he caught sight of the stranger's face, illuminated by a streetlight. "I haven't seen you at work the past couple of days. Where've you been?"

I blinked in confusion as the two embraced, pressing up against each other and kissing in a passionate way. I inspected the new person briefly. He was an attractive foxtaur, with what seemed a very dark coat, almost brown rather than red. A neatly trimmed mop of bleached hair ran down his back and was tied up in a ponytail.

"Kerisa," said Dréko, pulling away from the hug he was in. "This is Reemus, my boyfriend. Reemus, my new flatmate, Kerisa. She moved in just today."

Somewhere in the recesses of my mind I heard the sound of breaking glass, symbolic of the incredible pang of heartache I felt right then. 'I knew it was too good to be true! Smart, handsome...and gay!' I screamed inwardly.

"Nice to meet you, Reemus. A friend of Dréko's is a friend of mine." I nodded politely to him, an impassive expression on my face. I didn't trust myself to say any more, for fear that my emotionality would get the better of me.

Reemus smiled, nodding back. "Same here." He sniffed, and looked at the package in my hands, which Dréko had handed to me earlier. "Is that fish 'n' chips I smell?" he asked, grinning. "Mind if I join you? I was just going to get some myself."

"I don't, certainly. What about you, Kerisa?" Dréko looked at me, his eyes shining in the light.

I did mind, a little bit, but I didn't have the heart to say anything. I shook my head instead. "I don't mind. Walk with us," I said to Reemus before I turned and began to trot rapidly up the street. 'What I wouldn't give for a heart-to-heart talk with Sandy right now! Shi would understand – after all, shi's half male herself.'

Dréko and Reemus almost had to run to keep up with me. Until we got home, I never said a word, though the other two chatted quite animatedly. "Is anything wrong, Kerisa?" Dréko asked me as he unlocked the front door, finally noticing my unnatural silence.

“No...not really. I’m just...tired, I guess. Too many things happening today.” It was a lame excuse, but it worked. Dréko just nodded and went inside, followed closely by Reemus and myself.

We sat in the lounge to eat, watching some comedy on TV. Dréko and his boyfriend talked quietly with each other, while I just sat and ate, musing at life’s unfairness. ‘Shot down before I even got off the ground,’ I thought glumly to myself.

“I’m going to go to bed,” I announced a few minutes later, having got sick of my depressing thoughts. “Goodnight Dréko, Reemus.” I nodded to both before I exited the room, heading for my own room, which was still pretty cluttered as I hadn’t unpacked all of my stuff yet.

“At least the mattress is soft,” I muttered as I threw myself down on top of it. I turned on the bedside lamp that I’d brought with me, and pulled a blanket over me, for it was a slightly chilly night. From a bag I pulled out one of my favourite books, and settled down to read for a while. The great thing about books is that you can lose yourself in a completely different world, forget about your life’s problems, and be one with the characters. As I buried myself in the text, I felt strangely at peace, though I knew the feeling wouldn’t last.

I put the book down after a couple of hours, and flicked the lamp off, lying in the darkness, listening to the various noises in the neighbourhood. Crickets chirping, the occasional car driving past, a dog barking.

I soon fell asleep, only to be awakened not long after by what sounded like soft moans from the room next to mine – Dréko’s room, I remembered. As much as I wanted to get back to sleep again, my curiosity soon won out, and I found myself padding silently out of my room to investigate.

The door to Dréko’s room was ajar, and light spilled out into the hallway. I knew it would be extremely unethical to spy on him, but I also knew that I would never be able to sleep until I had satisfied my curiosity. I stepped closer, resting a hand on the door frame, and slowly poked my muzzle through, just enough to view what was going on.

My eyes widened when I saw what was happening. I was torn between stealing back to my bed, and staying to watch the show unravelling before me. I did actually make it halfway back, before fascination hauled on the reins and dragged me back.

Upon Dréko’s bed was, as expected, Dréko. But he was definitely not sleeping. Far from it, in fact. He and Reemus were lying on the spacious mattress, facing each other’s tails. Each was occupied with the delicious (I assumed) task of performing fellatio on the other. Dréko was closest to me, and I could clearly see the rather impressive length of Reemus’ maleness sliding in and out of his muzzle. Every now and then he’d stop to lick and caress the hard rod before going down on it again.

‘Kerisa! Bed! Now!’ my subconscious mind screamed at me. ‘No way! You’re staying!’ my conscious mind overruled. I watched with detached amazement as their movements increased a little in tempo, the moaning going up a few tones.

A minute or so later the show seemed to come to its rousing finale. The wolftaur pulled Reemus’ rigid cock out of his muzzle, and stroked it up and down rapidly until it began shooting thick ropes of vulpine semen, a lot of which splashed all over Dréko’s face before he pulled it back in to take the rest of Reemus’ climax in his mouth, swallowing with evident pleasure.

I suddenly had a pressing need to go to the bathroom, and found myself not wanting to leave, in case anything else happened. Nature called too loudly, though, so padding as quickly as I could I went and did my business, then returned to the door.

Reemus was completing his grooming of Dréko’s face, lapping up the dregs of his copious emission. I guessed it had been a while since he had had any sexual relief. Having done that, he then got onto all fours – in a ‘taur’s case it was rather clichéd – and crouched down, swinging his bushy tail to the side and looking over his shoulder at Dréko.

I could see the love on Dréko’s face, mirrored in Reemus’, as he moved to mount his lover. It’s a hard thing to describe, love. All I knew right then was that, as Dréko gently pushed his wolfhood into the foxtaur’s tailhole, it was as if it were two spirits joining.

Dréko thrust slowly, taking his time as he made love to Reemus. He utilised his handpaws to gently rub his partner’s underbelly, teasing his nipples into hardness. His hands were busy also,

helping Reemus' hands to caress his breasts. I knew that that action was a little pointless, as a male's breasts weren't all that sensitive, but I could sense the affection that went into the gesture.

It was when they began to kiss, Reemus turning his head and upper torso to get a better contact, that I almost gave myself away. I accidentally leaned on the door and, as most doors do when one is trying to be surreptitious, it creaked. Just a tiny bit, but enough to alert the two lovers.

I quickly ducked my head back into the hallway, not daring to move, or even breathe. It seemed like an hour, though it was probably only a few seconds, until they began again, much to my relief. I definitely knew then that I should return to bed, but I so wanted to see this through to the end.

Very carefully I poked my head through the gap in the door again and picked up my observation where I had left off. 'Peeping Tom!' admonished my mind, but I shrugged it off. 'So what? It's basically like watching a porn movie, only live,' I reasoned back.

Dréko was thrusting a little faster now, so I figured he was getting near his climax. Reemus was meeting his lover's thrusts, taking every available millimetre into his rear passage.

Somewhere in my mind, my sense of humour kicked in, with an image of a troupe of cheerleaders jumping up and down with coloured pom-poms yelling 'Go, Dréko! Go, Dréko! Goooooo, Dréko!' I had to fight quite hard to suppress the giggles that threatened to blow my cover again.

Finally Dréko wound up the act, ramming hard one last time into Reemus' butt before releasing his pent-up passion in a flurry of hot cum into his partner's bowels. Dréko gently draped himself over Reemus' body, hugging him gently. I'd swear that if Reemus had been a cat he would have purred.

I took that as my cue to disappear, and I hurried, very quietly, back to my mattress, where I lay for a long time just running through the action I'd seen over and over again. They loved each other, that was plain to see. Again the annoyance that I'd felt earlier when I'd found out that Dréko was gay surfaced, but this time it was suffused with understanding and acceptance. So what if he was unavailable? There were plenty of other fish in the sea, and I was bound to catch one that was just right for me. I just had to wait a while, that was all.

Having settled that point in my mind, I drifted off to sleep again. The dreams that followed still centred around Dréko, though. Typical.

The next morning I beat Dréko up, waking at 6:34. I yawned, got up, and went immediately for the shower. I revel in my morning showers, often spending half an hour just enjoying the water sluicing through my fur. Of course, the drying of such saturated fur takes a while, but it was well worth it to have a glossy, knot-free coat.

When I walked into the kitchen Dréko was up and making coffee and toast for us both. "Good morning, Kerisa. Did you sleep well?" He delivered both cups to the table, followed by the toast. "I have only Marmite and raspberry jam at the moment. I forgot to go to the store yesterday, so the cupboards are a little bare."

"Oh, no problem," I said, taking a sip of the coffee then a bite of the toast. "I'm quite fond of jam."

"Really? I, personally, have always thought jam was that much better when served with fox cream on top. Don't you agree?" Dréko watched with amusement as I started choking again.

"You knew I was at the door, didn't you!" I protested, abashed and mortified at having to admit that. "You let me go on thinking that I was being the perfect little spy, and you knew?"

The wolftaur grinned, nodding his head. "I did mention to Reemus that you might hear us, but he just said 'If she comes to investigate, she'll just see two males enjoying each other's company.' The first inkling I had that you were definitely there was when I heard the door squeak. Reemus picked up your presence when you came back from the toilet."

I sighed, taking another long sip of coffee again. "Damn it. I feel so embarrassed now. I'm surprised you're taking it so well."

"Yeah, well.... I've had a number of flatmates, and they inevitably came to check out what was happening in my room. I've sort of got used to it."

“Seeing as we seem to be getting things out in the open, I’d might as well tell you this now. Last night, when I went all quiet for no particular reason, and put it down to tiredness? It was actually because I was upset about you and Reemus being...you know, together.” I paused for thought, and a bite of toast. “As soon as I saw you for the first time I’ve been trying to think of a way to get you as my boyfriend. You are the most handsome ‘taur I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting.”

It was Dréko’s turn to look surprised. “Really? I had no idea my relationship would have such an effect on you, and especially on your first night living here. You’re the first female flatmate I’ve had; the others, with the exception of a chakat, were males. They had no attraction for me whatsoever, so I naturally assumed that you’d be the same. Of course, I have no idea what goes on in a female mind, so making assumptions on the basis of knowing what males think is rather silly.”

“I’ll agree to that,” I said with a chuckle. “If the world was run by females, it would be a much better organised place. That doesn’t take chakats and skunktaurs into consideration though. They know what it’s like to be the other gender, so I’d imagine they could run the world to the best of everybody’s interests.”

“That’s a good point. I’ll have to bring it up when Skywatcher comes by.” Dréko sipped at his coffee, and ate some toast. I followed his example, and we ate in silence for a few minutes. “What is it that you do?” I asked, finishing my breakfast first.

Dréko swallowed his last mouthful and spoke. “I’m a secretary in an accountant’s office, believe it or not. The work is a little boring, but it pays quite well.” He waved a hand around, indicating the house in general. “That’s how I’m able to live with all these mod-cons.”

“Ah, I see.” I would never have taken him for a secretary. He looked the sort of person who’d be involved in personal well-being, like a fitness instructor, and I said so.

“Me? A fitness instructor? I abhor physical effort, and I’m not referring to sexual effort, either!” Dréko grinned widely at me, then starting laughing. I was rather taken aback by his reaction, but I couldn’t help joining him. “Seriously, I’m more suitable for a desk job, not for dancing around like a loon in front of fat, sweaty people.” He glanced at the clock mounted in the stove, then got up quickly.

“What’s the hurry?” I asked, peering at the clock myself. It read 7:28 in green numbers. “You don’t work on Saturdays, do you?”

My flatmate shook his head and grinned. “My favourite TV programme is on.” He trotted out into the lounge, and a few seconds later I heard the TV come on. Curious, I followed him.

I was just in time to see the words Dragonriders of Pern disappear from the screen, and I looked at Dréko as I made myself comfortable on a large Persian rug. “You must really like dragons, don’t you?”

“Yeah. If I could, I’d trade my body in for that of a dragon. Like one of those beauties.” He gestured at the screen with the remote control, at a massive bronze dragon skimming past with a man perched on his neck.

I wrinkled my muzzle up at that. “I don’t know...I think I’d rather keep mine the way it is. They look so huge and graceless.” I continued to watch though, curiosity overcoming my distaste for the genre.

“True, but just think...if you had a friend like that, sharing your heart and mind, always in constant touch with you, don’t you think that you could look past the ‘huge and graceless’, to see the real beauty underneath the hide?”

“Well, maybe, I suppose,” I murmured, trying to imagine what that would be like, having a mate for life, sharing my thoughts and feelings, and perhaps my triumphs and failures. “It’s a difficult concept to grasp.”

Dréko shrugged, and put the remote control down beside him. “Watch with me, and tell me what you think at the end. You’ve never read any of Anne McCaffrey’s books? She’s been dead for the past three centuries or so, but her legacy lives on in her books and, of course, this early 21st century TV series based on the books.”

I stared Dréko. “Three hundred years, and we’re getting re-runs even now?” What was the world coming to? I shook my head in amusement, and turned my head to watch the show.

By the end of the program I was starting to see the fascination that Dréko had for dragons. The rapport that they had with their riders was phenomenal, and I felt a twinge of envy. Possibly the closest I would ever come to such a relationship would be akin to what chakats call Lifemateship, when two people, usually chakats, though other 'taurs could be involved, share themselves, physically, mentally and emotionally. I sighed wistfully as the credits rolled, drawing Dréko's attention. "Is something wrong?"

"No, not really. I was just thinking. A rider's relationship with their dragon is much like that which chakats seem to have, or perhaps that of yours and Reemus'."

Dréko tilted his head, studying my expression. "You may be right," he said after some seconds of thought. "Of course, we don't share the mental aspect, but the others...." He smiled warmly, then shook his head. "Anyway, what did you think?"

"Of the program? Well...a few things confused me, but on the whole it was very enjoyable." I got to my feet and stretched, a gesture echoed by my flatmate. "I don't know about you," he yawned, "but I'm going for my Saturday morning run."

"I'll come too," I said with a grin. "I'd like to get to know more of my new neighbourhood." I padded out of the lounge to the front door, opening it to view the front garden, which I had previously not noticed. Dréko came up behind me, and tapped me on the back. "You're blocking the doorway," he said.

"You'll have to show me your garden when we come back," I murmured as I moved onto the porch to let Dréko pass. "I have a bit of a green thumb myself. Except with roses; I've been pricked too many times to go near them."

We moved off down the path, and onto the sidewalk. As we trotted lightly down the street we saw some people already out and about. A few waved, and we returned the gesture, sometimes stopping to have a chat with the odd person whom Dréko knew.

After thirty minutes of jogging we decided to turn back. "Skywatcher likes to show up around 9:30 most times, and shi's always punctual." That much I could remember from the times I'd met hir. Whenever shi was late, shi considered it a personal affront, even if the circumstances were unavoidable.

We passed a dairy on the way home, so we stopped in to purchase a few packs of biscuits. "Cream-filled ones are hir favourite," Dréko said in an aside as he paid for them. He gave me a wink, and I blushed, though my fur colouring helped to hide the red tinge that might have been noticeable.

Skywatcher was just starting up the front path when we arrived, slightly breathless. Shi hadn't changed much in the few years since I'd last seen hir. Hir fur was still a glossy black, though a few grey hairs were beginning to show themselves. The white star-like specks scattered over hir body were still pure white. "Morning, Shir Skywatcher," greeted Dréko as he stepped past hir to unlock the door. "You're looking well."

"As are you, Dréko," shi replied, hir tone polite, but with a hint of superciliousness. "And this is your flatmate?" shi added, turning to view me as I bounded up to hir, several steps behind Dréko. "You look very familiar, somehow," shi mused.

"We'll talk about that over morning tea," said Dréko, poking his nose out of the door, waving at us to stop dallying and come inside.

Once the biscuits were opened and the drinks served, Skywatcher turned to look at me. "Now, my dear. To whom am I talking? I'm sure that I've seen you before, but for the life of me I can't remember where."

I grinned widely before answering. "I'm Kerisa Whitelock. I saved Sandwalker from drowning years ago, and I'm hir best friend. Or I was before losing contact with hir." I smiled when the light of recollection dawned in hir eyes. "Ah, yes! Of course. Sandwalker has often talked about how much shi misses you."

"I miss hir a lot too," I murmured. "Friendships can be so hard to re-establish once they've faded through distance." I paused for a sip of coffee, then continued. "Would you be able to get us back together again? Dréko tells me that shi's going to be studying botany this semester." Sky-

watcher nodded. “As big a coincidence as it may seem, so am I. I’m pretty sure there’s only one course running, so we’d be in the same botany classes, but I’m not sure about the others, like maths.” I stopped, then flushed slightly. “I’m rambling again, aren’t I?”

“I don’t think so, dear,” Skywatcher murmured. “Sandy talks more than you do.” Shi at another biscuit then added, “I’ll give you the address where shi and Greytail are flatting, and when you have the time, call in. Shi works part time at a grocery store to earn money for hir studies, but that’s from Wednesday to Sunday.”

I nodded, a smile breaking over my face. “Thank you, Skywatcher. This means a lot to me. I really wanted to talk with hir last night —” I shot a glance at Dréko. “— about something I was upset about, but....” I shrugged and took another biscuit.

“Do you know Elspeth Street?” I shook my head, but Dréko nodded and said, “I do. It’s about half an hour’s walk away.” The chakat nodded in reply. “I see. I’ve never had to walk there, but anyway.... It’s number 49, a small white house with light brown trim. And a red door,” shi added thoughtfully.

Dréko waved a hand at me. “Why don’t you go pay hir a visit Sunday night? Maybe stay over if shi’s agreeable?” He waggled his eyebrows in a suggestive manner, and I glared at him, the corners of my mouth twitching in suppressed amusement. “What?” he asked innocently, spreading his hands.

“Never mind.” I turned my gaze back to Skywatcher. “So, how long have you been in the flat-renting business? I was rather surprised when Dréko told me who his landlady was.”

Skywatcher raised hir eyebrows. “Really? Yes, I suppose you might have been, at that. Trailblazer and I bought this place and the one next door about a year after moving here. The original house that stood on this site was rather run down, so we fixed it up and started letting it out. Most people who’ve stayed here were ‘taurs, as the facilities are more suited to our needs. It’s been quite profitable.”

“At the rates you charge, of course it is.” Dréko received a light slap on the hand and a glare for that remark. “One more crack like that, and I can evict you, just like that,” shi threatened though shi was smiling as shi said it.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean it!” Dréko began a litany of apologies, until Skywatcher shut him up with a firm “Quiet!” He winked at me, and I rolled my eyes. ‘What a comedian,’ I thought.

The chakat sighed dramatically. “I don’t know why I put up with him. Handsome, a good tenant, but with a terrible sense of humour.” I grinned at nodded vehemently. “I’ve noticed that his sense of humour is somewhat warped.”

The three of us talked some more until about 10:30, when Skywatcher said shi had things to do at home. “It’s been lovely chatting with you,” I said by way of farewell as shi stepped out the door. “Don’t say anything to Sandy about me if you happen to communicate with hir again. I want to surprise hir.”

“Of course, dear. Mum’s the word.” Shi tapped the side of hir muzzle conspiratorially, smiled, then walked off down the path.

“Now, you expressed an interest in my garden? Before I came here there were virtually no flowers in sight. I took several weeks of pulling weeds and a lot of effort on my part, but I coaxed it back to life.” Dréko had padded up beside me and I jumped. “Dréko! Don’t do that. You walk too quietly,” I admonished.

The wolftaur grinned sheepishly. “Sorry. I’ve always been a quiet mover. Would you prefer it if I clomped around in heavy boots?” I began to laugh as an image of him wearing big gumboots around the house came to mind. “No; I think that would be worse.”

“Aside from the fact that our feet aren’t exactly suited for footwear anyway.” Dréko tweaked my ear then scampered into the garden before I could react with more than a startled “Ouch!”

I didn’t get Dréko back; I felt that petty revenge was just too out of character for me. Instead I walked around his extensive garden, which took up almost the entire front yard, going around the side of the house to fill the back yard as well. “Saves on mowing,” Dréko said by way of explanation.

“Fair enough. Hey! Bird of Paradise!” I made a beeline for the orange, blue and red flower sitting in a sunny corner. “I love these.”

“That was a difficult plant to find,” my flatmate murmured. “I had to try several garden centres to find one. And then there’s the Black Chakat Lily...” He chuckled when I raised my eyebrows. “It’s a special lily developed by a chakat friend of mine named WindBlossom.” He pulled me away from the Bird of Paradise, and led me over to a small patch in direct sunlight. “This is hir final product.”

I stared down in amazement. “It’s black!” I crouched down to get a closer look. It was indeed black, or as close to black as it could possibly be. It had a long tubular form, with seven petals, perched on a pale green stalk. Tilting one up to peer into its centre, I saw small yellow stamens. The fragrance was reminiscent of cinnamon with an undertone of mint. “It’s beautiful, in a dark sort of way.”

“That’s partly why I got it. I helped Wind Blossom develop it.” Dréko threw the last statement out rather off-handedly, I thought. “You have no idea how difficult it was to get black. Months of genetic manipulation, computer time, and let’s not forget the swearing, the sleepless nights...”

“Yes, that would have been a problem.” I leaned forward again for another dose of the wonderful, hypnotic fragrance. “This smell should be bottled.” I just couldn’t get enough of it.

“That’s enough of that,” said the wolftaur, hauling me up. “Let’s not wear your sense of smell out.”

I chuckled for a few seconds like an idiot, then resumed following Dréko around the garden until he’d shown me everything. “Hmm...if you’ve taken over the outside, I guess I’ll have to start transforming the inside, won’t I? I think I’m more successful with indoor plants anyway.”

“Be my guest. Just don’t expect me to do any maintenance on them. I have enough to do without tending to your charges as well,” Dréko warned as we went inside for lunch.

Shutting the back door behind me, I nodded. “That’s fine with me. I prefer people not to muck around with my plants anyway. Mum has the gardening sense of a brick, and she’s managed to kill a number of plants I’ve grown.”

Dréko sniggered, then stopped when I levelled a Look at him. “I was laughing at your brick comment,” he said innocently. “Anyway,” he went on, changing the subject, “what do you feel like for lunch?”

I passed the rest of the day, and most of Sunday, in silent anticipation. Dréko picked up on my excitement, and guessed rather easily why I was so bouncy. “That eager to see your mate, eh?” he said just before I went to bed that night.

“Well...yeah. Wouldn’t you be?” I replied, leaning against my door frame and folding my arms.

“I suppose I would be,” he said thoughtfully. He then stepped forward and gave me a goodnight hug. “Sleep well, Kerisa.” I watched as he trotted into his own room and closed the door, then went into mine. I shut my door then settled down on my bed, pulling the covers up over me.

It was just before seven o’clock on Sunday night when I pressed the doorbell of Sandy’s and Greytail’s flat. I waited with a little apprehension on the small front stoop, my tail swishing to and fro behind me.

A few seconds passed, then I heard the lock being fumbled with. The door opened to reveal a slim chakat with fur the colour of full cream. Hir tail, the only part of hir body not cream, was a soft silvery grey. “Yes? May I help you?” Shi obviously didn’t recognise me, which I suppose wasn’t much of a surprise. We hadn’t exactly been close in our youth.

“Is Sandwalker in?” I asked, staring into Greytail’s blue eyes. “I’m an old friend come to visit. Kerisa Whitelock?”

Greytail’s eyes widened, and hir mouth opened in shock. “Kerisa? It’s really you?” Unlike most people I knew, shi knew how to be quiet. Instead of raising hir voice in incredulity, shi kept hir voice down to a normal tone.

“That I am,” I said with a big smile. “Is shi in? I’d like to surprise hir with a big hug.” Just then I heard a voice from somewhere inside the flat. “Who is it, sis?”

“A friend of ours,” Greytail replied truthfully. “Come in, please. We’ve got quite a lot to catch up on. Drink?” shi asked as shi closed the door quietly behind me.

I shook my head. “Not at the moment, thanks. I want to get the formalities over first.” I followed Grey through a wide doorway into a cosy lounge. On the TV was playing a game show, *Sale of the Century*. On a large rug that was laid out in the middle of the room lay a tabby-striped chakat, who was busy eating pop-corn. “Eighteen-twelve!” shi suddenly said, just before the contestant on screen answered. I raised my eyebrows and glanced at Grey. Shi merely shrugged and gestured for me to step forward.

I padded up behind Sandy and leaned down to gently blow into hir ear. “Hey! I don’t do that to you!” Shi swivelled around and aimed a light punch at me, which faltered when shi realised that I wasn’t hir sister. Shi lifted hir gaze up to my face, then hir jaw dropped. “Hi, Sandy,” I said simply.

Sandy’s expression was priceless. Shi didn’t say anything for a few seconds as hir mouth worked silently, then shi suddenly hauled me down to hir level and planted a long kiss on my muzzle, pulling me closer to hir. ‘Whoa!’ my mind commented as I was drawn into this rather passionate embrace. Not that I minded at all.

Grey stood a couple of feet away, a big smile on hir face. “Did I mention that Sandy is at the height of hir male phase?” shi murmured. “I didn’t think I had,” shi added when I shot a dirty look at hir. “I think I’ll just leave you two alone for the time being.” The cream-furred chakat turned and padded out of the room, chuckling to himself.

Finally the oral contact was broken, and I could get my breath back. “Well, that was a fine welcome for an old friend!” I said, grinning like an idiot at Sandy. “Been a little deprived of company, hmm?”

“This is like a dream,” Sandy remarked, pulling back slightly to look me over more thoroughly. “You’ve grown so much since the last time I saw you. Quite the attractive vixetaur, if I’m any judge.” Shi tentatively reached out a hand and ran it over my average-sized breasts. Tonight I was wearing a fur-tight halter-top, and my nipples were beginning to poke out through the fabric. “Oh, it’s so good to see you again! You’ll have to tell me everything!”

“Gods, that’ll take a while. It’s been several years, after all.” I looked into Sandy’s golden eyes, and saw the flames of passion begin to burn. I normally wasn’t turned on by chakats of any description, but within myself I felt my own internal furnace stoke itself up. ‘But shi’s your best friend!’ my subconscious mind pointed out. ‘You shut up,’ came the reply from my heart. ‘This chakat is going to be my first, and nothing you say is going to stop me!’

I’m sure the same debates were running through Sandy’s mind too; shi pulled back from me, and shuffled hir hindquarters to try to hide the growing length of maleness that was creeping out of hir sheath. “Kerisa...I know it has been a very long time, and I know that we should really get re-acquainted with each other, but...” Shi looked helplessly into my eyes. “If you had waited just a couple of days, I wouldn’t have to ask this.” The chakat sighed, thinking carefully. “When I turned around and saw you standing there, I immediately thought that you were the hottest vixen I’d ever seen. As Grey said, I’m at the peak of my male phase, and I’m hornier than a goat right now.” Shi laughed a little weakly at that admission, and I smiled in return.

“Basically you’re trying to say that you want some relief, and that you want me to provide it?” I said before Sandy could say anything else. Shi blinked at me, then nodded, the insides of hir ears colouring slightly. “Grey’s been rather busy over the weekend, doing the neighbour’s tax forms because he can’t do them, and I didn’t really want to bother hir with my sexual problems.” Shi shrugged, moving hir hindquarters again.

“Well, what better way to get re-acquainted than to make love?” I said, moving my own hand to circle around hir left nipple. “I’ll have to admit here that...uh...” I blushed slightly before I confessed. “I’m a virgin. I’ve managed to survive this long without giving in to anybody. Believe me when I say that, right now, I’d like nothing more than to have you mount me for the first time.”

Sandy blushed even harder. "I've actually had little fantasies, where we've made love in various places, with various people...." Shi trailed off, looking down at the carpet. Shi looked up again when I began to giggle. "If it's any consolation, I've done the same."

"Really? That makes it even better." The chakat leaned forward and started to lift up my halter-top. I help by lifting my arms up for hir to slip the top up over my head, then my arms. She then began to very gently lick my right nipple, taking my left breast with one hand and squeezing it lightly. A vixetaur's nipples are only slightly less sensitive than a chakat's, and I found myself shuddering with miniature orgasms as shi expertly teased my breasts.

Shi stopped when I was almost on the verge of a powerful climax, pulling back to grin at me. "Before we go any further, I would like you to return the favour." Shi patted hir chest while still looking at me. I was a little unsure, but any reservations I had were dispelled when shi took hold of my muzzle and guided it down to hir right breast. My mouth opened up slightly, and my tongue slipped out to lick hir hardened nipple. Without thinking I moved my hand to cup the breast, and began to massage it, pleasantly surprising me when a squirt of warm milkwater shot into my mouth.

For the next few minutes I alternated between breasts, drinking Sandy's nutritious – for chakats, at least – milkwater, gently kneading them until, with a wild yowl that I could honestly say I'd never heard the likes of before, shi came, grabbing my head and forcing my head into hir rather comfortable breasts.

When shi'd relaxed a bit, shi released hir hold on my head, and grinned sheepishly at me. "Sorry about that...it's been a while." Sandy shifted hir gaze to look towards my rear end. "May I...?" shi asked quietly.

It took me a couple of seconds to track on what shi meant. "Oh! Please...I'm quite wet back there." Sandy got to hir feet and padded around to settle herself down behind me. I flicked my tail out of the way, showing off my femininity to my friend. I jerked forward when I felt something intrude a little ways into me. "What the...?"

"Just relax, Keri," Sandy murmured. "That was my tongue. You taste very nice, you know." Shi lowered hir head again, and this time I barely moved as hir feline tongue slowly flicked around my damp labia. "You've done this often, I take it," I asked, turning to look down my back to where the top of hir head was showing.

"A few times, yes, but only with Greytail. I've never been with anyone else but hir," shi added after a few seconds more licking. Shi continued hir ministrations on me until I was on the brink again, then shi stopped. "I believe that it is time," Sandy said quietly, affection in hir tone.

I raised my rump a little, and looked at Sandy with a look of longing. "Then take me, Sand-walker. Make love to me, and make me a woman." Almost as soon as I had said that I started thinking, 'When a chakat has sex for the first time, are they made a man or a woman?' I dismissed the question as being trivial as Sandy moved forward and straddled my back. I felt something nudge my labia, then begin to slide between them into my hot depths. "Please, relax," Sandy admonished again. I'd unconsciously tensed up when shi began entering me, which I suppose was a reasonable response for a virgin being penetrated for the first time. "This won't hurt at all."

'That's what they all say,' I grumbled inwardly. I did, however, relax somewhat, and I felt the remainder of Sandy's length slip into me. "There, that wasn't so bad, was it?" shi murmured, leaning close to encircle hir arms around me. "How does it feel?"

I thought for a few seconds before I answered. "It feels strange, but...quite nice." Sandy pulled out a little way, then pushed back in, eliciting a pleasure-filled gasp from me. "Just let yourself go," shi purred as shi began to gently thrust in and out of my slick pussy.

Sandy took hir time with hir love-making, wanting to make it last for both of us. The immense pleasure I was getting from the movement of hir cock in my pussy was great, and hir hands cupping my breasts, kneading them slowly as shi thrust, added to the sensations I was feeling.

All good things must come to an end, though, and this was no exception. Sandy lost all pretence of being slow and gentle, and started ramming into me as shi neared hir climax. "Uhh...Keri," shi moaned, turning my head to plant a hard kiss against my mouth. "I can't hold it...."

A few seconds later shi exploded, yowling again in that weird feline way as orgasm swept through hir. Hir orgasm swept through me, too; I could feel every hard spurt of chakat cream going deep inside me, splashing my insides. The heat of the moment, and hir cum, brought me to the edge as well, and my own vulpine howls mingled with Sandy's screechings, seemingly loud enough to wake the dead.

Both of us collapsed not long after that. We hugged each other, still joined, for a few minutes, until Greytail came in, an amused expression on hir face. "All done?" shi asked warmly. Shi came over and lay down beside us, adding to the hug. "I'm very happy for you two. What better way to re-establish an old friendship?"

"Yes," I muttered quietly. "What better way?" I suddenly gave a yawn, my muzzle opening wide. "All that effort has tired me out, I think." Sandy nodded, a smile crossing hir muzzle. "Same here. Perhaps we should retire for the night, hmm?"

Grey nodded. "As you see fit. I'm feeling a little tired as well. Redpaw really should learn to fill out tax forms himself. Goodnight, you two. I'll see you in the morning." With that shi got up and padded out of the room towards what I assumed was hir bedroom.

Sandy sighed and carefully got off me. Hir cock had returned to its furry home, and shi leaned down briefly to clean up the juices that had leaked from my pussy. "Come one, Keri. My room's this way." I followed hir out into hallway, then into a small room that was almost totally occupied by the bed. "A little small, I know, but it's comfortable." Shi lay down upon the bed, and waved me over.

I settled down beside hir, and shi enveloped me in a light cuddle. "It's good to see you again, Kerisa," shi murmured, kissing me in a quick peck. "I hope that you'll always be like a sister to me."

"As do I," I replied, returning the kiss before snuggling down against Sandy's warm body. "As do I."

Has that settled your curiosity at all? I hope so, because there's really not all that much to tell afterwards. Sandy and I had sex a few more times, sometimes with Greytail, but it just wasn't the same as doing it with a proper male. I still like Dréko a lot, but I'm confident that I will find somebody out there to be my mate. Hmm...maybe I should give that Leon Runswift a call....